

Plate of Famous Footballer and "Nipper's Mag." Given Away

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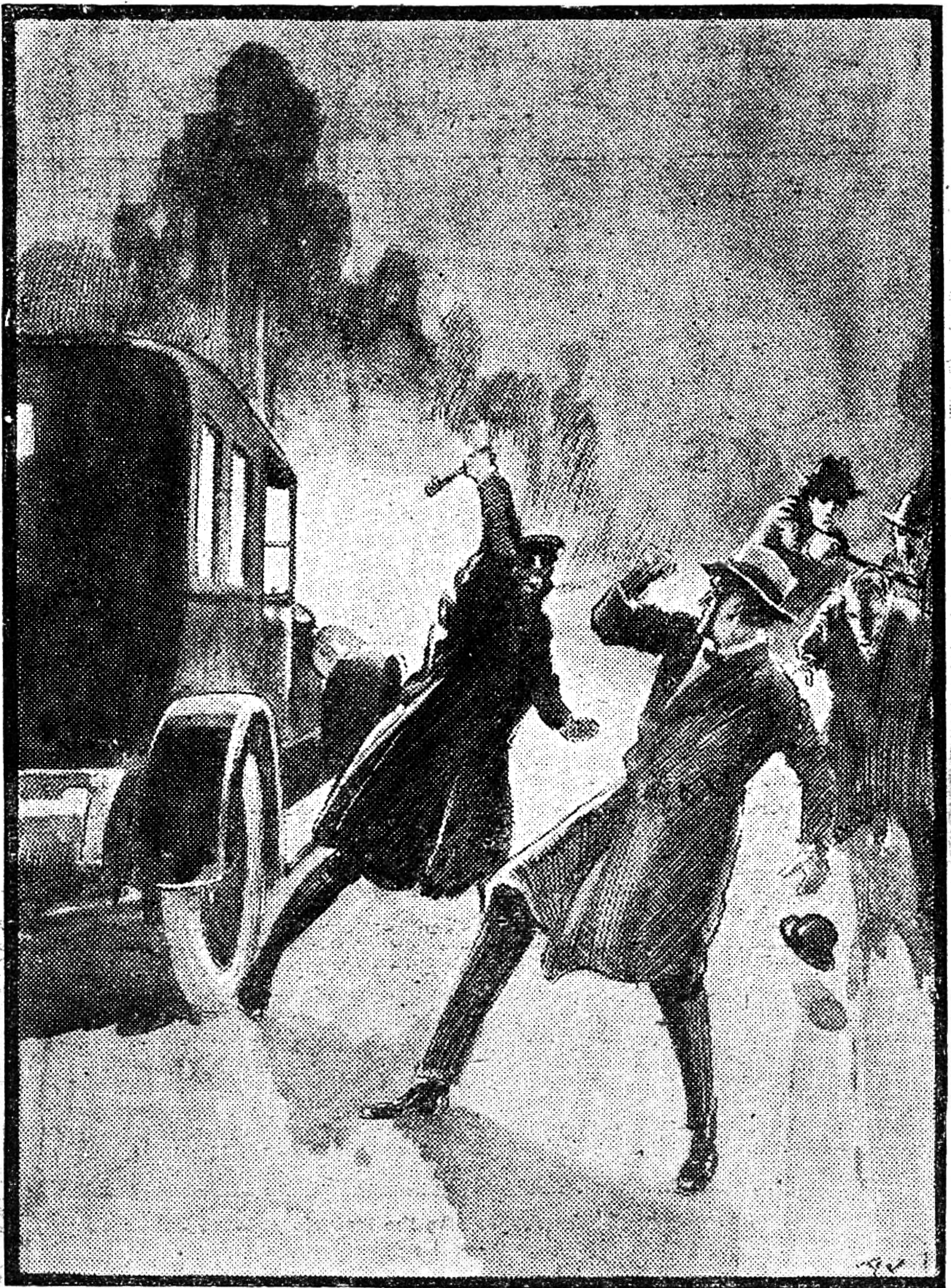
No. 340.

December 10, 1921.



Crash—crash—CRA—ASH! As the last blows were delivered
the goal-post sagged over.

LOYALISTS AND REBELS



The man with the spanner made a swift lunge at Nelson Lee. As the latter dodged, he saw that Mr. Trenton was fighting fiercely with two other men.

LOYALISTS AND REBELS!



(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGH-OUT BY NIPPER.)

A Splendid Long Complete Story of School and Detective Adventure at St. Frank's College, introducing **NELSON LEE, NIPPER**, and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "The Secret of the Box-Room," "The Head's Other Self," "Shunned By His Schoolboys," and many other Stirring Tales.

CHAPTER I. THE AGITATOR.

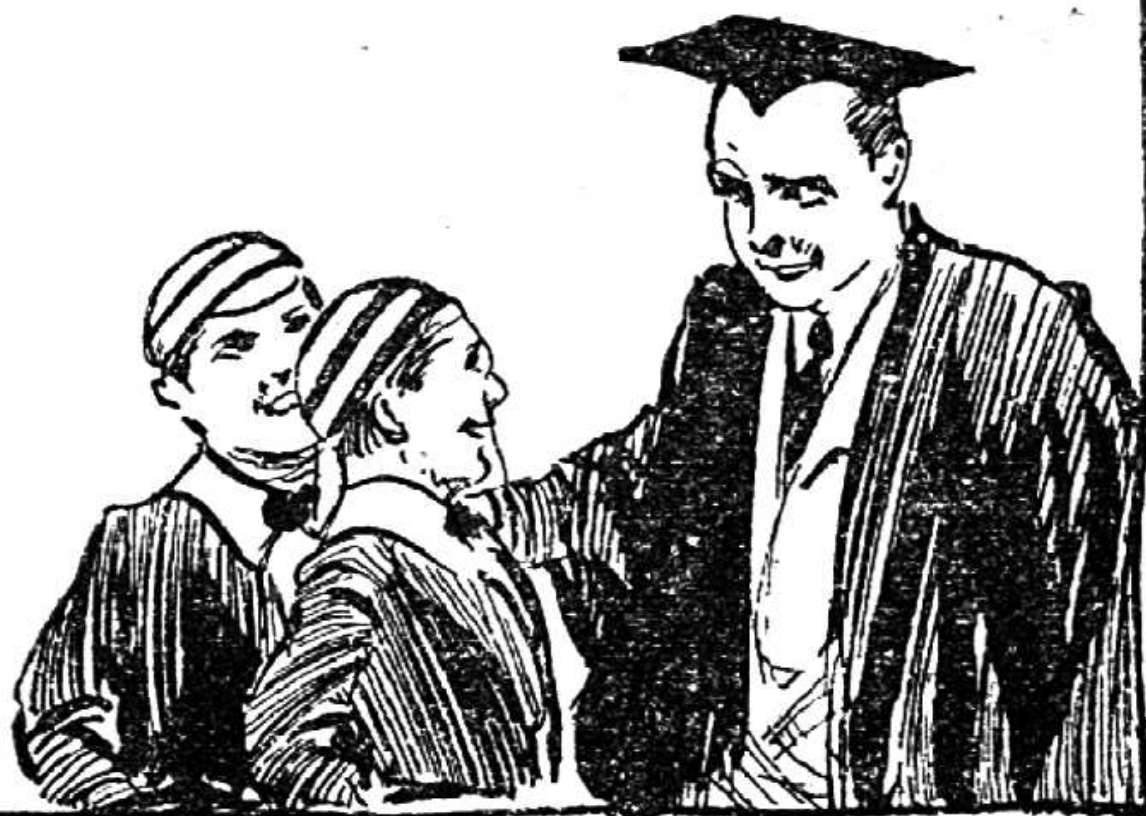
"COMRADES, fellow slaves, and sufferers!"

Timothy Tucker adjusted his green-tinted spectacles, and gazed at his audience. The tame lunatic of the Remove at St. Frank's was evidently bent on making one of his famous speeches.

He had perched himself upon a rough piece of ornamental stonework in the corner of the Triangle, not far from the gateway leading into the playing-fields. It was morning—cold and clear, with a sharp frost in the air.

Lessons had only been over a short time. Timothy Tucker, to tell the truth, had been planning his speech most of the morning, which accounted for his dreamy, far-away look during lessons. Mr. Crowell had awarded T. T. two hundred lines for inattention but the Remove's pet Bolshevik had completely forgotten this.

"Comrades!" he shouted again, in his thin, piping voice. "I am standing here to address you on a subject which is foremost—"



"Hear, hear! Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Tucker!"

"Really; I must protest against these unseemly interruptions!" exclaimed Tucker severely. "The audience will oblige me by remaining silent!"

"Right you are," said Owen major. "The audience has no objection—both of it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Hubbard.

Sad to relate, there was absolute truth in Owen major's remark, for T. T.'s audience consisted merely of two fellows; and they were thinking of strolling off even at that moment. It was Tucker's greatest grievance that he could never get a crowd of fellows round him—he could never claim the attention he deserved.

"Gather together!" shouted T. T., waving his hand wildly. "Collect round, my comrades! There is much vital matter to be discussed."

"Good!" said Hubbard. "Come on, Owen!"

"H'm! Quite so—quite so," went on the speaker. "We are dealing with grim facts. We are oppressed; we are ground down under the heel of a rank tyranny—a system which is rotten to the core!"

"Something like this apple!" said Pitt, strolling up.

Whizz!

Pitt hurled the apple, but judged it so that it missed Tucker by a few inches. The tame lunatic of the Remove blinked, and then stared severely at Reginald Pitt. T. T. shook his finger at him.

"I must protest!" he exclaimed. "Really, my dear sir, I must protest! You do not seem to realise that I am just about to make an important speech. The actual importance of this speech is so tremendous, so absolutely vital, that every boy in the school ought to be listening to me and supporting me!"

"Good!"

"Go it, Trotsky!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed Tucker. "This is most distressing. Really, my dear sirs, I cannot find words to express my feelings. Why you should address me by the name of Trotsky is an insoluble puzzle to me. You are surely aware of the fact that my name is Tucker—"

"Yes, and you Tucker a wrong turn-

ing when you blew in here!" grinned Pitt.

"Help!" gasped De Valerie. "Water! Smelling salts!"

He nearly fainted into the arms of Jack Grey.

"It's bad enough to listen to Tucker's rot without ghastly puns of that kind!" said De Valerie, after he had recovered.

"Ahem! I am shocked!" exclaimed T. T. "Indeed, I must demand an instant and complete apology, Pitt, for that appalling misuse of my name. Unless you immediately beg my pardon, I shall not deliver my big speech!"

"Hurrah!"

"Don't apologise, Pitt, for goodness' sake!" grinned Grey.

"I'm not going to," said Pitt calmly.

T. T. blinked, and shook his head sadly.

"Dear, dear, dear!" he muttered.

"This is most distressing. I did not realise that such a depravity existed. However, I will overlook the matter this once, my lad."

"Really?" said Pitt hoarsely. "Your kindness is only superseded by your exquisite and rare beauty."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My lads, you are laughing at me!" said Tucker severely. "It grieves me beyond measure to find such levity in existence when every face ought to be sad and stern—when every heart ought to be steeled to a state of cast-iron hardness!"

"How can you make steel into cast-iron?" asked Pitt curiously.

"These interruptions are unseemly," replied Tucker. "Yes, they are most unseemly. H'm, h'm! That is so! Indeed, they only serve to show the feeble and decaying intellect of the modern schoolboy!"

"Well, a decaying intellect is better than one that's decayed altogether!" retorted Pitt promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you suggesting that my intellect is decayed?" shouted Tucker, whipping off his spectacles, and staring round wildly. "Dear, dear! I am receiving insults of the most appalling kind. I can see that disciplinary treatment is necessary. I shall be forced to administer it, my lads!"

"Go ahead, T. T.!"

"H'm! Quite so!" mumbled Tucker.

"Upon second thoughts, I am willing to overlook the insult. The matter on

hand is of such importance that it admits of no delay. We must get on with the matters which are upon the agenda. Only this morning I scribbled out a minute concerning this most important subject."

De Valerie sniffed.

"That's nothing!" he said. "I scribbled out a half-hour!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, I fail to comprehend—Dear, dear, dear!" said Tucker. "You are labouring under a most ridiculous mistake, sir. When I say that I scribbled a minute, I am referring to the fact that I made a memorandum—a note—a few words to remind me of some points I have to deal with. And let me say now, before any further time is wasted, that my subject this morning is—The Head!"

"Oh!"

"Steady on, T. T.!"

"Better let the Head alone, old son!"

"We shouldn't like to see you sacked!" said Pitt, shaking his head. "We'd never get another comedian to take your place!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the juniors were not inclined to sheer off now. Timothy Tucker, it seemed, was about to make a speech concerning Dr. Malcolm Stafford, the Headmaster of St. Frank's. And just at the moment the Head was the most talked of person in the whole school.

Quite a number of fellows had collected round Tucker by this time. In addition to Pitt, Grey, and De Valerie, Singleton and Solomon Levi strolled up. Jerry Dodd and Tom Burton, of Study F, were just arriving, and Fatty Little was on his way. Perhaps he thought there was some grub knocking about.

"Yes, comrades and fellow slaves," went on Tucker, "it is my intention to address you upon the vital subject of our Headmaster and his recent tyrannous behaviour. It is a subject which affects us all!"

"Better not let any of the prefects hear you talking like that, old son," called out Singleton.

"You think I care for the prefects?" shouted Tucker. "And, in any case, would they bring harm down upon my head? No, my dear sir, they would

not. For the prefects are in sympathy with us; they are just as keen to rid the school of this tyrant as I am!"

"Shut up, you fathead!"

"Traitor!"

"What—what?" exclaimed Tucker.

"You call me a traitor? How dare you? As a matter of fact, I am a traitor! Yes, I admit it. I glory in it. And I call upon you to support me—I call upon you to become traitors, too!"

"Rats!"

"Piffle!"

"I don't know whether it is piffle," said Pitt. "I'll guarantee that half the fellows in the lower school would become traitors to the Head if they saw a chance of doing it without suffering any consequences. Everybody must admit that the Head's been a brute recently——"

"Thank you, my dear sir—thank you!" shouted Tucker. "That is the correct word to use. Quite so—quite so! That is certainly the word to use! A brute—a tyrant—a man possessed of the attributes of a beast!"

"Steady on, Tucker! Draw it mild!"

"Better go easy!"

"And why should I draw it easy and go mild?" demanded Tucker lucidly. "Why should I? Is it not the truth that the Head has displayed the habits of a beast? Is it not the truth? And is it right that I should be punished for telling the truth?"

The audience was silent for a moment. Every fellow there knew that Tucker was, indeed, speaking far from wildly. His remarks were, upon the whole, strictly truthful.

For Dr. Malcolm Stafford, the Headmaster of all St. Frank's, had undoubtedly had several outbursts of violent and terrible savagery. These outbursts were of a most remarkable character, for they were generally of short duration. Afterwards, the Head would become himself again, and would regret his actions. But then another attack would come, and so things had been getting from bad to worse.

"The truth can always stand the full light of day!" shouted Tucker. "And I maintain, boldly and openly, that we are living under a system of brutality and tyranny. That, my dear sirs, is my contention. Are we going to submit? Are we going to allow this state of things to continue?"

"We can't help ourselves!"

"We've got to submit, old son!"

"No—I say no!" shouted T. T. firmly. "We must rise in a body and cast out this system, once and for all. Yes, my friends, we must rise! Rise—rise! Comrades and sufferers, it is our duty to place our strength upon the side of justice. Meek submission to this brutal regime will do us no good!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The funny ass is right there!"

"We certainly ought to do something!"

"Listen, my dear sirs, and I will refresh your memories!" declared Tucker, seizing his opportunity. "I will bring to your minds a few incidents which, perhaps, have become overlooked. Until recently the Headmaster was no worse than the normal schoolmaster—an evil, I will grant, but one that could be borne."

"Rot!" said Pitt. "Don't trot out any of your fatheaded ideas now, Tucker. According to your mad notions, all schools ought to be run without masters—that's what you put in 'Nipper's Magazine,' anyway."

"Quite so—quite so!" agreed Tucker.

"My only regret is that Nipper is narrow-minded and petty. He fails to see that his magazine forms an excellent medium for propaganda. I have already offered to fill the entire magazine with my learned writings; but, sad to say, that offer has been declined."

"And so 'Nipper's Magazine' is still alive!" said Grey.

"However, we will not discuss that journal at the moment," went on T. T. "Possibly you think my ideas are highly advanced; but that is merely because you are groping in the darkness of narrow-minded ignorance. The Head, I repeat, was, until recently, no worse than the normal schoolmaster. Then, without any previous warning, he developed fits of rage, which, in turn, developed into cold spells of cruel harshness. At times the Head is in his ordinary state—even kindly and considerate in his actions. Although he is the natural enemy of all schoolboys, I must admit that, in his better moments, he is a gentleman. But what of those periods when he changes into a wild beast? Yes, my friends, what of them? Have we not suffered agonies at his

hands? Have we not been caned without reason? Have we not been restricted and enslaved? Have we not put up with miseries untold?"

"Well, there's a certain amount of truth in that," admitted Pitt. "The Head has let himself go once or twice of late."

"Let himself go!" echoed T. T. "My dear sir, your words are paltry! Your expression is childish! Dr. Stafford has been a tyrant—a bully! He has deprived himself of every right to claim respect from us. And it must be admitted by you all that the fundamental basis of the whole structure is tottering. Yes, my friends, tottering! Here and now, I call upon you to support me."

"Why, are you tottering, too?" asked De Valerie.

"Dear, dear! This is no time for unseemly jibes and jokes!" said Tucker severely. "I call upon you, my comrades to support me. There is work to be done—work of an important nature. I suggest that we band ourselves together into a party; and this party is to be called the Brotherhood of the Free!"

"We shouldn't be free for long!" remarked Hubbard.

"And why not?" shouted T. T. "Why not, my dear sir? You do not know what magnificent schemes are in my head. I am appealing now for members of the Brotherhood of the Free! I want this society, this party, to become strong and all-powerful. Do you not realise, comrades, that we are helpless and powerless in our present condition? Banded together, however, under this great banner of freedom, we should assume a new power—a power which would become as strong as our present weakness."

"We shall be a tremendously powerful party, then!" grinned Pitt.

"My words were badly chosen; but I will improve upon them," said Tucker. "We shall assume a power as strong as our present weakness is weak. That is better. H'm! H'm! Quite so. Much better. Now, friends, let me enroll you as members of the new Brotherhood. Organised, we shall be in a position to dictate our terms to all and sundry. Tyranny will never exist while we have that power—"

"Rats to your giddy Brotherhood!" said Pitt.

"Dry up about it, T. T.!"

"Perhaps the time is not quite ripe," exclaimed Timothy Tucker. "Possibly I have been foolish in mooting the subject so early; but later, after you have submitted to further harshness and degradation, you will come to me—you will remember my words. At present I will confine myself to the matter in hand. The Head has been a brute and a bully—"

"Hear, hear!"

"A rank rotter!"

"A tyrant!"

"Oh, indeed!" came a quiet voice from the rear. "So that is your opinion of your Headmaster, boys?"

The juniors twirled round, startled, and found themselves looking at the grim features and stern eyes of Nelson Lee.

CHAPTER II.

WANING POPULARITY!

TIMOTHY TUCKER looked at Nelson Lee inquisitively.

"Really, my dear sir, I failed to observe your approach," he exclaimed. "However, I am delighted that you have decided to join my audience—"

"Get down from that stone at once, Tucker!" commanded Nelson Lee curtly.

"Really, my dear sir—"

"I do not want to repeat my order, young man!"

"But—but I beg of you to consider, sir!" said Tucker hastily. "I have merely addressed my comrades upon a matter of vital importance—"

"In other words, you have been agitating their minds against their Headmaster," said Nelson Lee. "I have punished some of you boys previously for talking in a disloyal manner against Dr. Stafford. Such talk cannot be allowed. Disloyalty to the Headmaster is disloyalty to the school itself."

"But pray consider, my dear sir!"

"Tucker, you will write me one thousand lines!" said Lee grimly. "Yes, the punishment is severe—I intend it to be. Owen major, you will write me a similar imposition. You, De Valerie, will take five hundred lines."

"What for, sir?" asked De Valerie blankly.

"You referred to the Headmaster as a tyrant—"

"Well, isn't it true, sir?" broke in De Valerie. "I don't see why you should mind us telling the truth! Everybody in the whole school knows that Dr. Stafford has been like another man during the last week or so—"

"You need not continue, De Valerie," interrupted Lee sharply. "Whatever the school knows, that fact does not give you permission to criticise your Headmaster openly. If I hear any boys participating in such a discussion as this again, I shall make my punishments much more severe—I shall, in fact, inflict drastic floggings."

The juniors were silent.

"Now that I have the opportunity, I should like to talk to you seriously," went on Nelson Lee. "I am convinced that it is merely boyish thoughtlessness which impels you to hold these little discussions. If you would only take all the facts into consideration, you would not be so harsh in your denunciation of Dr. Stafford."

"The Head isn't the same as he used to be, sir," put in Singleton.

Nelson Lee nodded.

"With that remark I agree," he said. "But why can't you think of Dr. Stafford as he has always been, and not judge him solely according to his recent hasty actions? It is not my business to make any appeals on behalf of the Headmaster, but I do wish you boys would be a little more thoughtful."

"In what way, sir?"

"Ever since you have been at St. Frank's, you have always found Dr. Stafford to be an ideal Headmaster," replied Lee. "He has been considerate, just, and kindly in all his actions. I will admit that during the last week or so he has performed one or two actions which are not in keeping with his general character. But is that any reason why you should reverse your opinion of him so completely?"

"Dash it all, sir, the Head's been going it a bit too thick!" protested De Valerie. "Everybody knows that—"

"If you mean that the Headmaster has forgotten himself once or twice recently, I will agree with you," said Nelson Lee. "But surely you can overlook these trifles—for, taking everything into consideration, they are trifles. You

boys are particularly bitter because you have been the chief sufferers. Your bitterness, therefore, is perhaps easy to understand. But why do you forget the most important things?"

"What things, sir?"

"Dr. Stafford not only made a public speech, explaining to the best of his ability that these mysterious attacks of temper were beyond his control, but he also penned a notice and had it placed on the board," said Nelson Lee. "That notice asked you all to have patience, and to remember that if undeserved punishments were inflicted, such punishments would be cancelled later."

"But the Head can't cancel canings, can he?" asked De Valerie. "After he's swiped into us, and made our hands raw, he can't do much good. And when he gets into one of his tantrums, there's no telling what's going to happen."

Nelson Lee looked grim.

"De Valerie, I object to that term," he said sternly. "You must not say that Dr. Stafford gets into 'tantrums.' It is not only untrue, but objectionable. Cannot you boys appreciate the fact that the Head is doing his utmost to keep himself under control—that he is as kind at heart as he ever was? Can't you realise that these strange attacks are beyond his control?"

"But it seems so queer, sir," put in Owen major. "The Head never used to have these violent fits of temper. And it's not right that we should have to suffer, is it? He's given all sorts of new orders—that we're to do lessons until six o'clock, and then have extra lessons in the evening——"

"But those orders have already been cancelled, Owen major," interrupted Lee. "At the present moment the Remove is enjoying the same liberty as it has always enjoyed. Such remarks, therefore, are idle. My advice to you all is this—if Dr. Stafford behaves strangely at any future time, do not attempt to answer him back if he accosts you. Obey his orders implicitly, no matter how harsh they may seem. Discipline is the chief factor in a big school like this, and discipline must be maintained. And it is contrary to all law and order for you boys to get together and talk against your Headmaster. Don't let it occur again."

"All right, sir!"

"As for you, Tucker, I shall be very

severe if I ever catch you at this sort of business in the future," said Lee. "I had always known that you are a peculiar character, and that your ideas are perverted and weird."

"Dear, dear!" said Tucker, blinking. "I must protest, my dear sir! Pray allow me to correct you upon a most important point! My ideas are sound in every particular. Greatly, as I regret to make the statement, it is your ideas which are perverted and weird——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That is enough, Tucker," said Lee, trying not to smile. "Knowing you as I do, I will excuse what you have just said. You're an extraordinary boy, and I had hitherto regarded you as harmless. But even you may do some damage if you agitate the minds of your school fellows. It must not continue."

And Nelson Lee, without another word, turned and walked away.

The crowd waited until he had gone some little distance, and then the remarks flowed freely and volubly. Just as Nelson Lee left the group, I joined it. I had seen the gov'nor talking as I was leaving the Ancient House, and I had come across to find out what the trouble was.

The first words I heard were not exactly pleasant to my ears.

"The rotter!" said De Valerie gruffly. "He's getting nearly as bad as the Head, and he's supporting him in his bullying tyranny. It's the last thing I expected from Mr. Lee, but it proves that he's no class!"

"Rather!" said Owen major.

"All this talk about discipline!" sneered Armstrong. "Fancy telling us to submit to everything the Head likes to do—submit without saying a word! Lee's a beast, and I'd be jolly glad to see him kicked out of St. Frank's—together with the Head!"

I walked up to Armstrong grimly.

"I'm giving you just ten seconds!" I said.

"Eh?"

"Seven seconds now!" I added curtly.

"What the dickens are you talking about, you ass?"

"If you don't apologise immediately, I'll knock you down!" I replied.

"You've just called Mr. Lee a beast, and said that you'd be glad to see him

kicked out of St. Frank's. You've got to apologise for it."

"Rats!" said Armstrong. "I'm not going to——"

Crash!

"Ow—yaroooh!"

Armstrong went over backwards, headlong, and I looked at the others.

"Anybody else asking for it?" I said hotly. "You miserable cads! You set of worms! Aren't you ashamed of yourselves for talking against my guv'nor like that?"

"Oh, don't ride the high horse!" snapped De Valerie. "You'd better try to knock me down—that's all! I agree with everything that Armstrong said——"

"Right!" I cut in. "We'll see about——"

But before I could do anything I was seized by half a dozen fellows, and held firm.

"Steady on!" grinned Pitt. "There's no need for us to have squabbles over nothing, Nipper. Have some sense! The Triangle is no place for punching noses!"

"Let me go!" I panted. "Do you think I'm going to stand here and listen to these rotters running Mr. Lee down?"

"Well, he's been supporting the Head," shouted Armstrong, struggling to his feet. "And you know as well as we do that the Head is a brute!"

"If Mr. Lee supports the Head, so do I!" I snapped. "You haven't got any more brains than a collection of insects!"

"What?"

"You're as empty-headed as Tucker!"

"Dear, dear, dear! Really, my dear sir——"

"You'd better not start, T. T., or I'll give you something to remember," I went on hotly. "You're the chief cause of all this trouble, I'll bet—with all your fat-headed ideas. And you're all tarred with the same brush, every one of you! Hasn't Mr. Lee always been one of the best?"

"Yes, until recently——"

"Until recently he's hanged!" I shouted. "He hasn't changed in the slightest degree. But he knows that Dr. Stafford isn't responsible for these queer attacks of his; and if he's not responsible, it's not fair to blame him. There's something queer about the whole busi-



"Leave the field!" ordered the Head, addressing the astonished referee. "The game ceases from this moment."

ness, and the guv'nor knows it. He's asking you to have patience, because he hopes to get to the bottom of the mystery before long."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said De Valerie. "What do you mean—the Head isn't responsible? If I get into a raging temper I don't blame anybody else!"

"Yes, talk sense, Nipper!" said Owen major.

"That's just what I am doing; but I might as well address myself to a brick wall," I replied bitterly. "It's no good trying to make idiots understand! You don't seem to realise the simple truth. Dr. Stafford is as kindly and as generous as ever he was, except when he's in one of his peculiar moods."

"Well, that's what we're grumbling about," exclaimed De Valerie. "We don't see why we should be compelled to suffer because the Head chooses to go off in these rotten fits of temper——"

"He doesn't choose to go off into them," I interrupted. "They come, and he can't help himself. Supposing a man goes dotty, and destroys all the furniture in a room. He can't be blamed for that, because he doesn't know what he's doing at the time. Well, it's just the same with the Head."

"You mean that he goes off his rocker?"

"No, I don't!" I replied. "There's——"

no need to take me so literally. Dr. Stafford's had the cleverest brain specialist in London down, and it's been proved that his mind is perfectly healthy and strong. You don't seem to understand that the Head's been doing everything humanly possible to stop these attacks. He can't help it; they're beyond his control. He doesn't go mad; but something happens which seems to alter his character; and you can take it from me that there's something fishy about the whole business. There's somebody working against Dr. Stafford—somebody who wants to get him chucked out of the school."

"Oh, rats!" said De Valerie. "You're getting just as bad as Mr. Lee; and if you can't talk better sense, I'd advise you to dry up. Anyhow, until you show more intelligence, I'll steer clear of you!"

And Cecil De Valerie walked off.

I breathed rather hard as I looked after him. De Valerie and I had always got on very well together, and it was a pity that a breach of this sort should open. And I had an idea that this was only the beginning of things.

I joined Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West in the Ancient House lobby, and they could see at once that I was not quite myself.

"Begad! Who's been rufflin' your sweet temper, dear old boy?" inquired Sir Montie, regarding me critically through his pince-nez. "I trust that nothin' very serious has happened?"

"Oh, nothing much," I replied gruffly. "I've just knocked Armstrong down, and had a row with De Valerie—that's all."

"All," echoed Watson. "About enough, I should think!"

"I found them running the guv'nor down—calling him a beast, and saying they'd like to see him chucked out of the school," I said hotly. "And they're not the only ones, either. Half the chaps in the Remove are talking against Mr. Lee all the time."

"That's frightfully bad form—it is, really," said Tregellis-West, shaking his noble head. "Dear old boy, I quite approve of your action in knockin' Armstrong down. Any fellow who talks against Mr. Lee ought to be horse-whipped."

"Rather!" agreed Watson. "But why should they talk against Mr. Lee?"

"Because the guv'nor has been trying to make things easy for the Head," I replied. "He knows well enough that Dr. Stafford isn't to blame for these strange attacks of his, and he's telling the chaps to have some patience. And all they can do is to say that the guv'nor is as bad as the Head himself."

"Well, the Head hasn't been playing the game, has he?"

"Look here, Tommy, are you starting the same tricks?" I asked grimly. "Are you running down the Head? Because, if so, it means that you're running down Mr. Lee, too——"

"Oh, it's all right—don't get excited," said Watson. "I'm with you every time, Nipper. I think I suffered more from the Head than any other chap—but for Mr. Lee's sake I'll forgive him willingly. Is that good enough?"

"It's just what I expected of you," I replied. "I know I can trust you chaps—and I think a good few others will remain true, too. But I can tell you quite plainly that there's going to be trouble in the Remove before long."

In the meantime, Mr. Trenton, the popular science master, had joined the group in the Triangle. I saw him as I glanced out through the Ancient House doorway, and I frowned.

"Oh, there'll be some nice talk going on now," I growled. "That oily bounder is jawing with the chaps! The more I see of Trenton, the more I dislike him."

"Blessed if I can understand you," said Watson. "Trenton's all right—quite a decent chap. And he's getting more popular every day."

"The more popular he gets, the more I detest him. Take my word for it, he's no blessed good," I said grimly. "If you can't see it now, you'll see it later on. And it's a significant fact that the Head only developed these queer ways after Mr. Trenton arrived."

My chums stared at me.

"Begad!" said Sir Montie. "What are you gettin' at?"

"Oh, nothing," I replied vaguely. "Still, you can think it over if you like."

I wouldn't say any more, and Tommy Watson and Sir Montie were rather puzzled. Out in the Triangle, Mr. Trenton was making himself very pleasant. Just recently he had got quite into the habit of strolling up to groups of juniors and entering into their conversations.

On the face of things, Mr. Trenton was very pleasant and easy. Tall, upright, good-looking, he had gained popularity from the very moment he had entered the gates of St. Frank's.

But Mr. Hugh Trenton was deep—very, very deep.

CHAPTER III.

JUST LIKE HANDY!

DE VALERIE nodded wisely. "It's no good talking," he said, "the Head has been going it a bit too strong. I'm all for law and order, but when things get too bad—well, there's a limit. Don't you think so, sir?"

"Strictly speaking, young man, I ought not to pass any opinion," smiled Mr. Trenton. "But we all understand one another, don't we?" he added, glancing round at the group. "We're all pals, eh?"

"Rather, sir!"

"Every time, sir!"

Mr. Trenton nodded.

"Good!" he said. "Then we can have a little confidential chat. I rather like talking with you fellows. I want you to regard me as one of yourselves. A master who holds himself aloof can never really understand his boys. I think that's why we get on so well—because I mix with you a good deal."

"Yes, sir, that's it."

Mr. Trenton knew how to stroke the fellows the right way.

"Well, about the Headmaster," he said. "I've found him to be very generous, kindly-natured and fair. I'm bound to say that. His little lapses are unfortunate, and perhaps he has been somewhat harsh." But you mustn't take too much notice of them. However good and generous a man may be, he is always liable to be something of a tyrant if he gives way to fits of temper. Mind you, I'm not exactly referring to Dr. Stafford," added the science master. "I'm speaking in a general way."

"Of course, sir!"

But the juniors quite understood that Mr. Trenton actually did mean the Head.

"To-day has been quite an easy period for you," went on Mr. Trenton, smiling round. "The Headmaster has been a

model of all that he should be. In other words, he has confined himself to his own quarters, and left the under-masters to look after their charges."

"Mr. Lee's been a bit unreasonable, sir," said Owen major, in an injured tone. "Just because we were talking about the Head, he gives us lines!"

"For merely discussing the Head?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come, come!" protested Mr. Trenton. "That's not all, surely."

"Some of the chaps were saying what they thought about the Head, sir," explained Jack Grey. "It was Tucker's fault, really, because Tucker was agitating them—you know what an ass he is, sir."

"Really, my dear Grey!" protested T. T. "Dear, dear! What an atrocious libel! Quite so! The position is this, my dear sir—"

"There is no need for you to tell me the position, Tucker," chuckled Mr. Trenton. "I rather fancy I know it. But just take my advice, boys—don't let your Housemaster hear you talking about Dr. Stafford."

"Why should he give us lines?" asked Armstrong. "We don't mind talking about the Head when you can hear, sir. You don't give us lines—"

"My dear boy, I'm different!" interrupted Mr. Trenton. "I'm not a Housemaster—I haven't got the responsibilities that Mr. Lee has. I suppose he considers it his duty to punish you for saying anything against the powers that be. He regards it as treachery to the Head, the school, and all that sort of thing. Of course, my ideas are different—but we needn't go into that."

"It's because you're jolly decent, sir," said Owen major warmly. "That's why you're different—you understand us."

The science master nodded.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I rather pride myself that I understand boys," he said. "I like to live with them—with you, I mean. I like to feel that my pulse is beating at the same rate as your own. You catch the idea? If we all pull together there can't be any friction. And that's my idea all the time—to pull together, and proceed swimmingly."

"I wish you were the Head, sir!" said Canham.

"Oh, rather!"

"We'd be all right, then!"

Mr. Trenton smiled modestly.

"To tell the truth, boys, there's nothing I'd like better than to rule your destinies from the top," he observed. "But that's impossible. One day, perhaps, in the distant future—Ah, but we mustn't discuss dreams. Dreams, my lads, don't always materialise."

"I'll bet everything would go on lovely if you were the Head, sir," said Hubbard. "As it is, we don't know what might happen any minute. With Dr. Stafford going off into these fits of temper, and Mr. Lee backing him up and distributing lines—why, it's simply awful!"

"Now, Hubbard!" said Mr. Trenton severely. "Not content with running the Headmaster down, you are adopting the same tone with Mr. Nelson Lee! I'm sorry to hear that. It indicates a spirit of discontent."

"Well, we are discontented, sir!"

"Rather!"

"Things are all going wrong in the Remove!"

"At the same time, you've got to grin and bear them," said Mr. Trenton. "Take my advice, and discuss such matters as these out of Mr. Lee's hearing. He's a Housemaster and must maintain discipline. If you want to pour your troubles out into sympathetic ears, you can always run into my study. I'll cheer you up!"

"Thank you, sir!"

"You're a brick, sir!"

"No—just a human being like yourselves," smiled Mr. Trenton. "I am flesh and blood—not a machine. I don't believe in a schoolmaster being stuck upon a kind of pedestal and held aloof from his boys."

Mr. Trenton nodded to the crowd in general, and strolled off. He was conscious that he had made a big impression. One more move had been made—his popularity was several steps higher on the upward grade.

If the juniors had only paused to consider they might have realised that Mr. Trenton was an expert in the art of using soft soap. His smooth tongue, his pleasant smile, his air of friendliness and sincere sympathy—they all helped him to gain the confidence and support that he was after.

I had watched it from the first, and I was under no misapprehension regarding Mr. Trenton's game. Of course, I had had more experience than the majority of the junior's, and I had met

Mr. Trenton's kind before, in other walks of life.

It had been an insidious progress. Any of the fellows, had the question been put to them point-blank, would have declared that Mr. Trenton had made no bid for popularity; they would have said that the science master had become popular on his own merits.

For, in simple truth, the Removites didn't grasp the fact that Mr. Trenton was using any and every opportunity—and his silky tongue—to worm his way into the confidence of the juniors. He told them to come to him for sympathy, he scolded them for talking against the Head and the gov'nor; but, in the same breath, he tacitly approved of the disloyal remarks.

And yet, if Mr. Trenton had been accused of agreeing with such disloyalty, a score of fellows would have instantly declared that he was as true as steel to the school. It was just the way that Mr. Trenton did these things.

He was clever—he was so clever that he appeared to be simple. And the conviction was growing stronger and stronger within me that our precious science master was a man to be very wary of.

The crowd of juniors still kept on talking after Mr. Trenton had gone. The dinner bell was due to ring at any moment, and the fellows were anxiously awaiting to hear the welcome sound.

"One of the best chaps we ever had at St. Frank's, that's what Mr. Trenton is," said Griffith with a wise nod. "I used to think that Mr. Lee was the best master here, but he's a washout. He's turning into a beastly strict beast. I'd ten times rather have Trenton as the Housemaster."

"Eh, what's that? Trenton as Housemaster?" exclaimed Edward Oswald Handforth, strolling up, and catching the latter part of Griffith's remark.

"What awful rot!"

"It's jolly sensible!" said Owen major. "The whole blessed Remove would be glad to see Mr. Trenton in Lee's shoes. We're all getting fed up with his domineering ways."

Handforth glared.

"Why, you rotter!" he roared. "Just let me hear you running Mr. Lee down again! Trenton's all right—but he'd be no good as Housemaster."

"Of course not!" said Church. "Trenton may be all right as a science master,

but he'd never be able to run the Ancient House. It wants a man with a clever brain to do that—and everybody knows that Mr. Lee is jolly cute."

"Well, let him go back to his detective work!" growled Armstrong. "He never ought to be a schoolmaster, anyhow—he wasn't cut out for it. St. Frank's would be better off without him."

"Well, of course, talking about detectives, I'll admit that Mr. Lee is rather out of his element here," said Handforth. "Strictly speaking, he ought to be occupying his time on criminal cases—rounding up gangs of coiners, and chasing bank robbers, and all that kind of thing. But you can't deny that he's always been a ripping Housemaster."

Clang—clang!

"Well, we won't argue about it," said Grey. "There goes the dinner bell."

They trooped indoors, but after dinner Handforth was not disposed to let the subject rest. It was quite characteristic of him to ponder over a subject during a meal, and then reopen it afterwards, when everybody else had forgotten all about it. In the lobby he talked loudly.

"Of course, you can't get away from the fact that Mr. Lee is wasting his time," he observed, talking to nobody in particular. "It's ridiculous, strictly speaking, for him to be looking after a lot of schoolboys when he could fill his time in with exciting detective cases."

"What are you talking about, you ass?" I asked, as I passed by.

"About Mr. Lee, of course."

"What, are you starting the same game, too?" I demanded gruffly. "What's wrong with all the chaps in the Remove? Not content with running the Head down, you're beginning to talk against the guv'nor as well!"

"Rot!" snorted Handforth. "I'm not running him down. I think he's one of the best—but I'm permitted to have an opinion, I suppose? And I reckon that he's simply wasting his talent by remaining at St. Frank's. Perhaps it would be better for him if he went back to London and investigated detective mysteries."

"I reckon he's got quite enough to keep him busy here," I said grimly.

"That's just the trouble," grunted Handforth. "I never get a look in!"

"A look in where?"

"Why, if there's anything mysterious

happens, I'm never allowed to investigate," said Handforth, in an aggrieved tone. "I never get a proper chance of showing what I'm worth. If there's any mystery to be investigated I've got to take a back seat, and Mr. Lee gets on the job. But if he went, there'd be nobody left, and so I should have a clear field."

I chuckled.

"Poor old Handy!" I grinned. "But there's no need to worry. When you get a bit older you'll be able to start in the detective business yourself, and after you've made an awful hash of it, you'll realise that you were really cut out to be a coal-heaver or a road-mender!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Church and McClure roared, and Handforth glared.

"You—you babbling fathead!" he snorted. "If you think that's funny, I don't. On the whole I should be rather pleased if Mr. Lee went away——"

"For good?"

"Yes!"

"Well, if the guv'nor went, I'd go with him," I said. "Then what would you say?"

"Why, that would be all the better!" replied Handforth promptly. "You're only skipper of the Remove because of favouritism. It's my job, really—and if you cleared off, I'd soon make things hum!"

And Handforth, having uttered this parting shot, strode out of the Ancient House into the Triangle—fondly imagining that he had squashed me. The yell of laughter which followed him out, however, probably told him that he was mistaken.

With Church and McClure in close attendance, he marched straight across to a knot of fellows who were leaning against the gymnasium wall. They were all talking intently, and the subject of their conversation was easily guessed. Of late, nearly all discussions concerned the Head, or Nelson Lee, or Mr. Trenton.

"I reckon we ought to get up an agitation," Armstrong was saying. "Tucker's right—the time's come when we ought to act. All this talk is no good. We can jaw and jaw for ever, and nothing will be done!"

"Well, what do you propose?" asked Pitt.

"I reckon that Mr. Lee ought to resign!" replied Armstrong.

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"You can call me what you like—but I'll stick to my own idea," said Armstrong stubbornly. "Mr. Lee ought to resign, and clear out. If he did that we should have Mr. Trenton as House-master, and perhaps the Head would clear off, too. Something's got to be done, anyway!"

Pitt grinned.

"I think something is going to be done!" he remarked.

Handforth, who had been listening, was rolling up his sleeves. There was a light of battle in his eyes, and it was quite apparent that somebody was about to find some trouble. Handforth was just ready for it—he hadn't punched anybody's nose all day—which was almost a record for him.

"Put up your hands!" he said, thrusting a huge fist under Armstrong's nose. "Buck up, you cad, or I'll knock you flat!"

Armstrong backed away.

"What's the matter with you, fat-head?" he growled. "I wasn't saying anything to you, and I didn't ask you to butt in."

"I didn't need any asking!" snapped Handforth. "You were saying that Mr. Lee ought to resign and clear out. Well, I don't allow that!"

"You don't allow it?"

"No, I don't!"

"Oh!" said Armstrong sourly, and with a sneer in his voice. "I'm awfully sorry to hear that! Perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to mind your own blessed business! I've got my opinion, and I'll state it without asking your permission. Understand?"

Handforth fairly towered over the other junior.

"Why, you—you cheeky cad!" he belowed. "Just because these other chaps are here, you think you can talk to me as you like! But I'm not going to stand by and hear Mr. Lee run down!"

"Why, you were saying that it would be a good thing for Mr. Lee to resign," exclaimed Church. "You told Nipper

"Never mind what I told Nipper!" roared Handforth. "I can say things that these chaps can't! They're getting out of hand lately! They've been jawing so much that they think they're as

good as I am! Are you going to put up your hands, Armstrong, or shall I knock your face into a mash?"

"You can go and eat coke!" snapped Armstrong.

He turned his back, but the next second Handforth twisted him round and planted a fist squarely in the middle of his face. Armstrong nearly turned a somersault as he went over backwards. He was certainly in the wars. This was the second time he had been knocked down that day—and for the same reason.

"Ow!" he howled. "Yow—yaroooh!"

"Get up, and I'll knock you down again!" snorted Handforth.

Armstrong did get up, but his recently acquired courage failed him, and he fled. He made tracks across the Triangle like a hare, and Handforth rushed after him. But, even if Armstrong wasn't a good fighter, he could certainly run well. And he gave Handforth the slip somewhere in the direction of the playing-fields.

Handforth returned, quite ready to punish another dozen noses if necessary. It was quite immaterial to him that he had, himself, stated the very same thing that he had attacked Armstrong for. Handy hadn't really meant it, but Armstrong had. That was just the difference.

Trouble was certainly brewing in the Remove, but the little breezes which had blown so far were nothing compared to the squall which was soon destined to break!

CHAPTER IV.

GETTING VIOLENT.

"READY?" asked Bob Christine genially.

"Waiting for you!" I replied with a nod.

"Rats!" grinned Christine. "You haven't got all your men here."

It was some little time later—getting on for two-thirty, in fact. And, as the day was a half-holiday a football match had been arranged. It was not one of the regular fixtures, but just a match between the College House and the Ancient House. Bob Christine and his merry men were very anxious for a win, but were not likely to get one.

The bulk of the star footballers in the Remove Eleven all belonged to the Ancient House, and House matches were, therefore, rather a one-sided affair.

Christine had more than once attempted to alter this—he had searched the ranks of his section of the Remove in vain for fellows who could make his team a strong one.

“Of course, we’re going down—that’s taken for granted,” said Bob. “But we’ll try and give you a good game. With Pitt on your side, and Tregellis-West and you and Handforth—”

“Keep your hair on,” I interrupted. “I’m giving the reserves a chance to-day. Pitt’s not playing, and neither is Sir Montie. And I’m trying Doyle in goal instead of Handforth. Your side, Christine, ought to be good enough to whack us.”

Bob Christine brightened up.

“Well, that’s better,” he said heartily. “With all the best chaps playing, it’s hardly fair. There’s more interest in a game if the teams are more evenly matched.”

I agreed.

And very shortly the two elevens took the field. Reginald Pitt and Sir Montie and the other members of the regular team stood looking on. It was really an honour for them to be left out—for the sole reason for their omission was that they were too good. Had they been included in the team the College House fellows would have stood no chance.

“Go it, my sons!” shouted Pitt. “If you let these Monks whack you you deserve to lose your places for good!”

“Rats!” roared Talmadge. “We’re going to wipe you up!”

The game soon started, and quite a lot of interest was taken in it, the ropes being crowded with interested spectators. Some members of the Sixth were practising on Big Side, and the whole scene was an animated one.

The Head was forgotten, together with all his recent doings. In the interests of football, the fellows had no time to think of their recent squabbles about Nelson Lee and Dr. Stafford.

And it was a good thing, too. For the juniors to forget these worries was all to the good. Perhaps there would be a better spirit abroad afterwards. At the moment the playing-fields rang with cheery shouts and encouraging cries.

I was trying Conroy minor at outside-right—Reginald Pitt’s position—and he proved to be a bit of a disappointment.

This, perhaps, was due to the fact that much was expected of him, and, at first,

he was rather nervous. Three times in succession he had chances to centre the ball, but he muffed every opportunity. After Pitt’s masterly playing, Conroy’s efforts seemed almost pitiful.

“Buck up, Conroy!”

“Wake up, you ass—put some life into it!”

Conroy did buck up. He settled down, and soon afterwards he raced away up the field, controlling the ball quite cleverly. Then he centred well, the leather dropping close against my foot.

I trapped it promptly, and without a second’s hesitation, shot for goal. There was no time to waste, for both the College House backs were coming at me. The leather left my foot at great speed.

Oldfield, in the College House goal, jumped desperately. But he was just a shade too late, and the ball lodged in a corner of the net.

“Goal!”

“Oh, good old Nipper! Well played, Conroy!”

“First blood to the Fossils!”

“Go it, ye cripples!”

We were just lining up again when there came an interruption. Bryant, of the Fifth, was acting as referee, and he paused just as he was about to blow his whistle. He stared out across the field.

“Buck up, Bryant—don’t go to sleep!” said Christine. “Blow away!”

“Hold on!” said Bryant. “The Head seems to be—— Well, I’m hanged!”

He broke off, and stared harder than ever. I turned round, and all the other footballers followed the direction of the referee’s gaze. There was ample reason for Bryant’s astonishment.

Dr. Stafford was striding on to the playing pitch!

“What the dickens——” began Christine amazedly.

“Keep cool, you chaps!” I said, in a low voice. “The Head’s on the war-path, by the looks of him! Whatever he says, don’t answer him back! When he’s in this mood he needs careful handling!”

The Head approached grimly.

“Every boy will remain perfectly still!” he rapped out harshly.

His usually kindly face was set and drawn into hard lines. His eyes glittered with an evil, relentless light—a light which nobody would have thought possible in the eyes of Dr. Stafford.

“Anything the matter, sir?” asked Bryant.

"Yes!" said the Head coldly. "Leave this field, Bryant!"

"Le—leave the field?" stuttered Bryant. "What for, sir? I'm refereeing this match for the juniors——"

"Your services are no longer required, Bryant," cut in the Head. "The game ceases from this moment!"

The juniors gazed at one another in dismay.

"Ceases, sir?" shouted Christine, running forward. "What for? We've only just started, and the Ancient House are one up against us! We've got to go on——"

"Oh, indeed!" snarled the Head, turning on him fiercely. "You have got to go on, eh? Another word from you, Christine, and I will flog you! This game is finished, and every boy will go at once to the Form-room!"

I walked forward and faced the Head.

"May I speak, sir?" I asked respectfully.

"Well, well, what is it?" snapped Dr. Stafford.

"Is there anything that we have done to earn your displeasure, sir?" I asked. "We would like to finish this game, and——"

"Silence!" broke in the Head.

I pulled up, and compressed my lips. I had been watching the Head closely, and I could see that he was far from being himself. This wild-eyed, cruel-looking man was not Dr. Stafford. Mentally, he was another being, and, indeed, physically, too. His very features were different.

Knowing that defiance only angered him the more, I had attempted different tactics. I wanted to see what the result would be if I spoke humbly and meekly. Apparently, this only irritated the Head more.

"I want no speeches from you, Nipper!" he went on harshly. "I have ordered you to leave this field. You are the captain of the Remove, and it is your duty to lead the way. Go at once, and without further comment!"

I bridled up somewhat.

"But why, sir?" I demanded. "Have we done anything wrong?"

"There has been a disgraceful amount of noise from this part of the playing-field!" replied Dr. Stafford curtly. "For some little time I excused it, but as the disturbance increased I decided that the cause must be removed without further delay. This football match, apparently,

is the sole reason for the unearthly cat-calls and wild shouts. Not another word, Nipper—go!"

The juniors were all crowded round excitedly.

"It's not fair, sir!" shouted Christine. "We're always allowed to play football on our holidays!"

"We haven't been making more noise than usual, sir!"

"Not so much, sir!"

"And we can't have football without shouting!"

"Of course not, sir!"

All the fellows were shouting at once. Dr. Stafford glared round ferociously. The protestations of the fellows, it seemed, were only making him more determined to enforce his order. The cold light in his eyes blazed forth into fierce anger.

"You insubordinate young hounds!" he shouted. "For this gross exhibition of insolence you will all be barred from football for the whole period of this term!"

"Oh!"

"Your immediate punishment will consist of detention in the Form-room for the remainder of the day!" went on the Head curtly. "I mean to have every boy in this school thoroughly subdued! You must all understand that I will not put up with any nonsense! Go at once, without a single word!"

Under ordinary circumstances the juniors would have obeyed without question, for to defy the Head was never to be dreamed of; but just now they were worked up to a high pitch of excitement by the injustice of Dr. Stafford's decision. Right in the middle of a game they were compelled to abandon it and go indoors! And football was to be barred for the rest of the term! An earthquake—a tornado—was not such a disaster as this!

And the juniors, unable to control themselves, burst forth into protest.

"Can't we finish the game, sir?"

"We've always been allowed to play football!"

"It's not fair to stop us!"

"Rather not!"

"Steady on, you chaps!" I shouted.

"Dr. Stafford will give us permission to finish the game, I know. Won't you, sir?" I added, turning to him. "We'll all go straight into the Form-room afterwards——"

I broke off with a gasp, for the Head suddenly swung his hand round and grasped me by the back of the neck. He gave me a violent shove which sent me sprawling on the grass.

"Silence!" he thundered. "Unless every boy obeys me at once, I will ban football permanently! Any boy who remains on this field after one minute has elapsed will be expelled from the school!"

"Oh, will he?" roared somebody in the crowd. "Don't budge, you chaps!"

"We're not going to!"

"No fear!"

"We can't all be expelled!"

The fellows, red with excitement and indignation, clung together. By this time the majority of the spectators had crowded round, and the excitement was at its height. The Head's orders were preposterous, for if he had been cooler he would have known that obedience was impossible.

But the Head had worked himself into a fine rage, and now he glared round with eyes that fairly blazed with fury. And in the midst of it Fenton, of the Sixth, came running up. The captain of St. Frank's had been practising on Big Side, and he had come across to see what the trouble was.

"Anything wrong here, sir?" he asked as he arrived.

Dr. Stafford turned on him savagely.

"If you interfere, Fenton, I will knock you down!" he shouted thickly.

Fenton started back.

"Why, what——" he began.

"Go away from here!" stormed Dr. Stafford. "I didn't ask you to come, Fenton, and I don't need you! But stay—your services may be useful! Take charge of these insubordinate young rascals, and march them into the Form-room."

Fenton looked rather helpless.

"Don't you try it, Fenton!" shouted De Valerie.

"We're not going!" yelled Armstrong.

"Rather not!"

"We're going to stay here, and finish the game!"

"Hurrah!"

"Down with tyranny!"

Fenton almost went pale with amazement. Here was the beginning of a minor rebellion, and it promised to develop into something big. But, after

all, it was impossible to defy the Head-master to his face.

"Now then, boys, be sensible!" shouted Fenton, when he found his voice. "You won't do yourselves any good by making a fuss. If the Head says you've got to go indoors, you've got to go!"

"Hear, hear!" I said. "Take it calmly, you chaps, and——"

But they wouldn't listen to me, and all sorts of shouts and yells were raised. And in the middle of it the Head stamped up and down, and looked really dangerous. This is what I had been afraid of. Driven to an excess of anger, the Head was quite capable of doing somebody a serious injury.

But the outlet of his rage found a different exit.

"Oh!" he shouted roughly. "So you defy me! You think that you can ignore my orders! Very well, we will see! From this moment there will be no more football in the junior school. The game is permanently forbidden!"

And Dr. Stafford suddenly rushed away, to the astonishment of us all. He made straight for one of the goals. The juniors looked after him, wondering what his intention was. And now they were beginning to get just a little afraid. The courage of excitement and indignation was dying down.

"What's he going to do?" asked Owen major huskily.

"Goodness knows!"

"I say!" muttered Grey. "You went a bit too far, you know——"

"Rats!" shouted Armstrong. "We're not going to put up with his rot!"

The Head arrived at the goal, and commenced pulling fiercely at one of the uprights with his bare hands. The post shook slightly, but, of course, the Head's efforts made little or no impression upon the sturdy post.

After a moment or two he desisted, and glared round. Morrow, of the Sixth, was close by, looking on in blank amazement.

"Fetch me an axe!" snarled the Head, turning on him like a whirlwind.

Morrow started.

"Speaking to me, sir?" he gasped.

"Yes, Morrow, I am!" thundered Dr. Stafford. "Go and fetch me an axe!"

"An—an axe, sir?" repeated Morrow blankly.

"Yes, you infernal idiot—an axe!"

snarled the Head. "Am I surrounded by fools? Don't you understand what an axe is? Obey my orders at once, Morrow!"

"Yes, sir!" said Morrow weakly.

He ran off, rather anxious to escape from the Head's fury. He was filled with astonishment. What did the Head intend doing? What could he want with an axe? Morrow was rather scared.

He arrived at the tool-shed, and as it happened, Josh Cuttle, the school-porter, was pottering about within. Mr. Cuttle was attired in his working clothes, with a green apron about his middle.

"Got an axe here?" asked Morrow bluntly.

"There was somebody axing for an axe!" said Cuttle gloomily. "Why was there somebody axing for an axe? Ax me! Because——"

"Don't try to be funny, Cuttle!" snapped Morrow. "It's serious! The Head wants a chopper—I believe he's going to do some damage!"

Josh Cuttle's face lighted up.

"Which was good!" he said cheerfully. "Why was it good? Ask me! Because there was going to be trouble—and when there was trouble there was something to make a man's heart feel good!"

"You—you garrulous old idiot!" snapped Morrow. "If I'm not back quick with that axe, I shall get the sack."

Mr. Cuttle positively beamed.

"There was somebody going to get the sack!" he exclaimed. "There was trouble brewing! Things was looking good! Last week there was a axe in this here shed, but this week there wasn't no axe! Why wasn't there? Ask me! Because I took the axe away!"

"Oh, you hopeless washerwoman!" roared Morrow frantically. "Where is the axe? If you don't tell me in two ticks, I'll—I'll——"

"Storms was breaking!" muttered the porter. "And when storms was breaking it was a time to act quick. The axe, Master Morrow, is just agin the wall outside. I was going to use it, but——"

Morrow didn't hear the rest. He dashed out, and found the axe tucked away behind a spade and fork. It was a heavy axe—one of those big imple-

ments capable of felling a tree. Morrow seized it and hurried away towards the playing-fields. He was hoping that the Head would have calmed down by the time he arrived; but he found that Dr. Stafford was still standing against the goal-posts, and his brow was as black as thunder.

"You have been an appalling time, Morrow!" he snarled. "Ah, that will do splendidly—splendidly! Chop down these goal-posts!"

Morrow started back.

"Chop them down, sir?" he yelled.

"Don't bark at me, confound you!" bellowed the Head. "You heard what I said—chop down these goal-posts!"

"But—but——"

"You will leave this school to-night, Morrow!" thundered Dr. Stafford, striding forward and wrenching the axe out of Morrow's hand. "Stand aside, or you will be hurt!"

Morrow dodged quickly, and the axe swung round with all the Head's strength—and Dr. Stafford was a sturdy man in spite of his age. Round in a wide semi-circle the juniors had collected, and they were watching breathlessly. It seemed absolutely impossible that the Head could be contemplating such a terrible act.

Crash!

The axe bit into the woodwork deeply. The Head wrenched it out, and then commenced hacking away with all his strength. The blade of the axe was sharp, and it cut into the woodwork powerfully, and sent the splinters flying. And, after all, a goal-post is not a very heavy article.

Within a minute it showed signs of falling.

The crowd was awe-struck now. The Head's fury was something to fear, for a man who could get himself into this state of savagery was not to be treated lightly. But the juniors were looking grim and furious.

No action that the Head could have performed was calculated to enrage the fellows as much as this. Football was barred, and, to prove it, the Head was destroying the goals!

Crash! Crash! Crash!

The last two blows were delivered, and then the goal-post sagged over. The other upright was not sufficient to bear the added strain, and the whole affair collapsed backwards with the net—ruined!

"Oh!"
 "Great Scott!"
 "That's done it!"
 "The rotter!"
 "Oh, the destructive beast!"
 "Booh—booh!"

In a second dozens of fellows were hooting and booing. The Head, hot and perspiring, glared round and strode away. He uttered no word, but his very look was eloquent enough.

The hurricane was not yet over!

CHAPTER V.

NELSON LEE TAKES COMMAND!

"**M**AD! Absolutely off his rocker!"
 "Oh, no doubt about it!"
 Crowds of juniors were talking excitedly in the Triangle. And not juniors alone, for Fifth-Formers and Sixth-Formers were discussing the Head's latest activity with as much animation as the juniors.

"He's gone too far this time—not a question of it!" said Chambers, of the Fifth. "I'll admit the juniors are a big handful, but it's sheer madness to

forbid football and wreck the goal-posts."

"And the matter isn't over yet," said Bryant. "Just you wait and see!"

The juniors, of course, were more violent in their choice of words.

"The rotter! The savage beast!" shouted Armstrong recklessly. "A man like that isn't fit to look after convicts, let alone schoolboys! He ought to be kicked out of St. Frank's!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And we're going to ignore him, too!" went on Armstrong. "In fact, I vote we go on with the match, just as if nothing had happened. That'll show the Head that he can't fool about with us just as he likes."

"How can we play with one of the goals wrecked?" asked Griffith.

"Oh, it won't take us long to set it up again!"

"Good idea!"

I stepped forward, looking rather grim. Armstrong, I had noticed, had recently been coming out of his shell; hitherto somewhat obscure, he was now

(Continued on page 18.)

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(Continued from page 17.)

blossoming forth into an agitator and a leader. And, what was more, he had already obtained a fair number of supporters.

"Hold on a minute!" I said curtly. "Look here, Armstrong, you seem to have an idea that you're in a position of authority. But I happen to be captain of the Remove, and I take your attitude as a direct challenge to me. Well, it won't work—and the fellows won't follow your violent policy."

"What do you mean?" demanded Armstrong roughly. "Who asked you to interfere?"

"I asked myself," I replied. "Haven't you got sense enough to see that it would be absolutely fatal to break out into open defiance? You're not powerful enough to do anything like that. If you're up against a Form-master it would be different; but you're dealing with the Head. And if you're not jolly careful you'll find yourself sacked! And a few other chaps will be sacked with you!"

"Rats!" sneered Armstrong. "If I was sacked, nearly every fellow in the Remove would back me up—and so would the Fifth and Sixth. The whole school would support me! Everybody's wild with the Head——"

"Now then, you chaps, inside with you!" said Morrow crisply.

We turned, and found the Sixth-Former looking grim. In other parts of the Triangle, Fenton and practically every other prefect was going round. It was quite evident that something big was afoot.

"Inside?" repeated Armstrong. "What for?"

"Because you're ordered inside—that's what for," replied Morrow curtly.

"Go and eat coke!" said Armstrong. "We're not going!"

Morrow frowned.

"You'll write me two hundred lines, Armstrong, for cheek!" he snapped.

"My goodness! Just because the Head went queer for a few minutes, some of you fellows seem to think that you can defy every form of authority! The whole school is to collect in Big Hall at once, and if there are any absentees, they'll catch it hot!"

Morrow walked away, and Armstrong looked somewhat sheepish.

"We're still living in a state of law

and order, old chap," I said cheerily. "If you want to lead a rebellion, take my advice—wait until the right moment comes. You will only bring disaster on yourself by opening your mouth too wide. But the best advice of all is this—don't try any rebellion at all!"

Armstrong grunted, and I walked away.

"I've been expecting something like this, my sons," I said, as I joined Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West. "The Head couldn't let that scene pass, of course. So he's having the whole school on the carpet, and there'll probably be some lively trouble."

"Dear old boy, it's shockin'—it is, really," said Sir Montie. "Things seem to be getting worse and worse, begad!"

We arrived in Big Hall, and found the school rapidly assembling. It was, of course, impossible for every fellow to be there, for it was a half-holiday, and a certain number had gone out for the afternoon. But quite two-thirds of the whole school happened to be on the premises, and all these were in attendance.

It was almost unheard of for the school to be brought together on a half-holiday, and the fellows didn't like it at all. It was their recreation time, and to be interfered with in this way was exasperating and annoying.

In the midst of the low murmur of talk the door at the back of the platform opened, and Dr. Stafford emerged. I looked at him closely, hoping for some sign of a change; for I thought it possible that his spasm, so to speak, was over.

But the first glance told me that such was not the case.

The Head's brow was black, and his eyes shone with savage fire. There was something about his very bearing which boded ill for anybody who dared to cross him.

"Silence!"

The prefects on all sides spoke the word curtly, and a complete stillness descended upon the well-filled hall. The Headmaster advanced to the edge of the platform, and surveyed the fellows as a wild beast surveys its victims—glowering, fierce, and with savage triumph.

"The whole school is not assembled!" he rasped out. "Where are the others?"

Fenton stepped forward.

"Being a half-holiday, sir, a certain number of fellows are away," he explained.

"They had no right to be away!" shouted the Head. "When these boys return they will be severely punished!"

"But they didn't know, sir——"

"Don't presume to argue with me, Fenton!" snarled the Head. "Go back to your place! Oh! So a certain number are away! They shall suffer—to the utmost extent! As for the rest of you, I have something to say!"

"Something sweet, by the look of it!" murmured Handforth.

"Shs-s-sh!"

Dr. Stafford, fortunately, did not hear the interruption.

"As you are all aware, a certain number of boys in the Remove have openly defied me," he went on. "As a punishment, and as an object lesson to you all, I smashed down one of the goals on Little Side!"

"Shame!" came a subdued voice from the rear.

"Who spoke that word?" roared Dr. Stafford furiously. "The boy who uttered that word just now will stand forward!"

There was no movement.

"Very well!" said the Head. "Very well! You will see whether I am to be flouted and insulted! I have noticed that the whole school has recently grown insubordinate, disrespectful, and absolutely blind to all form of authority. I am determined to crush this insolent spirit, once and for all. There will be no more laxity while I am Headmaster!"

The school listened in astonishment. I noticed the prefects exchanging glances. Mr. Crowell stroked his chin, and looked significantly at Mr. Pagett, who gave his shoulders an expressive shrug.

Nelson Lee was standing by himself, and his lips were pursed, and he was regarding Dr. Stafford closely and intently. The gov'nor knew well enough that the Head was not absolutely responsible for all he was saying.

"From now onwards there will be an end to all lenient methods!" went on the Head harshly. "It has been proved that such methods are a failure. You have liberties—far too many—and you take advantage of these liberties in every possible way. I am putting my foot down on all such unnecessary freedom."

The Head appeared to be working himself up into a fine state of fury, for his voice had been rising, and he was now thumping his fist into his other palm with fierce energy.

"Every one of you boys came to this school to receive education—to learn things which will be of use to you in after life!" he shouted. "As the Headmaster of this school, I am responsible for your education—and I have no intention of failing in my duty. There will be a changed order of things at St. Frank's from to-day onwards."

"A changed order, sir?"

"What's going to be altered, sir?"

"I will tell you!" roared Dr. Stafford. "Your leisure time is too long—your school hours are ridiculously short! Football is unnecessary——"

"Oh!"

"Silence!" thundered the Head. "Football, I say, is unnecessary—and not only unnecessary, but degrading and brutal! It is merely a waste of good time, and while so many of you are covering yourselves with mud, others can do nothing better than stand by and watch—impairing their health. And, not content with merely watching, they disturb the whole countryside by their frantic and uncouth shouts. The whole thing is wrong, and it shall cease!"

"Cease?" shouted a dozen juniors.

"No—no football, sir?" asked Fenton incredulously.

"Exactly, Fenton—no football!" replied the Head, nodding with keen enjoyment. "Rather a shock, eh? I had an idea I should surprise a few of you! From to-day onwards there will be no football! I am the Headmaster, and I forbid it!"

"Oh!"

"No football!"

"Get away—he can't mean it!" shouted Wilson, of the Sixth. "The first eleven's got to play Redcliffe on Saturday, and——"

"Silence, Wilson!" stormed the Head.

ANSWERS

EVERY MONDAY....PRICE 2:

"You will come to my study this evening to be flogged! How dare you interrupt me?"

"To—to be flogged, sir?" gasped Wilson.

"Yes!" raved the Head, shaking his fists with blind fury. "I will show you! I will prove that I am master here! Good gracious me! Fenton—Morrow—Mr. Crowell—Mr. Pagett! Are you mad—are you all deaf? Cannot you quell this storm of noise which is arising?"

Dr. Stafford, having worked himself up to a fierce pitch of rage, was now almost beside himself. Certainly a considerable din was going on, for juniors and seniors were excitedly discussing this devastating order. Mr. Crowell and the other masters shouted for silence.

"I have never witnessed such a disgraceful scene in all my career!" exclaimed the Head, panting for breath. "It further goes to prove the truth of my words; the spirit of insubordination is even stronger than I had suspected! But it shall be stopped—there will be no more disrespect!"

"But, hang it all, sir, the fellows will take this badly!" protested Fenton hotly. "Football is one of the most important features at St. Frank's, and to have it banned like this——"

"Fenton!" screamed the Head wildly. "Go to my study!"

"What for, sir?"

"I will tell you what for when I arrive!" panted Dr. Stafford. "But wait—wait! It will not be necessary for you to go! Here, before the whole school, I publicly expel you for insolence and unruliness!"

The captain of the school stood perfectly still, but his face turned pale.

"I—I am expelled, sir?" he asked quietly.

"Yes; you will go away this very afternoon!" roared the Head. "I will write to your father, giving him my reasons for sending you home in disgrace. Do not utter a word, sir, for at the first syllable I will flog you!"

Fenton breathed hard. The situation was rather tense, for every member of the Sixth was filled with righteous and furious indignation. For their skipper to be sacked in this way, for no earthly reason, brought every senior to the point of desperation. They broke ranks, and crowded round him.

"Don't you go, Fenton!" shouted Wilson recklessly.

"Don't budge an inch, old man!"

"We won't let you go!"

"We'll back you up—we'll stand by you, Fenton!"

"To the last!"

Dr. Stafford screamed with rage.

"To your places, you young hounds!" he shouted, his voice cracking. "How dare you? I have given my orders, and those orders shall be obeyed! As a punishment for this disgraceful scene, I intend to cancel every half-holiday for the remainder of the term, and the first boy who protests will leave St. Frank's with Fenton!"

"I protest, sir!" shouted Morrow promptly.

"So do I!" roared Chambers.

"Same here!" yelled Handforth.

"We all protest!"

A perfect storm of shouts went up. By this time the whole school was at white-hot heat with anger, and any little respect that they had felt for the Head was blown away. They had no awe of him now. They simply ignored him.

"You'd better sack the whole school!" yelled Armstrong. "If Fenton goes, we all go!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll all stick together!"

"Rather!"

Dr. Stafford staggered back, nearly choking.

"You infernal young dogs!" he screamed. "Be silent at once! Get back into your places! I shall——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A yell of derisive laughter went up. Every shred of respect for the Headmaster had vanished, and it was not merely the juniors who were taking part in this extraordinary scene.

In fact, the Sixth Form led the way out of Big Hall, a number of big fellows crowding round Fenton, and talking to him excitedly. Even the prefects made no attempt to restore order. They knew well enough that any such attempt was doomed to failure.

"Boys—boys! Just one moment!"

The voice was loud, firm, and incisive. Every fellow instinctively came to a halt—for there was something commanding about the tone. I turned my head, and

(Continued on page 21.)

SPECIAL! "BLACK JACK, THE FEARLESS!"
A TALE FULL OF THRILLS By Ed. Os. HANDFORTH.

NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

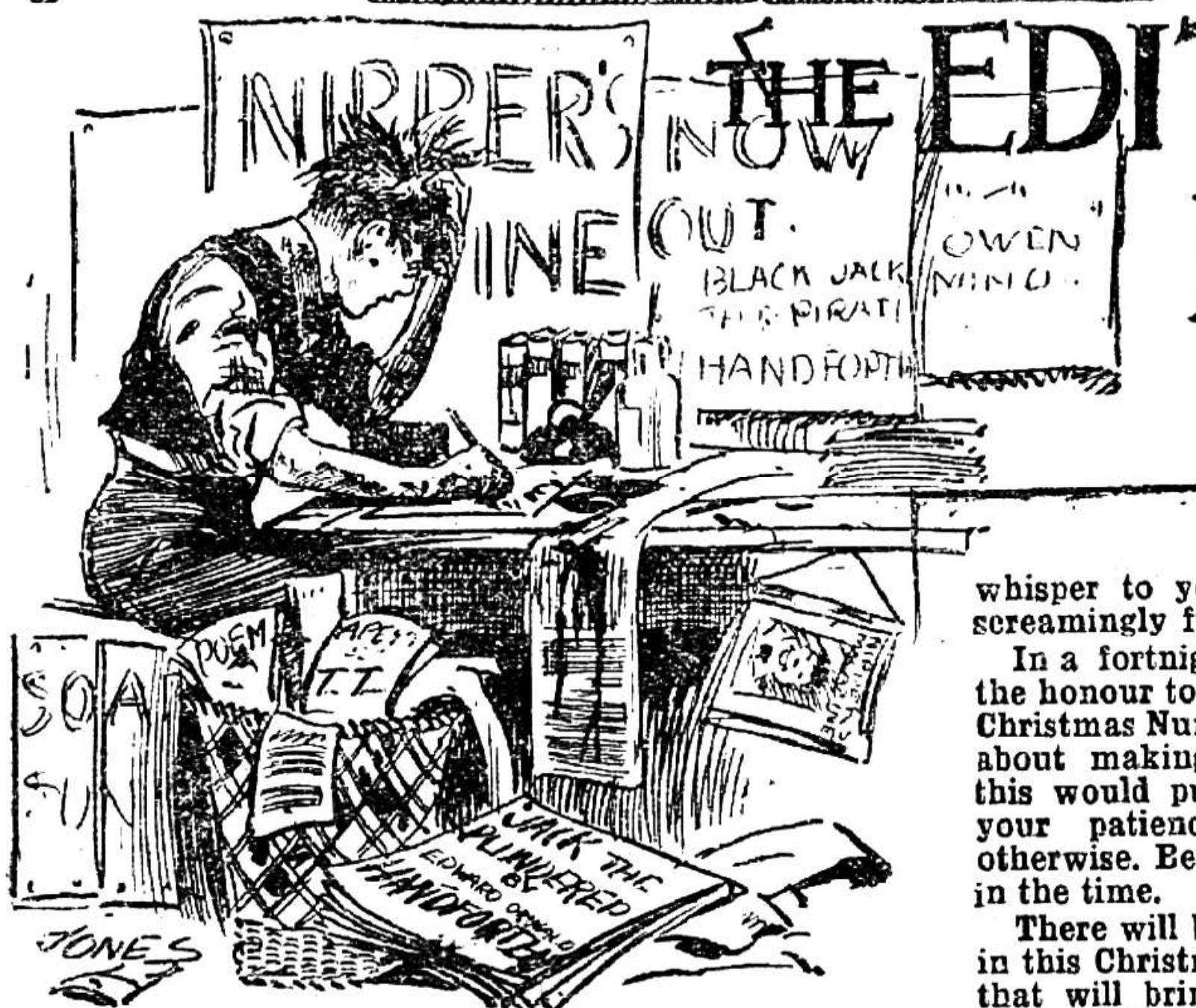
No. 3

THE JOURNAL OF THE REMOVE OF ST. FRANK'S
Edited By Nipper.

Dec. 10,
1921



NIPPER'S MAGAZINE



THE EDITOR'S DEN.

known to us. I have read the first two, and although they are meant to be serious, I can just

whisper to you that they are really screamingly funny.

In a fortnight's time we shall have the honour to produce our Magnificent Christmas Number. At first we thought about making it double size, but as this would put too great a strain on your patience, we finally decided otherwise. Besides, it couldn't be done in the time.

There will be something very special in this Christmas Number—something that will bring delight to the junior section of my readers, at all events.

I'm not going to tell you what this big surprise is. You will have to wait until next week, and if any inquiries are made in the Editorial Office, the makers of these inquiries will be dealt with very summarily by our Fighting Editor (E. O. H.). So be warned!

Having, filled up this page, there is now nothing further to be said. My only object in writing this chat, as you all know, is to get page 2 of the Mag. covered with printing matter on the cheap.

And so, beloved ones, I will worry you no more further.

NIPPER (Editor).

WHO'S WHO

Study D.—See also page viii.

WALTER CHURCH.—One of the famous trio of Study D. Associated with Handforth from the beginning of his adventures at St. Frank's. He is a good, all-round sportsman and a fair scholar, but lacks initiative. Likes to pull the leg of his leader—a proceeding that usually ends in a lively scene in which Church gets very much the worst of it. In spite of such treatment, Church bears no ill-will against his leader.

ARNOLD MCCLURE.—Shares Study D with Handforth and Church. Invariably sides with Church against Handforth and gets punished accordingly. Bitterly resents Handy's high-handed methods and causes a great deal of trouble before he will submit to the hare-brain schemes of his leader. He will loyally follow Handforth in the end, even though he knows it will lead to certain disaster. McClure comes from Scotland, and undoubtedly his Scotch temperament exerts a certain steadying influence over the high-spirited leader of Study D.

EDITORIAL OFFICE,
Study C, Ancient House,
St. Frank's College.

Dear Old Things,—

Here you are then!

Allow me to place before you, with that humble and long-suffering spirit characteristic of all editors, our Third Number. Self praise is the last thing I should dream of, but I honestly think that we are worth at least tuppence.

In this number, as you will observe—Providing, of course, that you manage to survive after the first page—we have a wonderful contribution by no less a person than Mr. Josh Cuttle. It was only after considerable persuasion that he consented to put pen to paper. However, I think the result is quite gratifying, for our worthy porter's effort is at least a novelty, even if it makes no claim to literary heights. Judge for yourselves.

We have had all sorts of inquiries pouring into the Editorial Office; and not only inquiries, but suggestions and hints. Now I don't mind readers writing up for fatherly advice, or anything of that kind. But I'm running this paper, and I wish to state, distinctly and clearly, that a magazine of this size has no use for twenty or thirty editors. One fellow suggests that we should produce the Mag. on glazed paper, and have a four-colour cover, and a few trifles of that kind. Another has an idea that we ought to increase our size to forty-eight pages—a mere bagatelle, of course. I don't suppose you'll understand what that means, but it sounds good.

For next week I have some particularly good things for you. A new series will commence by Edward Oswald Handforth, entitled "Fellows I Admire." In this series Handforth will give yards of praise to certain chaps who are well



We hear that No. I. of this journal met with a very warm reception in Study A. Fullwood & Co., we believe, used it to light the fire with, this probably being an exhibition of affectionate regard for the Editorial Staff. We are delighted to learn that the Mag. is of some use, after all!



A writer in a daily paper declares that the age of politeness is returning. Postmen, policemen, and others are all more polite than they used to be. Rats! We've noticed the same thing, haven't we? Boxing Day won't be long!



The ignorance of some fellows is extraordinary. In class the other day Teddy Long was unable to tell Mr. Crowell what city is the capital of the Dominion of Canada. He certainly Ottawa known that!

* * *

Not content with being an amateur detective, Handforth is thinking of making a name as a film comedian. He has already been practising facial contortions before the mirror in order to get funny expressions. But why practice?



There is no truth in the rumour that Sir Montie Tregellis-West has laid in enough clothes to last him until he gets into the Sixth. The huge parcels which were delivered for him last week were merely his monthly selection of neckties!

* * *

Matthew Noys, of Study G, has been crowing a lot recently because he won a fourth prize in a football competition. It isn't much to

boast of, anyway. There's no need to make such a Noys about it. It greatly annoys us!

* * *

Riches, according to T.T., are a miserable curse rather than a blessing. He says that only poor people are really happy. How nice it must be to be downright miserable!



Hitchen and Love, of the Fifth, after being study-mates for three terms, are thinking about parting company. That's the worst of being quarrelsome. They can't Love one another, or they wouldn't be Hitchen to separate!

* * *

Sessue Yakama, our genial little Japanese junior, has been teaching Skelton, his study mate, his own flowery language. Skelton is looking quite thin under the strain, and unless these lessons are immediately stopped, the unfortunate fellow will fade away to a Skelton



Police-constable Sparrow, our local arm of the law, used to be in the Army before joining the Force. He could hardly have been a Sparrow then—more like a Robin Redbreast. What larks he must have had!

* * *

We learn that there was a burglary at the White Harp Inn, in Belton, the other day. Mr. Porlock, the landlord, is now bemoaning the fact that he had such a Porlock fitted on the back door! But there's no need to keep harping on it.

* * *

T.T. has been talking a lot just lately about a mysterious Brotherhood of the Free. We think the headquarters of this strange sect must be in the jungle. Tucker is probably longing to return—he must find captivity very irksome!

* * *

We heard many wails and grumbles during the recent frost because the River Stowe didn't properly freeze over, and thus allow of skating. The frost seems to have been a frost in more senses than one!

SWANK!*By Owen Minor, of the Third.*

NOTE.—As this little contribution possesses a trace of merit, revealing, as it does, the sag point of view, I have decided to publish it exactly as it was submitted. The spelling, I may add, is Owen minor's—also the punctuation.—EDITOR.

It's Meaning and a Few Examples.

SWANK is a sign of swelled head, everybody doesn't suffer from swelled head. Some chaps can do all sorts of big things and they don't boast. Other chaps boast terribly even if they don't do anything. I am now going to write about what I think. Of a few members of the Remove and Fifth.

As a contributor to the Magazine I am consequently immune from attack. The fellows I write about daren't go for me. Or they will find Nipper, the Editor, (on their track). So I can go ahead, so I am going.

There is Fullwood. Everybody knows Fullwood he is a dreadful swanker as everybody knows. He can't do anything. At sports. he doesn't play football? Why. Because he can't work is distasteful to him! He is terribly backward in Form. Being a terribly backward boy. He is always swanking about as though he owns the whole Place and he would be a big (bully) if Nipper wasn't about Chambers of the Fifth. Who is another (swanker).

He Thinks He Knows Everything.

Chambers is not a bad Sort he is gennerous when he has money. Which is always except when he is short which is never. Swank is his (biggest fault) and he has allways suffered badly; from swelled head. He thinks he knows Everything and is allways giving advice to people who don't want it because of this Chambers is something of (a laughing stock in the



Fifth)? You can't tell him anything because he knows all ready at least he thinks so. Swankers are allways iggnorent a really sensible chap never swanks it is a nasty Habit.

The Case of Handforth.

It would not be fair very likely. To say that Handforth is a swanker. Perhaps. He suffers from swelled head. Of course as everybody knows but it is not swank in his Case it is quite diferent Handforth is very Fond of (arguing) but he is one of the Best. In the hole school and now I must conclude?

(Thanks !—ED.).

WHO IS HE?*By BOB CHRISTINE.*

OF course you'll say it's awful rot;
And wonder what a nerve I've got
To break out into verse
And, yes, it's even worse—
I mean to get you guessing some
And set your wits in quite a hum.

There's a fellow in Study —well
His name I really wouldn't tell
But he's brawny and big,
With a fist like a "nig";
And punches he's ready to land forth.
You surely know I mean *****?

In the Fifth there's an awful ass
Who can't do a thing except gas;
He's all swank and swelled head
And his brains are quite dead,
As a dud he's certainly famous—
The rhyme's "off" but I mean *****.

Another bright spark of repute
Often causes a wordy dispute
To say nothing of jeers
With his dotty ideas;
One day he'll come a fine "mucker"—
I'm referring, of course, to *****.

And there's a sneaky young cad,
A liar and everything bad,
Who spies morning and night
And steers clear of a fight—
You can't possibly say that I'm wrong
In describing thus young *****.

SERIAL STORY.

THE MYSTERY OF MOOR COTTAGE!

By Reginald Pitt, Dick Goodwin, Solomon Levi, and Sir Lancelot Montgomery Tregellis-West

A Story of Thrills, Perils, and Excitement—In Four Parts.

SYNOPSIS of previous chapters: Reginald Pitt, Dick Goodwin, Solomon Levi and Sir Montie Tregellis-West are on Bannington Moor. A storm is raging. A man dressed like a convict is taken into a cottage by three strangers. Nipper joins the juniors, and they get on the roof of the cottage, which collapses. They find the convict on a couch, but the three strangers have vanished. The convict declares that he is Lord Clinkerstone, and that he was dragged from his car by the real convict, who made him change clothes. Just then the paraffin lamp explodes and the cottage bursts into flames. (Now read on.)

THIRD INSTALMENT.

By Solomon Levi.

BELIEVE me, the situation was terrible. Lord Clinkerstone was in the cottage, and the flames were shooting up on every side—battling against the snowflakes which beat down. It was a fight of the elements.

But Nipper was not to be beaten.

"By my life!" he shouted. "We can't leave the poor old man in there, to burn to atoms! We've got to rescue him!"

And, with one accord, we fought our way through the snow, which already lay piled up in great drifts. Providence, however, solved the difficulty for us. Fate took the matter out of our hands.

The snow hissed down with appalling force. The flakes whirled about, driven by the wind across the moor. And so thickly did they come that the fire was extinguished almost before it had got a hold. And then, before we could do anything, the gale sprang into a terrible fury.

Tregellis-West was lifted off his feet, and flung down in the snow. I clung to Pitt, and then the snow was lifted from the ground by the wind and hurled right over the cottage—until the building was buried.

"Well, this is a bit of a shemozzle, believe me!" roared Dick Goodwin. "We've got to dig Lord Clinkerstone out of the snow now!"

"By my life, you're right!" gasped Sir Montie. "Come on, chaps!"

We fought our way through the snow. The wind howled, and the lightning flashed. And the deep roll of the thunder was drowned by the roar of the wind. Fighting like mad, we fought our way through the snow. And, at last, we succeeded in hauling Lord Clinkerstone out into the open. The poor old fellow was now half-dead, for he had suffered burns, and was practically frozen.

And again those three men surrounded us, and each one was holding a revolver.

"Hands up, you lozers!" shouted the leader. "Give Lord Clinkerstone to us, or we'll make nothing of you and scatter you in pieces over the moor! Make haste, you young rogues!"

And before we could do anything, Lord Clinkerstone was wrenched out of our grasp, and tossed into the car. Then it whirled away over the moor, until the red rear light could no longer be seen. Believe me, it was swift.

The storm closed down like something solid. The snowflakes hissed, the wind howled, and we clung together for warmth, Tregellis-West shivered.

"My luck! I'm hungry!" exclaimed Montie.

"You fresser—you glutton!" shouted Nipper. "There's no food now. Perhaps you would like me to sit down and make you some gefilter fish? Ah, you make me tired! We've got to get on the trail!"

And Nipper whipped out an electric torch and flashed it on the ground. Then he gave a violent start, and looked at us, quivering with excitement.

"See!" he cried. "The oil-tank of the car is leaking, and a clear trail is left in the snow. Come! We're going on the track now!"

And into the wild night we went. But, believe me, our adventures were not over!

(To be continued.)



THINGS THAT MAKE ME CHEERFUL**By Josh Cuttle.****Mr. Josh Cuttle.**

I Was Happy When Things Was Going Wrong. Why was I happy when things was going wrong? Because that was the time to be happy!

When everything was smooth, and the work was going even, and there was no trouble, that was a time to be miserable. Why? Because there was nothing to make a

man forget his work. And when a man don't forget his work he was miserable. Work was thought of to make a man unhappy. Work was bad.

There was many things that make me happy and cheerful.

There was a railway accident. In my weekly newspaper I was reading about it, and I was cheerful. The accident was in foreign parts, and the details was harrowing to ordinary people—but to me they was joyful. Why was they joyful? Because they was making me forget my surroundings.

I was thrilling with happiness when I read what happened to the people who was imprisoned in the coach what fell down the embankment and burst into flames. I was joyful when I read how many poor souls were drowned in the other carriage that fell into the river.

And then, quite suddenly, I was sad.

Why was I sad? Ask me! Because I wasn't there to see it. My happiness would have been great if I could have been on the spot. For things as was like that make me smile. Horrible things must happen before I smiled. Smiling was only for them what was light-hearted. I was not light-hearted.

I was also happy when I read of murders. Murders was good for making people feel joyful. Why was they good? Ask me! Because murders makes good reading in the newspapers, and fills up lots of columns.

I was not the only man who was happy when there was murders.

There was others who was happy.

There was editors, and there was reporters, and there was Scotland Yard detectives. They was all happy when a murder was committed. Why was they happy? Ask me! Because it was their job. Without murders newspapers was no good. Without murders detectives was out of work. Therefore, murders was good.

The other night there was a gale, and I was cheerful.

Why was I cheerful? Ask me! Because my thoughts was busy—because I pictured what was happening on the high seas.

There was I, sitting before my cosy fire, smoking and thinking—and smiling. For that was something to make me smile. Sitting there, listening to the howl of the gale, and knowing what was happening on the sea. And I was right. For awful things took place that night—things as was good to hear of.

There was a schooner wrecked on Shingle Head, near Caistowe, and there was many lives lost. But there was one bad report—the captain was saved. Why was that bad? Ask me! Because it was wrong for the captain to be saved. It was right for the captain to die with all the others.

And on that night there was a big steamer in difficulties out in the roads. And the Caistowe lifeboat was sent out, and all the men was froze up with cold. But there was no loss of life—and that made me gloomy again.

There was other things that make me cheerful.

What other things make me cheerful? Ask me! I was cheerful when a boy was hauled up before the Head to be flogged. Boys was better for a flogging. A flogging was good for boys. I was cheerful when the Head was angry and sacked one of the gardeners. Why was I cheerful? Because the gardener was out of work.

There was all sorts of things to make a man feel happy in this life!

(Mr. Cuttle has offered to write another article entitled:—"How to be Happy though Miserable." I think I had better leave it until after Xmas, anyway.—Ed.)

BLACK JACK, THE FEARLESS

A Tale of Pirates and Buccaneers and the Spanish Main.

By Edward Oswald Handforth.

CHAPTER I.

THE SIGN OF THE SKULL AND CROSS-BONES!

BLACK JACK, the Fearless, stood upon the poop of his pirate craft and gazed at his swashbuckling crew. A villainous set they were, dressed in rags, and each carrying knives and cutlasses in their belts.

"Stir your stumps, durn ye!" he bellowed. "Avast there! There's work to be done—there's heads to be smashed!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" shouted the crew.

They were loyal to a man. There was not a single member of that cutthroat gang who would not have laid down his life for Black Jack. Pirate he was, but he had a heart of gold—as will be seen as our narrative progresses.

Black Jack took out his telescope and gazed across the heaving sea to a craft that was sailing along serenely in the sunshine. It was a goodly craft, with all sails set, and she was making a smart pace. The pirate's eyes glittered evilly as he snapped his telescope closed, and spat over the side.

"Yo ho, my hearties!" he roared. "'Tis the mail boat, as I live! There'll be rich booty aboard that craft, or I'm a slabsided lubber. Stir your stumps, durn ye, or I'll have ye clapped in irons!"

Boom!

The cannon on the forepeak of the pirate craft spoke with its mighty voice, and a ball went hurtling away and crashed into the bows of the mail boat. She shivered from stem to stern and began to settle down by the head.

"An extra ration of grog ye'll get, my hearty!" roared Black Jack, to the gunner. "Up the lines, ye scum!"

The crew fled up into the rigging, and all sails were set. And, rapidly, the pirate ship bore down upon the helpless victim. But the mail boat was not defenceless. Guns boomed forth, and one shot came hurtling aboard the pirate vessel.

"Curses!" snarled Black Jack.

Five men were mown down, and the decks swam with gore. And as the cannon-ball hurtled on it sliced away Black Jack's right hand, for the pirate captain had been holding it outstretched.

"Avast there!" he bellowed. "Think ye I care?"

In a thrice he whipped out a kerchief and bound up the gaping wound. And with a curse he kicked his severed hand into the scuppers. It was his right hand, but what cared he? Black Jack was brave, and felt no pain.

And then the two vessels were alongside, and the fight was raging fiercely. The cut-throat crew of the pirate craft surged on board the enemy. Men were mown down like flies.

And Black Jack was prominent above all.

"Well done, my hearties!" he shouted, when all was over. "The mail boat is ours, and we have a rich prize. Get a move on, ye scum! Man the rigging, and set the sails! I'll have a whole fleet under my command ere long!"

And soon both ships were sailing serenely along, looking for further prey. And down in the cabin, Black Jack was swilling himself with grog.

And just then a mighty crash sounded.

Black Jack went on deck, and cursed with mighty curses. For there, within sight, came a string of warships.

"Ye marrowless lubbers!" he roared. "Think ye I care? It's a fight—and we'll be the winners, or I'm a cross-eyed lobster!"

(The battle raged, and Black Jack and his men were all killed. That's the rest of the story, condensed into twelve words. Space forbids setting it forth as the masterly author penned it—for it would have taken up about ten full issues of the Mag. Personally, we consider that one page is enough!—Ed.)



Black Jack.

Things We Should Like To Know

Why Owen Minor and Heath and Lemon were looking seedy the other day?

What McClure said when Handforth upset a cup of tea in his lap?

Whether an earthquake happened in Study D immediately afterwards?

The reason for the whole passage shaking?

How much plaster fell?

How much crockery Handforth & Co. had to borrow the next day?

Whether they had to leave a deposit on it?

And how long the borrowed crockery will last?

What Mr. Crowell thought when he found a tack on his chair?

What were the nature of his remarks?
Who put it there?
And why it couldn't have been done in the Form Room, instead of Mr. Crowell's study?

Whether the culprit will ever be discovered?

Why Josh Cuttle, the porter, has recently been looking happy?

Whether any of his relations have died?

Whether the unhappy drowning tragedy at Bannington affected him in this way?

How many tragedies would be necessary to make him laugh outright?

Whether there is a vacancy in a certain establishment, with a high surrounding wall and barred windows and padded cells?

Whether a certain fellow whose initials are T. T. is eligible?

How many readers are fed up with this twaddle?

And whether they'd like some more next week?

Who's Who at St. Frank's

STUDY C—continued.

THOMAS WATSON.—Better known to St. Frank's in general as "Tommy." Nipper's other chum, and an intimate pal of Tregellis-West before Nipper came to the school. Watson presents a marked contrast to his study mates. Nipper is obviously a born leader, and even Sir Montie could do something in that line if the necessity arose. But Tommy Watson is unimaginative, with no capacity for leadership. He is a splendid follower, and ready to back Nipper up blindly and loyally, and without question. Lack of imagination makes it unsuitable for him to be placed in a position of command. With regard to his other points, Tommy is as typical a British schoolboy as anybody in the Remove; being hot stuff at footer and capable in all healthy sports. He is stubborn, rather pig-headed, and just a little dense. But he is one of the best, for all that. The yarn in which he figured most prominently was "The Mystery of The Unstamped Letter," in which his uncle, Mr. Benjamin Watson, paid a visit to St. Frank's. Tommy is fifteen-and-a-half, weighs about nine stone, and is five-feet-five-and-half inches in height. He has dark-brown hair and grey eyes.

STUDY D:—

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH.—Is the only son of Sir Edward Handforth, K.B.E., a well-known figure in the City. Edward Oswald has an exaggerated opinion of himself, arising out of too much cocksureness rather than swelled head. To say that he is impulsive

would be charitable, but not nearly so truthful as to say that he is so headstrong, and possesses such a volcanic temper as to be a constant danger to himself and his chums. Physically, he is robust and the owner of a pair of formidable fists, that are brought into play perhaps a little too often for the comfort of his study chums. Of good looks, to be quite candid, he hasn't any. Brute strength he has in abundance, but being proportionately clumsy and his other failings considered, he is apt to be disappointing at sport with the one exception of goal-keeping. Here, it would seem, that his natural ability to get in the way stands him in good stead. To those who do not know Handy, it might be assumed from the foregoing that he is something of a rotter, and not very popular at St. Frank's. This is quite the contrary, however, for Edward Oswald is really one of the best and a thorough sportsman at heart. Handforth appears in Nipper's earliest recorded adventures of St. Frank's. We find his name first mentioned in No. 112 of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. Since then he has become almost as widely known as Charlie Chaplin. At all events, he appears more frequently than the celebrated film comedian. Once he was expelled from St. Frank's in disgrace, but it was afterwards proved—thanks to Nelson Lee—that there had been a miscarriage of justice and Handforth returned to St. Frank's like a hero. He has tried his hand at many things, but generally with lamentable results. Yet he is never discouraged, nor loses faith in his estimation of his abilities. As a born leader and a brilliant detective, he particularly fancies himself, and many are the escapades and false clues upon which he has led—and will lead—his trusty chums, Church and McClure, who, for once in a way, are separated from their leader. However, out of regard for their feelings, space has been found for them in this number, on the Editorial Page.

(Continued from page 20.)

saw that Nelson Lee was now standing upon the platform.

Nobody had made his exit, so far, from the hall, although many members of the Sixth had succeeded in getting to the door. But they came to a halt now. Nelson Lee was looking grim and determined.

"Come, boys, this sort of thing won't do!" exclaimed the gov'nor sharply. "Have you taken leave of your senses? Have you lost all idea of authority and obedience? Go back to your places this instant!"

The words in themselves had exactly the same meaning as the words Dr. Stafford had uttered. But to ignore them was impossible. There was something about Nelson Lee's tone which made every junior and senior hesitate. And, having hesitated, they were lost. The one-minute rebellion was over.

Everybody went back to his place. There was perfect silence in Big Hall, and all eyes were turned upon Nelson Lee's grim, determined face.

"I am very glad to see that you have not entirely lost your wits!" said the famous detective coldly. "What manner of behaviour is this—that you should all openly ignore your Headmaster's orders? I am surprised—astounded—that you should so far forget yourselves. The junior element I can excuse—but for the senior, there is no justification."

"We're not going to see Fenton sacked, sir!" shouted Bryant.

"It is not your place to question any action of Dr. Stafford's!" retorted Nelson Lee curtly. "Upon my soul! Have you boys no more sense than to act in this way? Don't you know what such an affair might lead to? You are all aware that Dr. Stafford is not himself this afternoon. That being so, you ought to realise that it is your duty to be patient."

"But what about Fenton, sir?" asked Handforth.

"Fenton will leave St. Frank's if the Headmaster so orders it," said Nelson Lee.

"Oh!"

"However, I have every reason to believe that Dr. Stafford will think better of his hasty decision," went on Nelson Lee calmly. "In fact, boys, you can take it as quite certain that Fenton will not be expelled."

"Hurrah!"

"If you would only exercise patience, this kind of trouble would not come about," continued the gov'nor. "However, it is impossible to allow you to act as you choose. Under any circumstances, discipline must be maintained. You will all dismiss, and refrain from creating any disturbances."

"What about football, sir?"

"There will be no football this afternoon!" replied Lee curtly.

"No football, sir!"

"But we're in the middle of a game, sir!" shouted Christine.

"We must finish it, sir!"

"Oh, you must?" snapped Nelson Lee. "We will see about that! You have all heard Dr. Stafford's decision—there is to be no football! If I find any boys playing the game I shall punish them severely. The playing fields for the remainder of the day are out of bounds!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"He's as bad as the Head!"

"A jolly sight worse!" shouted Armstrong.

"Come, boys, what have I just been telling you?" exclaimed Nelson Lee sharply. "Control yourselves—and let me hear no more of these rebellious interruptions. You may be quite sure that I shall do my very best to persuade Dr. Stafford to think better of his decision regarding football. However, at the moment it would be futile to bother the Head on such a subject. So have patience, and maintain order. I am hoping there will be good news for you to-morrow. You may dismiss."

The school crowded out of Big Hall. The rebellion was quelled—nipped in the bud. Nelson Lee had stepped in just in the nick of time, and a disaster had been averted.

But Nelson Lee's popularity had ebbed away like an outgoing tide!

CHAPTER VI,

FINGER-PRINTS!

"COME in!"

Nelson Lee called out somewhat impatiently in response to my knock.

I entered his study, and found the gov'nor lying back in an easy chair, toasting his feet before the fire. He ap-

peared to be in a lazy attitude, and he was evidently taking things easily. But I knew at once that Nelson Lee was hard at work—with his brain.

I closed the door behind me, and advanced into the room. Everything was fairly quiet now, and the majority of the fellows had cooled down after the excitement of the afternoon. It was evening, and Tregellis-West and Watson and I had only just finished tea in Study C.

"Well, Nipper, what do you want?" asked Lee quietly.

"I want to have a jaw with you, sir," I replied, sitting on a corner of the desk.

"I presume you mean that you have come for a little chat?" said Nelson Lee. "As a matter of fact, Nipper, I am not exactly in the mood for a chat just now. However, since you are here, I don't quite like to send you away. I have been thinking deeply, and there has been quite a lot to engage my thoughts."

I nodded.

"So I should imagine, guv'nor," I said. "My hat! Things seem to be going wrong with a vengeance now! The fellows are talking against you like one o'clock!"

"Let them talk!"

"You're losing your popularity, sir—"

"My dear Nipper, duty is far more important than popularity," interrupted Nelson Lee quietly. "It is my duty to stand by Dr. Stafford, and the school—and I am doing it. No matter how things look—no matter how appearances may seem—I am determined to stand by the Head all the time."

I frowned.

"That's just the trouble, sir," I said. "All the chaps misunderstand you—they're saying that you're just as bad as the Head himself, and that you're turning into a tyrant. It's—it's awful! I'm getting quite scared, sir. A week or two ago you were tremendously popular with everybody, and now, they're all jawing against you!"

Nelson Lee smiled somewhat amusedly.

"I am not appalled by the present state of affairs, young 'un," he observed. "It is a pity, no doubt, but, given time, things will right themselves. These hasty juniors will realise that the Headmaster is a much injured man, and that

he's the victim of a particularly dastardly plot."

"My goodness!" I said. "Is that really the case, sir?"

"It is!"

"Well, I suspected something of the kind, but I'm all in the dark," I said. "The chaps will be sorry later on, of course—when they understand that the Head hasn't been able to help himself. And your popularity will return when it becomes known that you have been on the track of this plot. Just now you're about as popular as a fox in a chicken-run! Mr. Trenton is the new star in the firmament. All the fellows are buzzing about him like flies—they think he's as sweet as a jam pot!"

Lee smiled again.

"My good Nipper, if you imagine that you are imparting some news, pray let me disillusion you," he said drily. "I am well aware of the fact that I am no longer a person of much importance at St. Frank's. I am now regarded as the Headmaster's ally—I am a tyrant and a disciplinarian. And our worthy science master, Mr. Trenton, is busily receiving all the bouquets."

"It's rotten, guv'nor," I protested.

"From your point of view it may be unfortunate, but I have no time to think of such trifles," said Nelson Lee. "After all, my popularity is of small importance. The Headmaster's exhibition to-day was deplorable—the worst attack he has yet had. It was only by prompt measures that I averted an open rebellion!"

"Yes, and I'm afraid that things will go from bad to worse unless the Head alters," I said gravely. "Awful things are being said in the Remove—and in the Fifth and Sixth, too! Seniors as well as juniors are talking about a revolt!"

"So long as they only talk about it, Nipper, no harm will be done," said the guv'nor smoothly. "And boys are very fond of talking about things they have no intention of doing. Let them talk—if it eases their minds. But they mustn't talk in my hearing—I will not listen to any disloyalty to Dr. Stafford."

"But, hang it all, sir, you can't blame them!" I said. "The Head's been shocking of late—and it's no wonder that the chaps are backing up against it. How is he now—the Head, I mean?"

"Dr. Stafford retired to his own rooms—although I'll admit that I had some little difficulty in persuading him," said Nelson Lee. "At the moment he is sleeping, I think—and it will do him good. When he wakes up, later on, he will be more like himself, and will intensely regret his drastic orders of the afternoon."

I scratched my head.

"It's a mystery to me, guv'nor," I said. "All sorts of things seem to be happening, and the Head's making the situation worse by changing into a bully. Is it absolutely a fact that he can't help himself?"

"Dr. Stafford is not the kind of man to have these attacks naturally," replied Nelson Lee. "I can tell you quite candidly, Nipper, that some enemy is working against our unfortunate Headmaster—a hidden, secret enemy who possesses extraordinary powers. I cannot go into any details now."

"Just like you, guv'nor," I grunted. "You'll find out all sorts of things, but you won't let me into the secret. What about that silver disc? Don't you remember that a burglar chap left a peculiar silver disc behind as he was escaping? Mr. Trenton saw it, and seemed startled——"

"Precisely, Nipper," interrupted Nelson Lee. "The disc was stolen before I could examine it—a singularly unfortunate circumstance. However, I am convinced that this silver disc is the emblem of a certain gang, or society."

"Then there's more than one man against the Head?"

"There are several men in this band," said Nelson Lee. "So far I have only been able to make certain of one—but, fortunately, this one is the prime mover in the whole business. I have my eyes well on him, Nipper, and it will only be a matter of time before I have my case complete. But the affair is of such a character that it is quite impossible for me to act decisively at the moment. It is a game of patience, and I must await my opportunity."

"Are these men really dangerous, sir?" I asked, fumbling in the dark.

"Dangerous—and deadly!" replied Nelson Lee. "It may interest you to know, Nipper, that my life was attempted two or three nights ago. I haven't told you of it, hitherto, because the necessity did not arise. It hasn't

arisen now, but as you seem so interested in the whole case I am inclined to take you into my confidence."

I jumped down off the edge of the table.

"That's the way to talk, guv'nor!" I said briskly. "That's what I like to hear! And you say that your life was attempted? Great Scott! And I knew nothing about it! What happened, sir?"

"Nothing much—but my decease would have been a matter of certainty if I had not chanced to sit up late before the fire in my bedroom," replied the guv'nor calmly. "A gentleman with a large knife visited me, and performed some really destructive efforts upon my bedclothes. Had I been between the sheets at the time I should have had no opportunity to defend myself. As it was I overpowered my ferocious visitor and he escaped."

"Didn't you attempt to follow him?"

"Such a course was unnecessary, since I discovered the identity of my visitor," replied Nelson Lee. "I merely caught one glimpse, but that was sufficient. To make quite sure, I made some photographic studies of his finger-prints—for future use. One must always think in advance, Nipper."

"Oh, you've got his finger-prints, have you?" I said, with interest.

"Whose are they, sir?"

"That I cannot tell you just now," replied the great detective. "However, it may interest you to know that I have since obtained a second set of prints, and these correspond in every detail with the others. Yes, Nipper, I am getting my man firmly enmeshed in the net. But it would be foolish to draw my net in just yet, for I wish to make a bigger catch."

"Oh, you always talk in riddles!" I grunted. "You never will let me into the know, guv'nor. You've been taking finger-prints, and escaping death by inches, and goodness knows what else! These people seem to be pretty desperate—and they're working against Dr. Stafford. What's the idea?"

"It is quite a simple one—to drive the Head from St. Frank's."

"But why?"

"What a youngster you are for questions, Nipper," smiled Nelson Lee. "I cannot tell you the precise reason for this attempt to drive Dr. Stafford from the school. But, as you must know, it is a

particularly cunning attempt—since the plotters are causing Dr. Stafford to bring about his own undoing. I can tell you positively that the Head is not responsible for his present harshness. When in these moods he is under some evil influence."

"Yes, but what influence?" I persisted.

"Think, my dear lad—think!" said Nelson Lee. "You must know that it is not hypnotism, and it is certainly not poison. Dr. Stafford is in a perfect state of health, and his mental balance is even. Have you formed any opinion as to the chief culprit?"

"Rather!" I replied promptly. "He's Mr. Trenton!"

Nelson Lee raised his eyebrows.

"Oh, indeed!" he said. "You wasted no time in answering, Nipper? Why do you assume that Mr. Trenton is responsible?"

"Because he's a sly beast," I replied. "He's a cunning, oily rotter! Ever since the first minute I saw him, I've detested him more and more! I don't know why it is, guv'nor, but I distrust him—I instinctively know that he's no good."

"Well, your judgment has always been very sound," said Nelson Lee approvingly. "We will be frank, Nipper. Mr. Hugh Trenton is deeply involved in this mysterious case. I am giving you no information by saying that—since you have already guessed it."

"And the blighter has got the whole Remove by the ears!" I growled disgustingly. "The other Forms, too! Nine chaps out of ten think he's a good sort—they're as blind as bats! They simply look on the surface, and don't see underneath!"

"That is generally the way," said Lee. "You must remember, Nipper, that we are different to most people. We have had a great deal of experience of criminals, and we are thus able to discriminate. The majority of the boys at St. Frank's are quite unsophisticated in such matters. Mr. Trenton makes himself pleasant and genial, and is always sympathetic. Therefore he is voted to be a good fellow. It's just the way of the world, my lad."

"Yes, I suppose it is," I agreed. "Thank goodness we can see a bit further than our noses, sir! But why is Mr. Trenton working against the Head?"

"As I told you before, I don't know."

"How does he make the Head go off into these strange attacks of savagery?"

"Again you have floored me, Nipper," said Nelson Lee. "That, indeed, is the most mystifying point in all these mysterious circumstances. How does Mr. Trenton change Dr. Stafford's character, how does he turn him from a kindly man into a brutal tyrant? That is a perplexing question, and I would give much to know the answer. However, I am working hard—secretly for the most part—and when I have discovered the actual truth I shall be in a better position to take action."

"It's a queer business, guv'nor," I said thoughtfully. "I wish all the fellows could understand it as we do. They're groping in the dark, and they've got a totally wrong idea of the whole thing. If the Head has many more of his strange fits, the whole school will be in a state of revolt."

Nelson Lee leaned forward.

"A revolt would be disastrous," he said. "If a certain section of the boys rebelled against the Headmaster it would not be so bad—but for the whole school to turn against him would be a tragedy. It would mean success to the enemy—and that is just what I am fighting to avoid."

"How do you mean, sir?"

"I mean that if the school turns against the Head, only one thing can result," replied Nelson Lee quietly. "Dr. Stafford will be compelled to send in his resignation, and Mr. Trenton will be triumphant. At all costs that must be avoided. And there is a way in which you can help me in my fight, Nipper."

"Good!" I said keenly. "Let me hear what it is, guv'nor."

"I am afraid it will be difficult, and you will be misunderstood," said Lee. "But I want you to stick up for Dr. Stafford on any and every occasion. No matter what excesses of tyranny he performs, I want you to talk in his favour. Not only this, but it is most important that you should get as many supporters as possible—the whole Remove, if it can be managed."

"I'm afraid that's out of the question, sir," I said. "Quite a number of the chaps are bitter already, and they won't listen to reason. They're as much

against you as they are against the Head."

"Very well—gather your forces together," smiled Lee. "Get your chums to trust in Dr. Stafford, and get them to trust in me. Your efforts in this direction will be of incalculable service. If you can only get the Remove to back you up, and remain staunch, we will defeat the wiles of our enemies."

I thrust out my hand.

"Guv'nor, it's a go!" I said keenly. "I'll do it!"

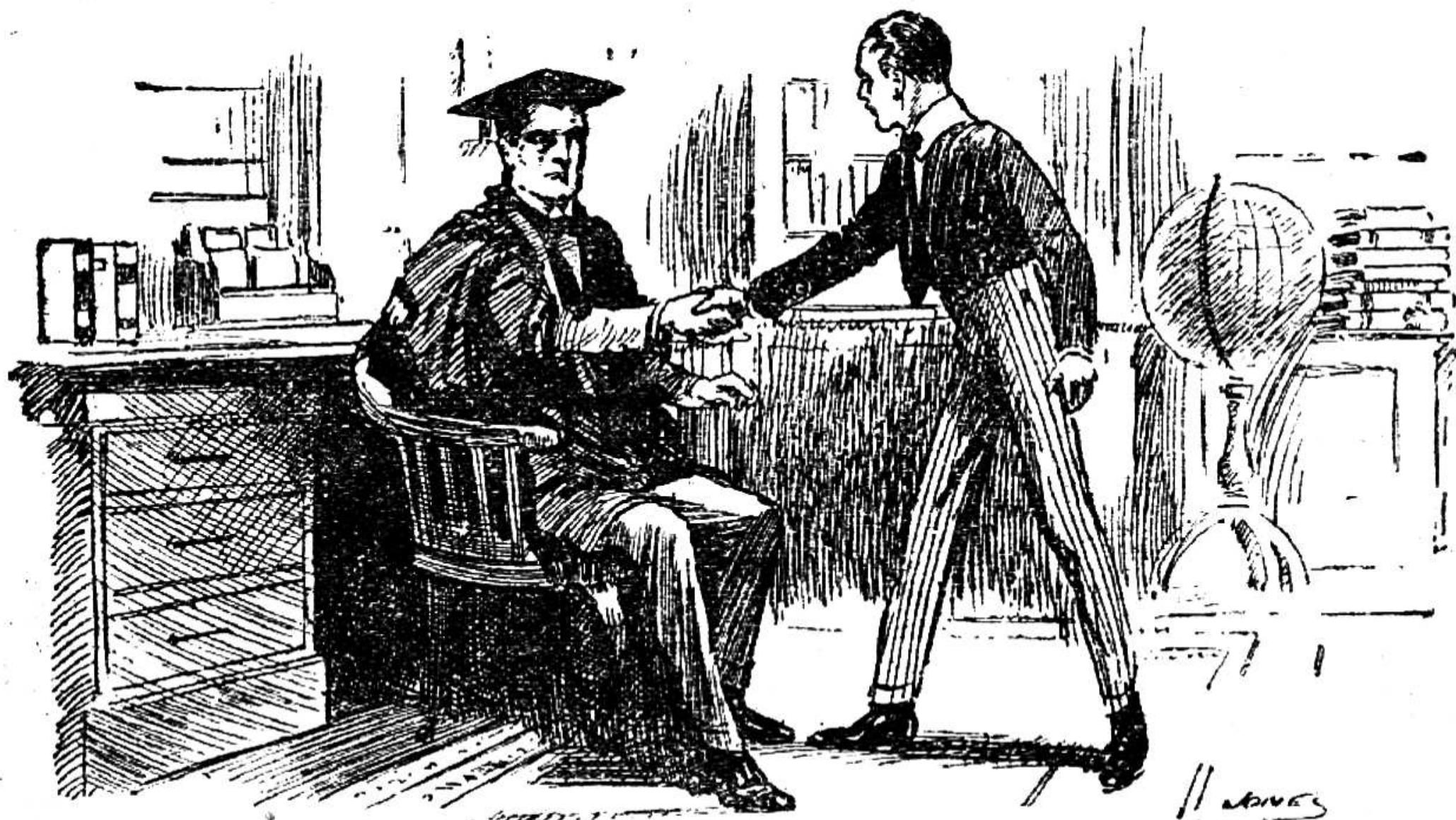
And we shook hands on it.

you were slack this evening. I won't disturb you——"

"Thank you," said Nelson Lee politely.

He nodded, and continued with his work, knowing quite well that Mr. Trenton would not go away so easily. The detective was right.

"As a matter of fact, I'm just taking a stroll in the village," said the science master. "If you weren't busy, Mr. Lee, I was going to ask you to come along with me. I always enjoy intellectual company."



"Guv'nor, it's a go!" I said keenly. "I'll do it!" And we shook hands on it.

CHAPTER VII.

DANGER!

NELSON LEE sat in the easy chair before the fire for some little time after I had left him. But he had certain matters dealing with his school duties to attend to, and at length he sat down at his desk.

He had hardly commenced work, however, before a crisp rap sounded upon the door.

"Come in!" said Nelson Lee, without pausing in his writing.

The door opened, and admitted Mr. Hugh Trenton, the science master.

"Oh, busy?" said Mr. Trenton, as he stepped in. "Sorry, Mr. Lee—I thought

Nelson Lee smiled.

"As a matter of fact, I had intended visiting the post-office a little later on," he said. "If it would please you at all, Mr. Trenton, I will come at once."

The science master looked eager and almost relieved.

"Oh, good!" he said, rather too promptly. "That'll be splendid, Mr. Lee. I shall quite enjoy a chat as we go down the lane."

Nelson Lee promised to be in the Ancient House Lobby within five minutes, where Mr. Trenton would be waiting. And the detective wondered what particular game this was that the science master was playing. Why was he so anxious that Nelson Lee should accompany him to the village—for a

stroll? Lee felt sure that there was more in it than appeared on the surface, and he did not wish to miss the opportunity. He realised, at the same time, that there might be an element of danger in accompanying Mr. Trenton. But danger was rather to Nelson Lee's liking.

He found Mr. Trenton waiting, and the pair of them sallied off across the Triangle, and made their way through the gates. It was comparatively early in the evening, although, of course, pitchy dark. It had set in cold, with thick clouds overhead, and with a blustery wind blowing—an east wind, which cut through one bitingly. There was no moon, and the blackness out in the lane was intense.

Both Nelson Lee and Mr. Trenton were well wrapped up, and they set off at a brisk pace towards the village. Lee was on his guard, and quite ready for any emergency that might arise. He hardly suspected, however, that Mr. Trenton would attempt any trickery single-handed.

"Another little breeze to-day, Mr. Lee," said the science master briskly, "I'm afraid our respected Headmaster is making some trouble for himself. Unless he greatly alters he will find that he is losing the sympathy of his scholars."

"Yes, Dr. Stafford's behaviour this afternoon was deplorable," said Nelson Lee. "However, if he reverts to his old self again, not much harm will be done. Let us hope that everything will be all right."

Mr. Trenton shook his head.

"I'm afraid that we can't rely on that," he said. "The Headmaster seems to have altered his character of late. When I first came he was almost a different man. And I greatly fear that he will grow worse, rather than improve."

"What reason have you for thinking that?"

"Oh, no reason—no reason at all!" said Mr. Trenton hurriedly. "But I am merely making an assumption. He has been gradually getting worse all the time, and it seems only reasonable that the process should go on. I wonder what can be the cause of it?"

"It is very difficult to say," replied Lee.

"Have you no theory of your own?"

"What theory can one have?" said Nelson Lee lightly. "It seems only too obvious, Trenton, that Dr. Stafford has

been successful hitherto in concealing his own character. And now, for some reason best known to himself, he is breaking out with glimpses of his real self. It is most unfortunate."

"My idea is exactly the same as yours, Mr. Lee," said the science master. "And this case is not the first, I believe. Many men in other walks of life have possessed a reputation for being kindly and generous. And then, owing to some financial crash, or family worries, perhaps, they have altered their characters. They have been no longer capable of keeping themselves under control. It seems to be so in Dr. Stafford's case. What a great pity—for, normally, he is such a nice old chap!"

Mr. Trenton seemed very anxious that Nelson Lee should know that his own opinion coincided with the detective's. And Lee also noted a tinge of relief in Mr. Trenton's tone. Perhaps he was glad to find out that Nelson Lee did not suspect that any outside influence was at work. Perhaps the science master would not have been quite so comfortable if he had known the full extent of Nelson Lee's thoughts!

They had almost covered half the distance to the village. The lane still continued to be very dark and deserted. On one side rose the great, inky mass of Bellton Wood, and on the other side the meadows stretched away down into the shallow Stowe Valley. Not a light was to be seen on either side, for there were no cottages hereabouts. Just ahead, however, two brilliant headlamps gleamed out. A motor-car was evidently standing there.

"Somebody in trouble, it seems," remarked Mr. Trenton. "Motoring is quite delightful while everything goes well, but it becomes hateful when there is engine trouble or a puncture, or some such calamity as that."

"Well, there is plenty of help to be obtained quite near by," remarked Lee. "The blacksmith at the end of the village claims to be a motor mechanic in addition—rather a heavy-fisted one, perhaps—and he always keeps a stock of petrol and oil."

By this time the pair had drawn nearly level with the stationary car. They had both been revealed in the glare from the headlamps. And now they were just beyond the range of the dazzling lights.

Nelson Lee took the scene in swiftly.

Vaguely he suspected something. Why, he did not know, for there was surely nothing wrong here. Merely a motorist in a little trouble. The driver was the solitary occupant of the car, which was a big closed landaulette. The driver was bending over the running board, examining his tool-kit.

And then, just as Nelson Lee and Mr. Trenton were passing, the man swung round—swiftly, grimly.

The movement was not altogether unexpected to Nelson Lee, for the great detective had been prepared, in a measure, for something of a dramatic nature. But he did not show any sign that he was on his guard. On the contrary, he gave a gasp of startled amazement, and fell back.

It was impossible to recognise the driver. All was gloomy here, behind the head lamps, and, moreover, the man was wearing a peaked cap, which was pulled over his eyes, and big motoring goggles. His thick coat was turned up right over his chin.

And, even as he whirled round with a spanner raised aloft, two other men dashed out of the gloom of the hedge. Their presence there had been quite undetectable. The man with the spanner made a swift lunge at Nelson Lee. The latter dodged aside, uttering a little gasp of horror. There was certainly no reason for these men to think that Nelson Lee was really prepared.

As Lee dodged, he saw that Mr. Trenton was fighting fiercely with the other two men. It was short and dramatic. A heavy wooden stick was raised aloft—it whizzed down, and Mr. Trenton collapsed over on to the grass border with a low groan. He was out of the fight already.

And the two men who had attacked him hurled themselves at Nelson Lee from behind. A thick motoring rug was flung over the detective's head. And then, before he could even attempt to free himself, he was bundled headlong into the rear of the car.

The two men followed, and the driver hurled himself into a seat, started the engine with one vigorous shove of the self-starter, and then the car shot away. It fairly flew up the lane, past St. Frank's, and then on towards Bannington Moor.

Inside, Nelson Lee was still held.

The whole affair had been so swift and well-planned that Lee had had no chance to assert himself. And there was practically no possibility that the incident had been witnessed. Thus, in the early evening, the famous schoolmaster detective had been captured by his enemies and whisked away.

But things were not quite so bad as that.

With a swift, unexpected movement, Nelson Lee swung his arms round and threw the motoring rug aside, in spite of the efforts of his enemies to keep it over him. They had been attempting to encircle his body with ropes, but Lee acted before they could meet with any success.

"No, my friends, I don't think you've got me yet!" said Lee grimly.

"Hold him, man—hold him!" gasped a voice.

"I can't! I—I—"

"It is not quite such an easy task to hold me!" said Nelson Lee. "And now I should like to have a look at your faces!"

He already had an electric torch in his hand, and he managed to switch it on. But before he could catch a glimpse of the men, the torch was knocked out of his hand, and something hard was pressed against his side.

"Make another movement, and I'll shoot you!" exclaimed the man who had spoken first. "I've got a gun here, and I'll fire."

Nelson Lee laughed.

"No, I don't think you are quite so desperate as that," he said calmly. "Anyway, I'll take the chance."

With a big heave he stood upright. There was no report, and he was quite sure that neither of these men held a revolver. Swinging his fist round at random, he caught one of the fellows a beautiful crack on the jaw.

He went down with a howl.

The driver, knowing that something was wrong, applied his brakes and brought the car to a standstill. Nothing could have suited Lee's purpose better. He flung open the near-side door, and stepped out into the road. As he did so, he pulled out his revolver.

"Not quite a success, eh, my friends?" he said amusedly. "It usually takes more than two men to hold me. All right, driver, you can carry on. I don't mean to indulge in any fancy shooting,

and it would be too much trouble to hold you until the police could be informed. You can drive on!"

The driver hesitated, quite at a loss. "Drive on, you fool!" snapped one of the men behind. "We've lost him now!"

Nelson Lee chuckled with amusement as the landaulette glided away. It gathered speed, but Lee had not allowed it to go without noting the number. He jotted it down in his notebook.

"Quite a paltry attempt," he murmured, as he set off back for St. Frank's. "These gentlemen will have to show more ingenuity before they can hope to hold me!"

He walked briskly, and the affair had not upset him in the least. On the contrary, he was feeling pleased, for he now had a certain indication that he was fighting against a gang. Not only that, this incident was a clear proof that the enemy feared him, and desired to get him away from St. Frank's.

Lee had not been able to see his antagonists, but this point did not worry him. He could tell that they were well-educated men, and not hired ruffians. And he was quite sure that he would find an opportunity of meeting them in the future.

There was something very amateurish in the way that the kidnapping had been attempted. Nelson Lee had a shrewd idea that these men were not accustomed to such work; and he was quite certain that the men had been unarmed. The talk about a revolver had been mere bluff.

The strangers had relied upon superior numbers to win the day. They had thought that it would be a comparatively simple matter for them to hold Nelson Lee once they had him inside the closed car; and Lee chuckled as he neared St. Frank's.

"I'm afraid Mr. Trenton will be rather disappointed," he murmured. "It will be rather interesting to note the expression on his face when he sees me."

The detective was under no misapprehension.

He had not been deceived in the least by Mr. Trenton's little game. The science-master had known all about that waiting car, and he had requested Lee to accompany him to the village for the sole purpose of delivering the detective

into the hands of his confederates.

Of course, he had been compelled to make a show of innocence. Thus, he had been attacked himself, but had taken good care to collapse with a groan at the very outset of the tussle. There was no actual proof that Mr. Trenton was in any way connected with the attempted abduction; but Nelson Lee was not deceived.

He entered the Triangle by means of the masters' private gateway, and walked briskly towards the Ancient House. He was just mounting the steps when he paused, and a little gleam of amusement crept into his eyes.

Mr. Trenton was just in the lobby, talking with Mr. Crowell.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Crowell, but I haven't the faintest idea where Mr. Lee is," the science-master was saying. "I haven't seen him for some time. Possibly he is out at the moment."

"Quite so," said Mr. Crowell, nodding. "I'll wait until— Dear me! Here is Mr. Lee now!"

Mr. Trenton twirled round, and found himself face to face with Nelson Lee. His features went rigid, and his cheeks blanched. He stood there fixedly, as though turned to stone—but only for a second.

With an effort he controlled himself, and gave a soft, easy laugh. Mr. Crowell had noticed nothing out of the ordinary—but Nelson Lee had not missed that momentary flash of consternation.

"Just talking about you, Mr. Lee!" said the science-master smoothly.

"So I understand," replied Nelson Lee. "I'm not so very far away, after all."

Mr. Trenton, who had his back to Mr. Crowell, gave Lee a warning look.

"I was looking for you, Mr. Lee, as I wish to discuss a few points regarding the mathematics examination papers," said Mr. Crowell. "It is rather important—"

"Quite so, Mr. Crowell; and if you will be good enough to go along to my study, I'll join you in a minute," interrupted Nelson Lee. "I should just like to have a word with Mr. Trenton."

Mr. Crowell bowed, and departed.

"I say, Mr. Lee, I'm glad we're alone for a minute," exclaimed the science-master, as he glanced rapidly round. "I wanted to explain."

"Is any explanation necessary?" asked Nelson Lee calmly.

Mr. Trenton was vaguely aware of a slight mocking note in the other's voice.

"Well, you see, it must have sounded queer to you," he exclaimed. "I was telling Mr. Crowell that I hadn't seen you for some time. And, of course, that's hardly true, since we were both together out in the lane not twenty minutes ago."

Nelson Lee made no comment. Inwardly, he was smiling at the laboured nature of Mr. Trenton's explanation. It was rather surprising that the science-master was able to invent one at all.

"I'm awfully glad to see that you're all right," went on Mr. Trenton heartily. "I was terribly afraid that you were in trouble, Mr. Lee. Some old enemies of yours, I suppose, who seized the opportunity to capture you?"

"No, not old enemies," corrected Nelson Lee smoothly. "New enemies. Mr. Trenton—and singularly clumsy ones at that; in fact, I have seldom battled against such paltry foemen!"

Mr. Trenton bit his lip.

"I hardly knew what to do," he went on hurriedly. "I thought it possible that you might escape, and so I refrained from mentioning anything, as I knew that you would prefer to keep it quiet. On the other hand, if you did not turn up within half an hour, it was my intention to ring up the police, and inform them of the whole occurrence. I thought that would be best."

"Your deductions were singularly accurate, Mr. Trenton," observed Nelson Lee. "I am certainly glad that you mentioned nothing, for I am indeed anxious that this matter should be kept strictly between ourselves. By the way, you appear to have escaped quite lightly," he added, closely regarding Mr. Trenton's face.

"Yes. I—I was bowled over by a blow on the side of the head," said the science-master, tenderly rubbing his hair. "The brute caught me before I could defend myself, and when I struggled to my feet I found the car gliding away. It was too late to do anything, and—and—"

"Quite so, Mr. Trenton," interrupted Lee. "It is unnecessary for you to say anything further. I understand—perfectly!"

And the famous detective nodded, and

walked briskly away. Mr. Hugh Trenton stood looking after him, and a bitter look of hatred came into his eyes. He knew nothing for certain, but he had more than an idea that Nelson Lee was fully aware of the true position.

The science-master strode out into the Triangle.

"Paltry foemen!" he muttered grimly. "By Heaven, we will see!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE SPLIT!

TIMOTHY TUCKER looked round impressively.

"Comrades and fellow sufferers, I have a few words to say on a most important subject," he exclaimed, rubbing his hands together. "Quite so! The position is this, my dear sirs——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, T. T.!"

"Dear, dear, dear!" protested Tucker. "These interruptions are most deplorable. H'm! H'm! That is so! As you are all aware, Mr. Nelson Lee has drawn a portion of Dr. Stafford's mantle over his own shoulders. In other words—since I fear you may not comprehend such subtle similes—Mr. Leo has recently been showing signs of becoming a tyrant!"

"Good!"

"A tyrant—a slave-driver!" shouted Tucker. "Yes, my dear sirs, Mr. Lee's character is changing—and, mark you, it is changing for the worse! As I have repeatedly said, the time has arrived for us to rise in all our might. I urge you to become members of the Brotherhood of the Free——"

"Oh, turn off the gas!"

"Dry up!"

"We don't want any of your Brotherhood rot!" said Jack Grey. "We're free enough already——"

"Free!" exclaimed Tucker. "Really, my dear sir, you are absurd! I repeat it—absurd! What freedom do we possess? None—none whatsoever! We are slaves! We are driven like cattle——"

"Who stuck that fathead up there?" I demanded, as I entered the Common-room. "More treacherous talk against the Head! Tucker, if you don't dry up within ten seconds, I'll yank you off that chair by your long ears!"

"Really, my dear sir——"



Crash! Handforth's fist smote Fullwood on the chin, and the leader of Study A went sprawling.

"Tucker's right!" shouted Armstrong. "He may use flowery language, but there's commonsense behind it all! And it's true that Mr. Lee is a tyrant!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rats!"

"Go it, Armstrong!"

"Dry up!"

All sorts of shouts filled the Common-room, and I was rather relieved to hear that quite a number of fellows were opposed to Armstrong's view. I had just had a talk with Tregellis-West and Watson, after my visit to the gov'nor's study, and we had decided to commence operations without any delay.

Entering the Common-room, we found things in a somewhat lively state. I strode forward, and pushed Timothy Tucker off the chair on which he had been standing. He protested vigorously, but I ignored him.

"Now listen to me, you chaps," I said grimly. "We've got to have a complete understanding, one way or the other. There's going to be no more of this confusion—you've got to declare yourselves."

"What do you mean, you ass?"

"Well, at present things are all at sixes and sevens," I said. "Some of you are against the Head, and some against Nelson Lee, and others quite indifferent. That's got to alter. We're going to take a vote, and every fellow must give his opinion. Then we shall know exactly how we stand."

"Hear, hear!" said Tommy Watson.

"That's a good idea."

"Jolly good!" agreed Pitt. "But it's no good doing a thing by halves. We're not all here—"

"Exactly," I agreed. "That's why I'm going to get some of you fellows to run round and collect the rest. We're going to hold a Form meeting, and every fellow in the Remove must attend. It's a question of the highest importance."

"A Form meeting!"

"Oh, good!"

"Buck up, you chaps—buzz round!"

There was a shout of excitement at once, for a Form meeting was an occasion of the highest possible urgency. Now and again there would be an impromptu meeting, but a regular Form meeting was something quite different.

Under no circumstances was it possible for any fellow to beg an excuse; every single junior in the Remove had to attend, whether he wanted to or not. It was an unwritten law, and it was a law that had never been abused.

Pitt and Grey and many of the others hurried out of the Common-room at once. Griffith and Owen major, supported by three or four more, rushed across to the College House, for Christine and Co. were to be included in this. Although members of the rival House, they were, nevertheless, of the Remove. Their absence was not to be thought of.

And House rows at such a time as this were distinctly "off."

Quite a number of juniors had been anticipating something of this kind. With football banned—only temporarily, perhaps—and with many other matters of importance in the balance, a meeting of the whole Form was essential. But nobody exactly guessed what my real intentions were.

Pitt burst into Study F, and found all the occupants at home. Tom Burton was sprawling in front of the fire, reading; Conroy minor was peeling the

shells off hot roast chestnuts; and Jerry Dodd was poring over a map of Australia.

"Common-room," said Pitt crisply; "at once!"

"Eh?"

"What's that?"

"You've all got to go to the Common-room!"

"By jings! What for?" asked Jerry Dodd, looking up. "We're comfortable here, and I reckon we don't need to move—"

"Your reckoning is several points out of gear!" broke in Pitt. "There's a Form meeting on, and no excuse can be taken. You've got to attend, even if you have to be carried. Buck up!"

"Bust my mainmast!" exclaimed the Bo'sun, laying his book aside. "He's right, shipmates—we've got to attend. It's the skipper's orders, and we'd better hoist our anchors and set our course for port!"

And the three juniors left Study F, and made tracks for port—in other words, the Common-room.

Meanwhile, Grey had routed out Cecil de Valerie and the Duke of Somerton from Study M, and they had gone next door and gathered together the Hon. Douglas Singleton and Fatty Little—who happened to be in Study N, engaged in the fairly simple task of borrowing some cash. Singleton was always flush.

Solomon Levi and Dick Goodwin were just coming out of the end study, and by the time they had all gathered together in the common-room, Bob Christine and his followers were on hand.

The only absentees now, were Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell—the knuts of Study A—and Church. Church, as a matter of fact, was in Study A at that very moment. Fullwood and Co. were inclined to be obstinate.

They were enjoying a little game of cards, to say nothing of a cigarette or two, and they had no desire to shift.

"You can clear out," said Fullwood, pointing to the door. "We're not comin'!"

Church glared.

"Oh, ain't you?" he exclaimed. "We'll see about that! It's a Form meeting, and you can't miss it—"

"Are you willing to get out quietly, or shall we chuck you out?" asked Full-

wood. "You'd better understand, my son, that we're having nothing to do with this dashed Form meeting. We're too busy!"

"All right—don't blame me for what happens," said Church. "But you're coming, even if you have to be carried. It's more than likely that your votes will be required."

"Votes," repeated Gulliver, looking up. "What about?"

"I don't exactly know, but Nipper is taking a division of the Remove, or something—same as they do in the House of Commons," explained Church. "He wants to find out how many fellows are against Mr. Lee, and how many in favour of him."

Fullwood jumped up.

"Oh, that's different," he said. "We'll come along—we'll record our votes against Mr. Lee!"

"Rather!" said Gulliver and Bell.

Church grunted and left them. When he arrived back at the common-room he found that apartment filled almost to overflowing. Every inch of space was occupied, some of the fellows were sitting on the window-ledges. And quite a considerable din was being made.

"Those cads are coming along at once," said Church, as he entered. "They wouldn't budge until they heard that their votes were required. And you can be jolly certain which side they'll vote for."

I nodded.

"Of course," I said. "But it's just as well that they should be present in person. This meeting is going to decide things, once and for all. I'm fed-up with the whole position. If there are to be two camps, we'll have them established clearly and definitely. Then we shall know what we're doing."

Fullwood and Co. appeared within a minute or two, and Handforth met them.

"Just in time!" said Edward Oswald grimly.

"What do you mean—just in time?" asked Fullwood.

"Why, if you hadn't turned up, I was coming along to yank you here by your giddy ears," said Handforth. "You blessed cads! If you think you can stay away from a Form meeting, you're mistaken."

"Go and eat coke!" said Fullwood politely.

Crash!

Handforth's fist smote Fullwood on the chin, and the leader of Study A went sprawling into the arms of his chums.

"Yaroo!" he howled. "You—you—"

"Now then, Handy—no scrapping now," I said grimly. "And if there wasn't so much noise in the room we could get on better. Order—order! Can't you chaps ease up a little?"

"Silence!" roared Handforth.

Order was obtained after a little trouble.

"Now, who's going to do the gas-sing?" demanded Pitt, looking round.

"This promises to be interesting. A Form meeting is always attractive—and I suppose it'll end up, as usual, in several free fights. I'm the Chairman of the meeting, and I call upon—"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "I'm Chairman!"

"For goodness' sake, don't argue about it!" I snapped. "Let him be Chairman. Pitt—or we shall never get any peace."

"Just as you like!" grinned Reginald Pitt. "Go ahead!"

"If anybody interrupts, he'll get a punch on the nose!" roared the Chairman, glaring round. "Understand, I don't allow any interruptions. This meeting has been called together for the purpose of—of— Well, Nipper knows what it's been called together for. I have much pleasure in requesting him to make a speech. Of course, I shall address the meeting afterwards, and I want to say at once that—"

"Order!"

"Dry up, you ass!"

"You're only the Chairman!"

"Why, you rotters, I mean to speak for half-an-hour!" snorted Handforth. "I've got all sorts of things to say, and now's my chance to get them off my chest. I call for silence—"

Handforth may have called silence, but he only obtained wild catcalls and energetic interruptions. In the midst of it all I jumped upon the table, and held up my hand. I was looking serious—I felt serious.

"Now then, you chaps, this won't do," I said quietly. "If this thing goes on we shall only have the prefects about our ears, and then the whole meeting will be smashed up. The subject is a serious one—it's the most important dis-

cussion that's come up during the whole term. So do try and keep quiet for a bit."

My words had due effect, and silence was obtained.

"Who's going to make this speech—you or me?" asked Handforth warmly.

"I am," I replied. "Don't be an ass, Handy—you'll have plenty of chance to join in afterwards," I added. "Before we go any further, I want to explain to everybody why the Form has been called together."

"That's what we're waiting to hear," said Bob Christine.

"Out with it, Nipper!"

"I'll bet it's about the Head!"

"Yes, and football!"

"As a matter of fact, it is about the Head," I said. "That's not a particularly brilliant guess of somebody's. Before answering me, I want you to think. But it's my habit to be blunt and straightforward. There's no sense beating among the bush. How many of you are against the Head, and how many in favour of him? That's the point I wish to get at."

"Oh, that's easy," said Christine. "We're all against him!"

"Rather!"

"Well, we'll put it to the vote," I said. "Hands up all those chaps who're against the Head."

Nearly every hand in the Remove was raised at once. I surveyed all those paws grimly.

"Right," I said. "Now, hands up those who are willing to support the Head!"

Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West, loyal to me, raised their hands at once. But they were alone. Theirs were the only votes in favour of Dr. Stafford. Things looked bad—and it seemed that my task would be a heavy one.

The split in the Remove would be very wide indeed!

CHAPTER IX.

THE RIVAL CAMPS.

"HA, ha, ha!"

A yell of laughter and derision went up from the Remove as Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West lowered their hands. My two chums looked rather red, but they had set their jaws in an obstinate kind of way.

"How do you like it?" grinned Fullwood. "You'll find a fat lot of support for the Head in the Remove—I don't think! Now you'd better take a vote on Mr. Lee, an' you'll find the result just the same."

"Dry up, you cads!"

"Who told you to speak, Fullwood?"

"I hardly expected anything different," I exclaimed, looking round. "Under the circumstances, it is only natural that you should all be feeling pretty sore against Dr. Stafford. At the same time, I mean to take a second vote—and I have an idea that the result will be a bit different. Because I'm going to explain things. You're a thoughtless set of bounders, and you don't fully realise the position. So it's up to me to put the facts before you."

"We know quite enough already!"

"Of course we do!"

"There's no need for you to jaw, Nipper!"

"None whatever, my dear sirs—none whatever!" said Timothy Tucker. "Comrades and fellow slaves! Listen to me—listen to the voice of reason! Listen——"

The voice of reason was drowned by a loud series of yells. Timothy Tucker subsided—chiefly because Handforth grabbed him from behind, and uncereemoniously sat him in the fender.

"Whether you want me to put the facts before you or not, I'm going to do it," I said firmly. "Do shut up, Hubbard! And don't make so much noise over in that corner, Fatty! This matter is of the utmost importance! When you vote against Dr. Stafford, you are automatically voting against Mr. Lee."

"How do you make that out?" said Pitt.

"In this way," I explained. "Mr. Lee, as you know, is in a very responsible position at St. Frank's. If the Head happens to be away, or ill, it's the guv'nor who takes temporary command. He's the Housemaster of the Ancient House—which is, of course, the premier house at St. Frank's——"

"Rats!" roared Bob Christine.

"Yah!" howled all the other College House fellows. "Swanky Fossils!"

"Mouldy Monks!"

"Peace—peace!" I shouted sharply.

"For goodness sake don't start a House row now. We don't want this meeting

to end up in a pitched battle!"

"Well, don't swank about the Ancient House," said Christine gruffly.

"My dear fellow, I'm doing nothing of the kind," I said. "The Ancient House is bigger than the College House, and it's an established fact that Mr. Lee has far greater responsibilities than Mr. Stockdale."

"Well, I admit that," said Christine. "Old Stocky's of no importance!"

"Well, that's all I mean to say," I continued. "When the Head is incapacitated, Mr. Lee takes charge of things. This afternoon he brought the Fifth and Sixth to their senses when they were on the point of starting a revolt. Mr. Lee's very position compels him to support the Head. It would be absolutely impossible for the guv'nor to take any action opposed to Dr. Stafford. You've been running him down on all sides lately, you've been accusing Mr. Lee of harshness and tyranny. That's the essence of unfairness."

"Rubbish!" said De Valerie. "You can't get away from the facts, and Mr. Lee has been harsh. He's been flogging chaps, and giving them lines all round, just because they happened to say things against the Head."

"It's not right to blame Mr. Lee for that," I said stoutly. "As Housemaster he's compelled to take action—he can't listen to these disloyal things and wink at them. And there's another point—which you've missed altogether. Dr. Stafford is more to be pitied than condemned——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dry up, you fathead!"

"Don't talk rot like that!"

"You're dotty, Nipper!"

"Clean off your silly rocker!"

"Think so?" I said grimly. "You've made a mistake—I'm perfectly sensible. I've reasoned things out, and you haven't. What I said just now is perfectly true. The Head needs our sympathy—not our condemnation. He can't help these attacks—there's some hidden enemy responsible for the whole rotten business, and Mr. Lee knows it. He's doing his best to fight against this peril."

"Oh, don't talk such piffle!"

"You may think it piffle now, but before long you'll find out that I'm right," I proceeded. "I can't say who these hidden enemies are, because I don't know exactly. But the Head's real

character is unchanged. When he chopped down the goalposts this afternoon he was suffering from some evil influence. All you've got to do is to wait—have patience—and everything will come right. To go against Mr. Lee now is disloyal and unfair."

"I reckon it's about time we had a new captain in the Remove!" shouted Armstrong boldly. "What's the good of this chap? He's all in favour of Mr. Lee and the Head! And isn't somebody else going to do any speaking? I reckon that we ought to have a new Head and a new Housemaster, and Mr. Trenton's the man to be Housemaster of the Ancient House."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good for you, Armstrong!"

"Trenton for us!"

"Every giddy time!"

I glared almost ferociously.

"Wait a minute!" I shouted. "Oh, so that's it, is it? You're all in favour of Mr. Trenton? So it amounts to this: A number of you are in favour of Mr. Lee, and a number in favour of Mr. Trenton. Well, you've got to declare yourselves now. We're not going to have any more uncertainty. We'll divide up into two parties—those who support Mr. Lee, and those who support Mr. Trenton. And we'll continue under two banners. I've tried to keep things together, but a split is unavoidable."

"Good!" shouted Armstrong. "We shall understand one another better now. There's nothing like straightforwardness. I call upon you chaps to support me. I'm all in favour of Mr. Trenton. He's a decent sort. He sympathises with us, helps us, gives us advice, and is a pal all round. Mr. Lee is harsh, and he's always imposing heavy punishments. I'm in favour of Mr. Trenton, and I don't mind telling you straight out that I'm as hot as mustard against Mr. Lee and the Head. All those chaps who believe in my view, hold up their hands—"

"Wait!" I shouted. "Don't vote yet!"

"Why not?"

"Because I've got a few more words to say," I replied. "We're going to take a vote, and it might as well be an honest one. Armstrong calls upon you to vote in favour of Mr. Trenton. I don't call upon you to support him, or support me. I just want you to weigh all the facts, and then vote according to your own

consciences. And the facts are clear enough. You all know Mr. Lee—you've known him a tremendous time. Until this trouble started with the Head the guv'nor was the most popular master at St. Frank's. Unless you're unfair and unjust you'll all admit that my guv'nor has been a true sport. Many of you have been with him during the holidays to distant parts of the world. It's not saying too much to remind you that he's saved some of your lives—"

"That's got nothing to do with this," put in Griffith.

"Yes it has!" declared Grey. "Nipper's right! We mustn't forget that Mr. Lee is as true as a die. He may be acting a bit queerly now, but under all the circumstances he can't very well do anything else."

"Mr. Trenton, on the other hand, is a newcomer," I continued. "We've only known him this term, he hasn't been here long enough, strictly speaking, to be tested. A number of you are blindly shouting that we ought to support him, and make him Housemaster in Mr. Lee's place. I'm not saying anything against Mr. Trenton. But, compared to Mr. Lee, what claim has he upon you to obtain such support as Armstrong asks for. So, before voting, I want you to think it out carefully—talk it over between yourselves. There's no sense in doing a thing in a hurry."

"Hear, hear!" shouted Handforth. "Nipper's got some sense, after all—he's been talking like a good 'un ever since he started. In fact, he's been taking the words out of my mouth—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Handy!"

"I suggest that you all think over this matter for a quarter-of-an-hour—we'll take the vote afterwards," said Handforth. "I'm just the same as Nipper—I don't believe in trying to influence you by talking in favour of one man, and talking against another. You've just got to know the facts, and give your votes accordingly. Mr. Lee is one of the finest chaps breathing. He never gives punishment unless it is deserved. He's a sport, and he looks after us all in the Ancient House with as much care as a father."

"Hear, hear!" said Church and McClure.

"Mr. Trenton is a greasy rotter!" went on Handforth boldly. "He's always

sneaking round the chaps, toadying to them, and trying to get their sympathy. He's not to be trusted, and it'll be a bad day for St. Frank's if he ever steps into Mr. Lee's shoes. I don't believe in trying to influence you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Handy—same as ever!" grinned Pitt. "He doesn't believe in influencing us, you chaps. He hasn't said a word against Mr. Trenton, has he? He hasn't breathed a syllable in favour of Mr. Lee!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Comrades and fellow slaves!" shouted Tucker, leaping up and waving his arms. "I must beseech you to listen to the voice of reason. Quite so! The words of Comrade Handforth are ridiculous and absurd! I am addressing you now, and my words are serious and important. You must not support the advocates of autocracy and bloated capitalism! You must join the ranks of the masses—you must become members of the Brotherhood of the Free! You must—— Really—— I—I—— Yaroooh! Dear, dear!"

Timothy Tucker suddenly collapsed. His feet were yanked from under him,

and he sat down with abrupt force. After that he was not allowed to make any further speeches. The juniors collected together, discussing the situation. Most of them were in little groups.

For example, Burton and Conroy minor and Jerry Dodd argued in one corner. Farman and Owen major and Canham talked eloquently in another. The occupants of the various studies were generally of the same opinion, excepting in the single case of Study E. T. T. shared that apartment with Pitt and Grey.

And, at last, the fellows declared that they were ready to vote. They had thought everything out thoroughly, and would give their opinion one way or the other—either against Nelson Lee, or in favour of him.

The thing was done properly. I stood upon the table with a notebook in my hand, and I meant to take the names of every fellow who voted against the gov'nor. I gave the signal at last.

"Now then—for Mr. Trenton!" I said crisply.

The number of hands that went up

(Continued on page 36.)

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(Continued from page 35.)

came as a bit of a shock to me. Study A and Study B were solid. Study C and Study D did not raise a finger, of course. Tucker was the only one in Study E who voted for Mr. Trenton. As he explained, he didn't believe in the science master, but Mr. Trenton was certainly an improvement on Nelson Lee. There were a great many other fellows who voted, for example, Merrell, Marriott and Noys, of Study G; Doyle, Armstrong and Griffith of Study J; Clifton and Simmons of Study K; and quite a number of others, including many from the College House.

"You're quite settled in mind about this?" I asked. "You all vote against Mr. Lee?"

"Yes!"

"Right you are!" I said grimly. "I've got your names, and I think you're a set of disloyal fatheads. Now for the others. Hands up everybody who undertakes to stick up for the guv'nor!"

A large number of hands were raised.

"Remember, you've got to stand by this vote," I declared. "Whatever happens in the future, I shall expect your support, and look for it. Once having decided, there must be no backing out. That's quite understood, isn't it?"

"Yes—we all agree to that," said Handforth.

I took the names, and I was pleased to find that all the best fellows in the Remove were on my side. The full list of the Ancient House fellows numbered more than I expected, and included Handforth and Co., Pitt and Grey, Burton, Conroy minor and Jerry Dodd; the Trotwood twins and Fatty Little, De Valerie, Somerton and Singleton, and Solomon Levi and Dick Goodwin. And,

of course, Bob Christine was staunch with me, and Talmadge and Yorke and Clapson, and many other Monks.

"Now, you chaps, listen to me," I shouted. "From now onwards we're two rival camps. I'm the leader of the Loyalists, and I mean to stick up for Mr. Lee right through, whatever happens!"

"Hear, hear!" roared the Loyalists.

"Cheers for Mr. Lee!"

"Hurrah!"

"Yah! Rotters!" yelled Hubbard.

"Down with tyranny!"

Armstrong leapt upon the table.

"Hold on!" he shouted. "What price me for the leader of the Rebels? That's what we'll call ourselves—Rebels! Elect me leader, and I'll guarantee that Mr. Lee gets kicked out, and Mr. Trenton takes his place!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Trenton!"

"Rebels for ever!"

"Armstrong for us—he's the man!"

And Timothy Armstrong, of Study J, was promptly elected the leader of the Rebels. Fullwood was anxious to be the Chief, but he couldn't even obtain a hearing. And when T. T. suggested himself as a leader he was yelled down.

Armstrong was coming out strong. Hitherto he had been in the background, but now that this trouble had arisen he had sprung into prominence—like so many other revolutionary leaders.

The die was cast—the Remove had split into two sections.

The Loyalists and the Rebels were about equal in numbers, and it was absolutely certain that some strenuous times were ahead!

THE END.

TO MY READERS.

The Remove are now divided into two parties, and bitter war will be waged between them before long. The result will determine whether Nelson Lee and the Head, or Trenton will remain at St. Frank's. But for Nipper's action the whole school would have risen up against Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee, and, in spite of the fine record of these two masters at St. Frank's, their removal would have been the only course open to the governors if law and order were to be maintained. With a determined party to fight the revolutionaries, the revolt, becoming more

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THE EDITOR.



TOM TARTAR AT SCHOOL

by **HARCOURT BURRAGE**

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INTRODUCTION.

Tom Tartar arrives at Mr. Wrasper's school, and on the way makes an enemy of Jonah Worrey, the school bully. Tom learns that Mr. Wrasper punishes by moral force only.

(Now read on.)

Trouble in Store.

TOM was hungry, and thick bread with thin butter was better than nothing, so he ate contentedly.

While Mrs. Wrasper sat at the head of the table not a whisper was heard. All the boys were as quiet as mice.

Jonah Worrey was at the upper end of the table on the right, and as Tom sat on the left about half-way down, he was able to see and study his face.

Jonah did not look at him, but he seemed to be in a contented frame of mind, and smiled occasionally.

Not a pleasant sort of smile, but a dry, malevolent, half-suppressed grin.

"He thinks he has scored one," thought Tom; "but the game isn't over yet."

When the meal was about half finished, Mrs. Wrasper rose from her chair, as if about to depart.

"Wood," she said to the serving man, "you can serve out the second lot of tea, and don't spill any about the floor!"

"Yes, mum—no, mum," replied Wooden Jerry, giving a double answer in response to the double request.

Mrs. Wrasper gathered up her skirts and swept majestically out of the room.

The moment she was gone a change came over the scene. The boys threw off all restraint.

"Now, then, old Woody!" cried one. "Give me another mug of tea, and get a move on!"

"Where's the cream tonight, Jerry!"

asked another. "You've been helping the cat to lap it up, you old thief!"

"More tea—more tea!" chorused half a dozen together.

"I ain't a-going to hurry myself for anybody," grumbled Wooden Jerry, gathering up half a dozen mugs in his hand—"not on the wages as I gets."

As he turned round a well-aimed crust hit him on the ear.

"Any more of that," said Jerry, wheeling round, "and you don't get no more tea."

A missile of the same nature from the opposite direction, hit him on the back of the head, and facing round he addressed Jonah Worrey:

"You did that!" he said.

"It's a lie!" replied Jonah.

Several of the other boys knew that Jonah was the real culprit, but they said nothing.

"What I've got to say is," said Wooden Jerry, as he walked to the urn, "that all schools with boys in 'em ought to be blowed up with dydlemite. I'd do the job wi' a good an' thankful 'cart!"

"What!" cried Sam Smith. "On your wages?"

A roar of laughter followed the question, and Wooden Jerry, with a wrench, set the urn running.

"What I've got to say is," he said, as he thrust a mug under it, "that if ever I—There! Now see what you've done. Here's the tea run over, and a nice mess on the table and floor! Wages or no wages, I'd blow you all up—there!"

"What makes you brush your hair with the stable curry-comb?" asked somebody at the bottom of the table.

Wooden Jerry made no reply, and possibly there was some foundation for the query.

He proceeded to fill the mugs and was allowed to complete his task in peace. Then at him they went again.

The questions with which he was assailed were all of a personal nature, and showed that Wooden Jerry was either a much maligned individual or that he was guilty of sundry offences calculated to bring him into righteous contempt.

Tea was finished amidst these noisy demonstrations, and then, as Jerry was rais-

ing the urn from the table, a bell was heard.

"The tea is wanted for the kitchen," said Wooden Jerry, hurrying forward. "I'll tell 'em that you made me late."

He was half-way to the door when he put his foot on one of the crusts where-with he had been assaulted.

It was lying on the sparsely-buttered side, and, slipping from under him, down he went.

As he left go of the urn it fell forward, rolled over, and, the lid coming off, discharged its contents, tea-leaves included, upon the floor.

Once more was there hilarity, and something like pandemonium reigned.

Then, suddenly the door opened, and Tom saw the master and usher enter the room.

The lull was instantaneous and complete.

"What is the meaning of this riot?" demanded Mr. Wrasper.

Nobody answered. Wooden Jerry slowly rose to his feet.

"Who knocked you down, Wood?" asked Foster Moore.

"Somebody pushed me from behind when I warn't lookin'," replied Wooden Jerry.

"That isn't true!" exclaimed Tom Tartar.

"You slipped and fell!"

Mr. Wrasper turned upon him with a darkening face.

"Tartar," he said, "why do you interfere in a matter that does not concern you?"

"He shouldn't tell lies!" protested Tom.

"Is there anyone to verify your version of the affair?" put in Foster Moore.

There was a few moments' silence; then up spoke Gray.

"I do, sir!" he said.

"So do I!" came from Sam Smith.

"There was nobody near enough to give him a push," said the cautious John McLara.

"Clear up this mess, Wood," said Mr. Wrasper, "and then come to my study. If you can name the offender, he will be subjected to discipline."

"It were the new boy, sir!" said Wooden Jerry.

"You are quite sure of that, eh?"

"Not quite sure, sir—but sure enough as makes no odds!"

"Can anybody confirm your statement?"

Jonah Worrey half-rose from his seat to do so, but he evidently thought it too bare-faced a lie to support, for he sat down again.

"Very well," went on Mr. Wrasper sternly.

"All except Tartar, Smith, and Gray can go to the playground. Evening studies as usual at six o'clock."

In a minute or so the room was clear of all but the master, the usher, and the three "offenders."

"In you, Smith and Gray," said Mr. Wrasper, frowning heavily at them, "I have the two worst boys in the school; and you, Tartar"—swinging round on Tom—

"have, as I must assume, by a natural law of affinity, already joined forces with them. But I bid you beware, Tartar! In this

establishment, conducted though it is without resort to physical force, insubordination is put down with a firm hand! Go to the schoolroom, all three of you!"

Sam Smith led the way to the end of the corridor, where the schoolroom was. Not a word did he say, but his demeanour was that of one preparing for dogged resistance.

The schoolroom was very large and lofty, with three big windows looking out upon the front lawn. The walls were panelled, and the ceiling decorated with splendid moulding, the work of craftsmen who had been dust for a couple of centuries or more.

At each end was a huge, handsome fireplace of marble, richly carved, and on either side of the one farthest from the door stood a raised desk of the approved school pattern.

The boys' desks and forms were arranged across the room, with a width of six or seven feet between them.

"Well, Tartar, how do you like moral force?" asked Sam Smith, as soon as they were in the room, and the door closed.

"Can't say," replied Tom. "I haven't tried any of it yet."

"You'll try it before long, I fancy!" said Sam. "I don't expect you'll like it, either. Foster Mother is chief administrator."

"Who's she?"

"The chief administrator isn't a 'she.' He's Foster Moore; but we call him 'Foster Mother' because he nurses us so well!"

"I see," said Tom thoughtfully. Then he said: "Why didn't the other fellows speak up like you two?"

Gray shrugged his shoulders.

"Expect they thought it no use doing so," he said.

"Why not?"

"Because they wouldn't have been believed, and they'd only have got into a row, the same as ourselves."

"It's Jonah Worrey whose word will be taken before ours," explained Sam Smith.

"Did you notice the fellow start to get up when Wrasper asked whether anybody could confirm Wooden Jerry's statement?"

"Yes, I noticed it. But he sat down again without saying a word. I s'pose he found he couldn't tell such a confounded lie as that."

"Oh, he's told it by this time, you bet!" said Gray.

"Yes," agreed Sam Smith, "and there's a dose of moral force in store for somebody over this business! I could see it in Foster Mother's eye! The beast looked absolutely vicious!"

"Yes, he seems to be a snarling sort of animal," said Tom. "But how does he work off his rotten bad temper if physical punishment isn't allowed in the school?"

"You'll see!" replied Sam Smith mysteriously. "By the way," he went on, changing the subject abruptly, "have you seen young Pubsey Wrasper yet?"

"Yes," said Tom. "I ran against him just before tea. Bit of a cub, isn't he?"

"You're right!" assented Sam. "But his father's chiefly to blame for it. You see,

Pubsey's been brought up to be good. No amusing books, no play to speak of, nor anything but to do as he is told and behave pretty. But of all the sneaking young rotters— Oh, it makes me ill to think of it."

"I don't think I shall be at this school long," said Tom. "It seems such a jolly queer show—quite different place from what my guv'nor thought it would be."

"Oh, you'll stay all right," replied Sam Smith. "It isn't half bad when you get used to it. We manage to have a pretty good time in spite of Wrasper and Moore. For one thing, there's a secret band of—"

Sam broke off, and looked at Gray questioningly. "Shall I trust him?" he asked.

"Of course!" nodded Gray. "Tartar's the right sort, and he's going to be one of us."

"Well, the fact is, Tartar," explained Sam, "there's a secret band of brothers in this school. It's made up of all the decent chaps, and—"

"Somebody coming!" interrupted Gray in a whisper. "Sit down!"

Scarcely had the three boys sat down on a form, when the door opened, and Mr. Foster Moore entered.

He fixed Gray with a malevolent eye; then said, in a harsh, grating voice:

"Gray, I want you. Come with me."

Gray at once rose, and, after a quick glance at Sam Smith, approached the usher, who signalled to him to go on before.

Not another word passed, and the two left the room.

CHAPTER IV.

Tom is Made an "Eagle."

TOM looked at Sam Smith in astonishment.

"Why has he picked on Gray?" he asked. "And what's going to happen to him?"

"Oh," replied Sam, "for some reason or other, old Wrasper and Foster have always been down on Gray. He catches it for the least thing."

"Then it's a beastly shame!" exclaimed Tom indignantly. "Why isn't something done to stop it?"

"It isn't easy to do anything. You see, outwardly this school is a model school, and Wrasper—also outwardly—is justice and kindness itself. We get plenty of holidays, have as much time for games as other schools, and—I'm quoting from the prospectus, so excuse the language—'corporal punishment is dispensed with utterly and entirely.' So you see—"

"Never mind about that!" broke in Tom impatiently. "What's Foster taken Gray away for?"

"To give him a night of solitary, I expect," answered Sam Smith. "Gray's used to that, so you needn't worry about him."

"And are we let off?"

"Looks like it—except that we've got to stick here for the rest of the evening. The other fellows will come here to do preparation in about an hour's time."

"What's that secret band you started to tell me about?" asked Tom, after a brief silence.

"Oh, yes; I'd better explain. The fact is, Tartar, this school is split up into two parties—the "Eagles" and the "Cuckoos."

"And which lot do you belong to?"

"Why, the Eagles, of course! I'm the chief of the band."

"Who are the Cuckoos?"

"They're the sneaks, bullies, and rotters of the school—most of 'em are that sort, anyway."

"And who's their chief?"

"Jonah Worrey!"

"Oh, is he?" exclaimed Tom. "Then, in that case, I want to join the Eagles—if you'll have me."

"I should just about think we would have you! Here, hold out your hand and take the vow."

Tom extended his right hand, which Sam Smith at once gripped.

"Promise," he said solemnly, "never to reveal anything which would get a brother Eagle into trouble."

"I'm no sneak," said Tom, "so there's no difficulty about promising that."

"And promise," went on Smith, "that you will always stand by a brother Eagle who wants help."

"Of course I will," said Tom. "You may rely on me. If Jonah Worrey is a fair sample of the Cuckoos, I'm not likely to take to them."

"All are not bad," said Sam. "Some are Cuckoos because we would not trust them."

"Trust them with what?"

"Oh, you will see by-and-bye."

"Sam, can't you trust me?"

"Of course I can, but it is a rule of our order not to be too hasty. You can trust me, Tom; we are friends already, and I hope we shall always be friends."

"I hope we shall," said Tom, heartily.

They talked of other matters of no great import until the other boys came in to prepare their lessons for the morrow.

Tom, surveying them, could see very little to guide him to the nature of the moral culture they received, excepting a few faces that were pale and had the hunted look of those who have erred and are in fear of being found out.

Jonah Worrey, with a swaggering air, dropped into a seat facing Tom, and before opening his books bestowed upon Tom a malevolent grin.

"What's the matter—taken bad?" asked Tom.

"You keep a civil tongue in your head," replied Jonah. "I won't stand any of your cheek."

"You'll stand whatever I like to give you!"

"I won't, you low cad!"

Tom was rising in his seat, but Sam pulled him back again.

"Don't play into his hands," he said; "a fight here doesn't pay. Let the cur alone."

"What did you call me?" asked Jonah.

"A cur," returned Sam. "You're nothing else."

"You're getting bold," said Jonah, "now you've got a Cockney bully to stand up for you."

"Was I ever afraid of you?" asked Sam.

"Always!" sneered Worrey. "You're a coward, and you know it!"

Sam Smith, at that epithet, suddenly grew very hot, leaped over the desk, laid hold of Jonah's nose, and the pair fell back together.

Immediately the school was in commotion, and Tom, who had hastened round to his friend's aid, saw the boys divide into two parties.

Sam and Jonah, after a short struggle on the floor, got up, both in a very ruffled condition.

"Now, Sam," said Tom, "you are first class at giving advice, but you don't act up to it."

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"I can't help that," said Sam hotly. "Now, Worrey, you cur, are you coming on?"

"What is this?" interposed a quiet voice, and immediately grim silence came upon the room.

Mr. Wrasper was there, with Foster Moore close behind him.

"I may as well tell the truth, sir," said Sam; "it will save trouble. Worrey called me a coward, and I jumped across the desk and pulled his nose."

"It was your duty to have reported Worrey's offensive word to me. I suppose he really uttered it?" said Mr. Wrasper.

"No, I didn't, sir," replied Jonah.

"Yes, you did!" exclaimed Tom.

"Really, Tartar," said Mr. Wrasper, "for a new boy you do interfere in a most unaccountable manner."

"I think there is good occasion," said Tom.

"We differ from you," remarked Foster Moore. "Smith, you can leave your lessons for this evening, and come along with me."

Sam closed his books and put them away in a locker which, with others, was fixed along one side of the room.

He did not look at Tom, but, with a composed air, he walked up to the tutor, with whom he departed.

"Let me have no more disturbance to-night," said Mr. Wrasper.

It seemed to Tom that he directed this request particularly to Jonah Worrey—certain it is that after the schoolmaster left the room the bully became as quiet as a mouse.

To Tom it was rather a dreary evening, for he had not even the mild diversion of learning lessons for the morrow to divert his thoughts.

But he made the best of a weary time by closely observing his future companions, and endeavouring to size them up.

The conclusion he arrived at was that there was a lot of good stuff in the school, and about the usual amount of bad stuff—just as there is in any community, little or big, all over the world.

At eight o'clock the boys closed their books and broke up into little groups. Tom naturally gravitated towards Lawrence Turrell and John McLara; but neither made any reference to Gray or Smith.

Presently a bell rang for supper, and, a mild repast of weak cocoa and bread-and-cheese having been disposed of, the boys were ordered to bed.

"I've got to show you where to sleep," said Jonah Worrey to Tom. "Your bed's in my room."

Tom made a pretty good guess as to why he had been put there, but he could not reasonably demur to the arrangement; so, merely nodding his head by way of reply, he followed Worrey upstairs.

(To be continued.)

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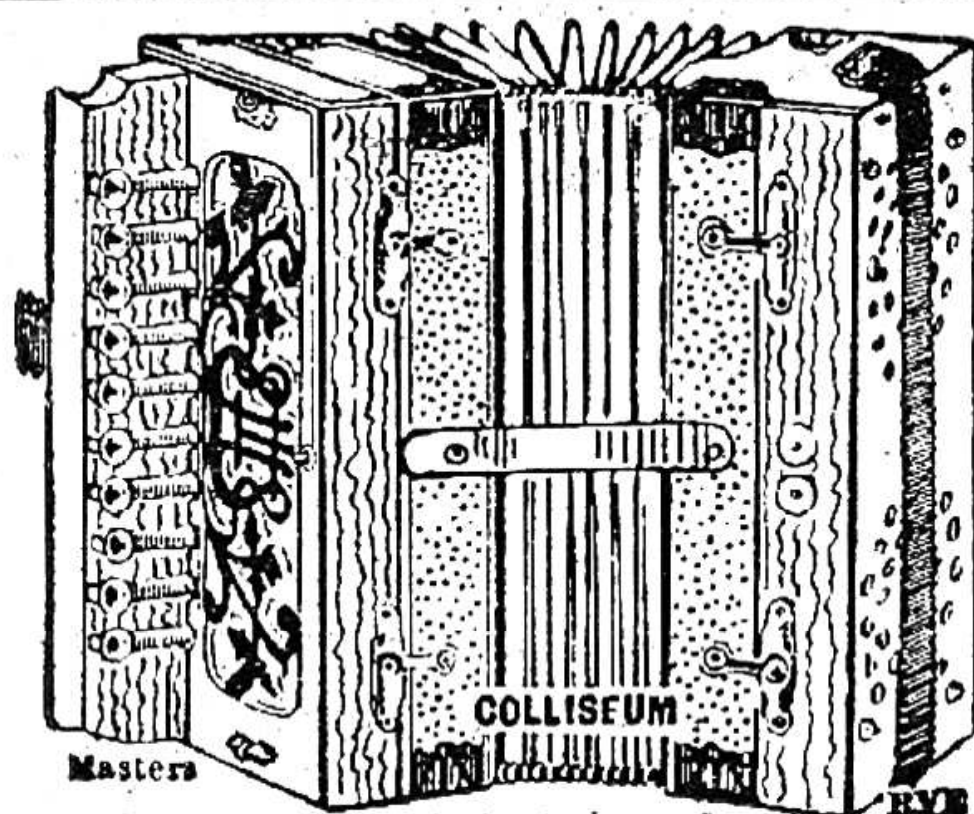
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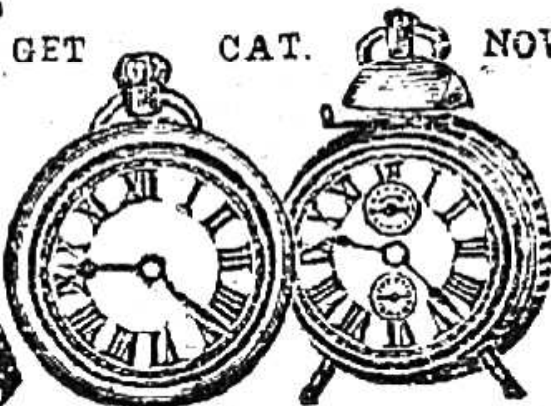


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