

ANOTHER FINE PLATE OF A FAMOUS FOOTBALLER GIVEN AWAY!

THE

PRICE

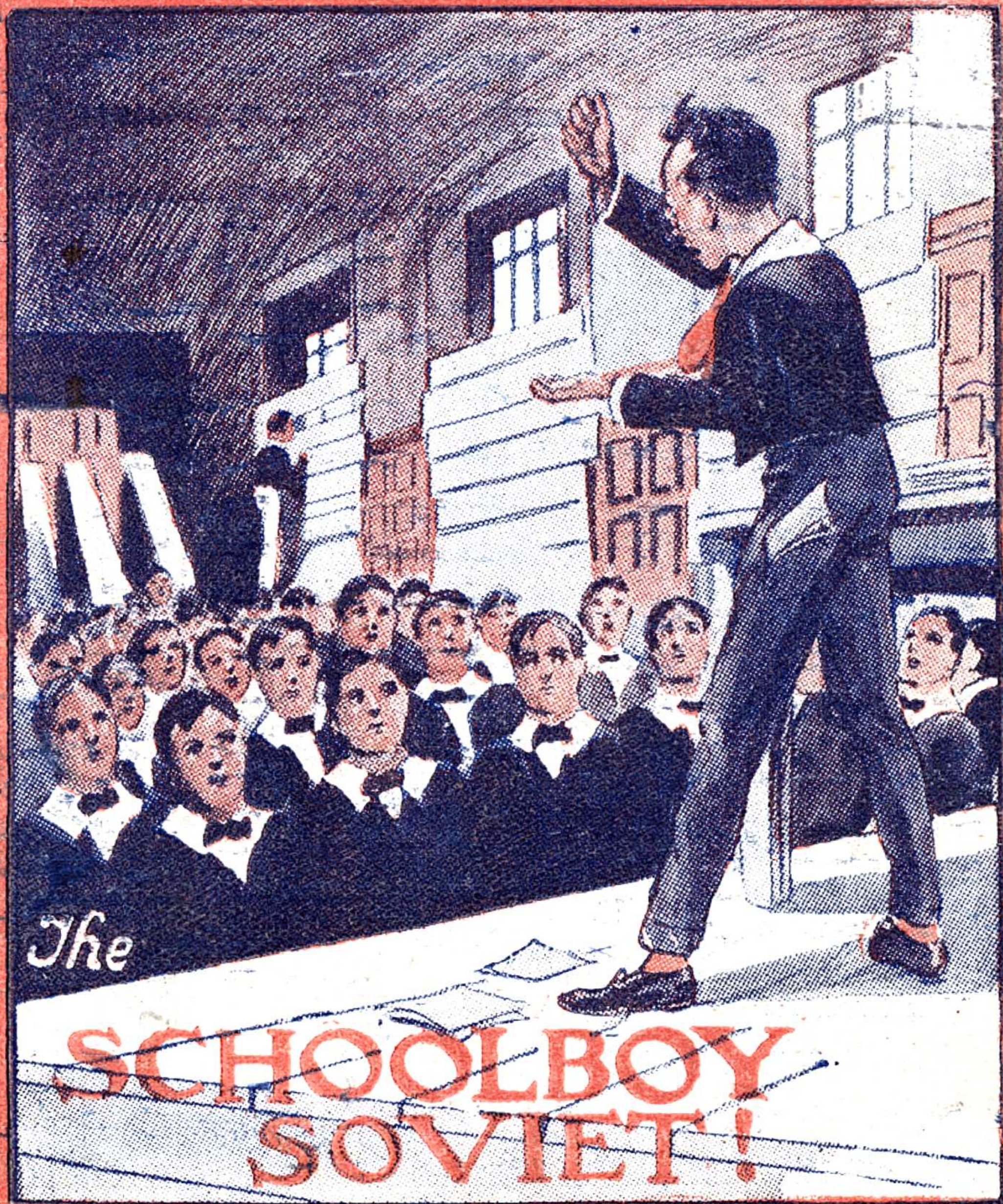
NELSON LEE

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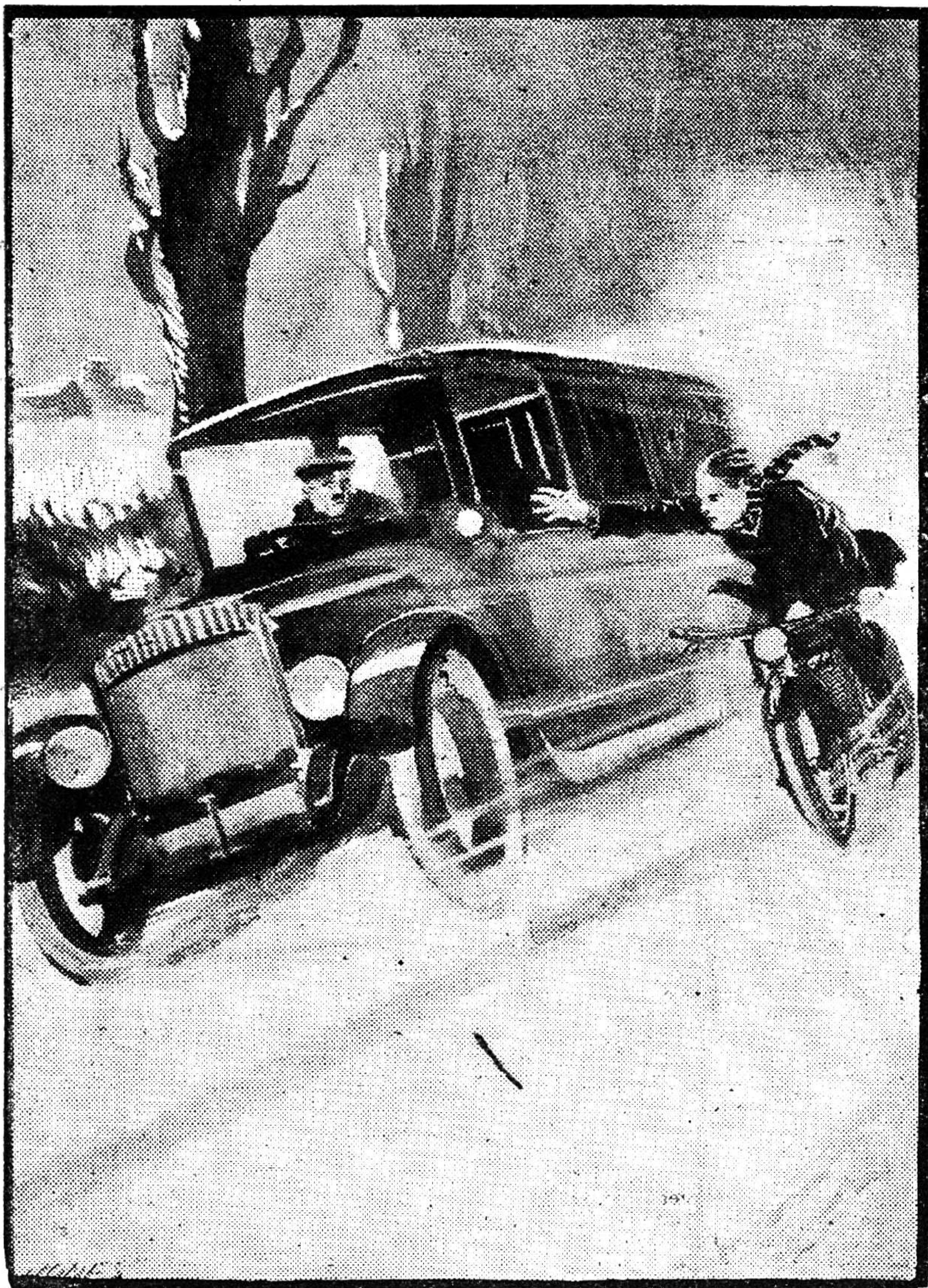
No. 343.

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The

SCHOOLBOY SOVIET!



I came alongside, and for a brief second travelled parallel to the landaulette. Then, before I could change my mind, I hurled myself out of the saddle.



The SCHOOLBOY SOVIET!

A Splendid Long Complete Story of School Life and Detective Adventure at St. Frank's College, introducing **NELSON LEE, NIPPER**, and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "Loyalists and Rebels," "The Schoolboys' Union," "The Christmas Plotters," and many other Stirring Tales.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER I.

THE REBEL STRONGHOLD.

ST. FRANK'S looked peaceful, quiet, and serenely at rest.

It was morning, and the wintry sun had just risen above the tree-tops of Bellton Wood. Lanes, meadows, fields and the whole countryside, in fact, was covered with a thick layer of crisp, powdery whiteness.

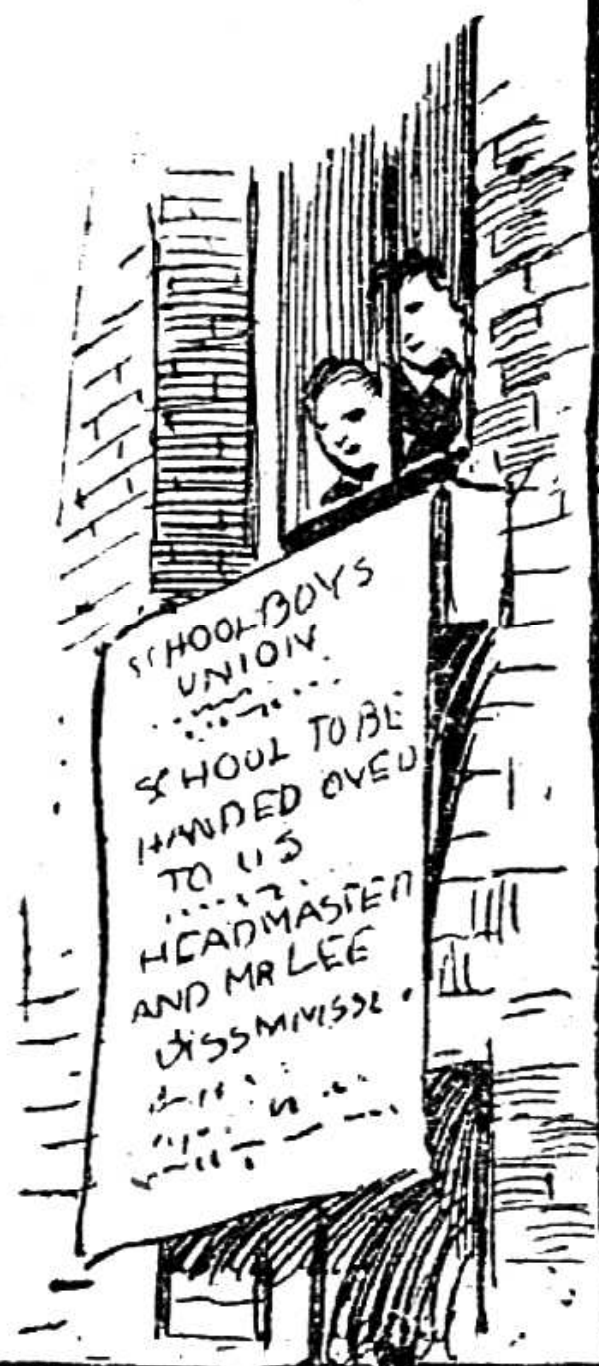
The frost was still keen, and there was no prospect of any change in the weather conditions. St. Frank's itself was covered with snow, like everything else, and the normally picturesque buildings of the great old school were even more attractive in their winter covering.

The gabled roofs, the ornamental stone parapets and chimney stacks, the great stone buttresses of the Ancient House—all were white and gleaming in the morning sunshine. It was a picture well worth seeing, and one which impressed itself upon the mind in a notable way.

St. Frank's at rest—at peace.

Such appeared to be the case, for the Christmas holidays were not yet over, and the noisy bustle of school life had not been resumed. Yet it is said that appearances are sometimes deceptive.

They were certainly deceptive in this instance.



Any chance passer-by, pausing to look at the noble old pile, would have been somewhat struck by the fact that two figures were regularly pacing the flat section of roof of the Ancient House. They were in no danger, for the stone parapet was high and quite safe. The figures appeared to be youthful, and they were marching to and fro, keeping their eyes on the alert.

They were, without a doubt, performing sentry duty.

From many of the chimneys wreaths of smoke were coiling up into the still morning air. Why all these fires if the school was empty? It seemed that something unusual was taking place at St. Frank's.

The College House looked similarly deserted at first glance. Then a number of juniors came round the angle of the building from the rear—Handforth and Co., Reginald Pitt, De Valerie, Tommy Watson, and a few more.

"By George! It's good to be alive on a morning like this!" exclaimed Handforth heartily. "What a ripping nip in the air! Just the morning for a scrap, my sons! And there'll be one, too; you mark my words!"

"There's bound to be a scrap for you, anyway," remarked Church. "Is it possible to remember any morning, spring, summer, autumn, or winter, when you haven't scrapped with somebody, Handy?"

"You fathead! I mean a proper scrap!" said Handforth scornfully. "I mean a terrific battle against those rotten Rebels! We're going to drive 'em out this morning, and have the school completely in our possession by the time Mr. Lee arrives. We'll show Armstrong and Co. who's master! The awful nerve of the chap! Trying to set himself up as a Rebel leader! Huh! It won't take us more than ten minutes to topple him off his giddy pedestal!"

Pitt and the others grinned.

"Sounds quite easy, when you hear Hancy jawing," remarked Pitt. "Poof! It's nothing—a mere bagatelle, by George! What do we care about odds? What do we care about defences and such like trifles? We're simply going to walk in and kick the Rebels out on their necks. Oh, it's easy!"

Handforth glared.

"Are you trying to pull my leg?" he demanded suspiciously.

"My dear old son, your leg is being pulled day in and day out with never a pause!" replied Pitt genially. "Allow me to inform you, Handy, that this job isn't going to be half so simple as you seem to think. It's easy enough to talk in that way—but when it comes to actual reality, we shall find ourselves striking up against a few snags. They'll be nasty, pointed ones, too!"

Handforth sniffed.

"If you're afraid of a few snags, I'm not," he said. "We're supposed to be on our Christmas holidays now, and instead of that we're camping out in the College House—because the beastly Rebels are in possession of the Ancient House. Why, putting aside loyalty to the school and all that, it's our duty to pitch Armstrong and Co. out for having the nerve to pinch the Ancient House!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Anybody got any brilliant wheezes this morning?" asked Bob Christine. "Anybody got any sparkling suggestions to make? Last night's affair was a fiasco. We attacked, but we were repulsed with heavy losses and many casualties. We want to think of something that'll admit us into the fortress without any trouble."

"You'll have to think a long while before you get an idea like that," said Pitt. "Personally, I reckon that the Rebels will be able to keep up the siege for a tremendous time. If they only work things right they can hold us at bay with impunity!"

"They're more likely to hold us at bay with pails of water!" grunted Handforth. "Ugh! It makes me shiver when I think of it! I don't mind scrapping with anybody, but I call it an exhibition of—of frightfulness to use such Hun methods! Dash it all, cold water in this weather is as bad as poison gas!"

The other fellows chuckled, and they all came to a halt in the Triangle, and stood contemplating the Ancient House—the stronghold of the Rebel forces. And the more they looked, the more they realised that this proposition was going to be an extremely tough one.

They were still standing there when I joined them.

"Got any plans for the attack?" asked Pitt. "Because, if you haven't, Handforth's full of them!"

"I'm afraid Handforth's plans would

be a bit too drastic to be effective," I replied. "Handy's a great chap when it comes to a pitched battle, but in anything strategic he is out of his depth."

"Strategy requires brains," remarked Church casually.

Handforth rolled up his sleeves.

"I don't like to cause trouble among our own forces, but it can't be helped!" he said grimly. "Nipper says I haven't got any strategy, and this ass says that strategy requires brains! That's simply another way of saying I'm brainless!"

"I—I didn't mean that exactly," said Church hurriedly. "But you can't be brainless, or you wouldn't have seen the point so quickly. In fact, your wits are sharper than needles!"

Handforth was mollified—his chums knew how to rub him.

"Oh, all right, we won't say any more about it!" he growled. "And what's all this jaw about strategy, anyway? Who wants strategy? It's all tommyrot, in my opinion. The only way is to rush the blighters——"

"My dear, fatheaded ass!" I interrupted. "How are we going to rush them? Their defences were strong enough last night, but now they're doubly strong. Armstrong and Co. have thoroughly consolidated their position."

"They've done what to it?"

"They've which?"

"Consolidated the position," I repeated. "That means to say, they've made everything fast and secure, and every possible means of defence has been adopted. In fact, their fortifications are complete."

"Blessed if I can see any fortifications!" said Handforth, staring.

"You may not see 'em, but they're there," I replied. "Didn't you hear hammering going on all night?"

"No."

"Considering that your snores were nearly enough to drown a thunderstorm, I'm not surprised," I said drily. "But it's a fact—Armstrong and Co. got some sleep, I've no doubt, but they must have worked in watches, like they do on a ship. One watch hard at work, and the other sleeping. I'll guarantee they've barricaded every lower window—and probably the upper ones, too. Let's get a bit closer, and have a look."

We moved across the snow-covered ground towards the Ancient House, and the more I thought of this position, the

more serious it seemed. Without any doubt at all, Armstrong and Co. held the best hand in the game. Providing they kept their heads, and utilised their fortress well, their position was well-nigh impregnable.

They had food enough for weeks. They had fuel, electric light, water, and blankets and linen, and everything, in fact, to keep them going in comfort. Everything they needed was in the Ancient House.

And they could defy all attempts at storming the stronghold. With all the lower windows barricaded and barred there was no danger of any attack forcing its way through. And the upper windows could only be reached by ladders, and it would obviously be a simple matter for the Rebels to keep the besiegers at bay.

We soon discovered that my surmises were correct.

All the lower windows were closely boarded up, and I had no doubt that the Rebels had ruthlessly been tearing up the floorboards in order to provide these defences. The night hammering was explained.

"Better not come too near!"

"Clear off, you Loyalists!"

"We give you five seconds to shift!"

The voices came from above, and, staring up, we beheld several heads looking over the parapet of the roof. Armstrong and Griffith and Fullwood were there, and they were all grinning.

"You rotters!" shouted Handforth. "Are you going to surrender, or shall we use force?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just wait till I grab you!" yelled Handforth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no good talking like that, Handy," I said. "You only make yourself look small, and these Rebels simply grin at you." I looked up. "I say, Armstrong, just a word."

"Twenty, if you like," said Armstrong. "There's no harm in the two commanders of the opposing forces having a pow-wow. But if you're going to talk about surrender, and rot like that, you'd better save your breath!"

"No, I'm not going to talk about surrender," I said. "But do you quite realise what you've taken on?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you know that if you're defeated

you'll be expelled in disgrace from St. Frank's?" I asked.

"Well, I'm not fool enough to think that I should only get twenty lines!" replied Armstrong sarcastically. "If this rebellion fails, I shall be sacked—and some of the others will be sacked, too, I expect. We're ready for it, and we'll face the consequences. But the rebellion won't fail. We're out for victory—and you're a lot of blessed black-legs to stand out!"

"That's your way of looking at it," I replied. "Without sufficient reason you and your followers have made war against Dr. Stafford and Mr. Lee. Well, you're going to fail—you can take that for granted."

"Rot!"

"A united Remove could do a thing like this, and do it easily," I went on. "But the Remove is in two separate parties—its forces are divided. And there's an old saying that goes something like this, 'United we stand, divided we fall.' And you're booked for a fall before long."

Armstrong laughed aggressively.

"We'll see about that," he replied. "If you chaps are going to attack us, you ain't worthy of being in the Remove! If you don't agree with our cause, we don't expect you to join our ranks. But the least you can do is to avoid taking sides against us. We expect you to remain neutral."

"Rats!" shouted Handforth. "Why should we? If your cause was an honourable one we'd not interfere. But you're up against all kind of authority, and are simply doing this wildly. We're not going to see the fair name of St. Frank's dragged into the mire!"

"Oh, dear, little, loyal innocents!" sneered Armstrong. "Do you think we take any notice of that rot? You must be mad to stand up for the Head and Lee! They're a couple of bullies, and it's the duty of every Remove fellow to support this barring-out!"

"Look here, Armstrong, I don't suppose it's any good offering you advice, but the best thing you can do is to chuck this game up before Mr. Lee arrives on the scene," I said grimly. "You don't understand the position. If you'll just wait a little while longer, you'll find that all your ideas about the Head are wrong."

A yell of derision came from the Rebels.

"I suppose you'll say that the Head ain't a brute?" shouted Armstrong.

"I do say so!" I replied.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Head's not a brute!" yelled Armstrong. "Didn't he go mad with wild rage? Didn't he chop down the goal-posts on Big Side? Didn't he act like a tyrant and a bully on fifty different occasions?"

"Yes, he did!" roared the Rebels.

"And are we going to stand any more of it?" asked Armstrong.

"No!" bellowed his supporters.

"It's all very well to work up an enthusiasm like that, but it's hollow," I said, after the din had died down. "The Head's not a tyrant, as you think. I'll admit that he's acted jolly queerly—but he couldn't help himself. There's been some evil influence at work, and the whole thing was engineered. By rebelling in this way you're playing right into the hands of the Head's enemies."

Again there came a yell of derision.

"Enemies be blowed!" shouted Armstrong. "You're talking out of the back of your neck! The Head's his own enemy, and we don't want him at St. Frank's! You can talk as long as you like, but it won't make any difference. We've started on this rebellion, and we're carrying it through—to victory!"

"Hurrah!" roared the Rebels.

"Are we going to chuck it up before we're really started?" demanded Armstrong.

"No!"

"Are we going to be victorious?"

"Yes!"

"Are we going to associate with these cads down here?"

"No!"

And the Rebels went off into a wild series of cat-calls and hoots. They supplemented this by making a number of snowballs and hurling them at us before we were prepared for the onslaught.

"You see, what's the good of arguing with such trash?" asked Solomon Levi, with an expressive shrug. "Believe me, they're a bunch of no-goods!"

When we were out of range we turned and looked at the Ancient House rather grimly. The more I thought of the matter, the more serious the problem became. There was very little chance of our driving the Rebels out. Indeed, without additional forces, it would be hopeless to attempt such a thing.

Armstrong and his men thought they were doing something particularly fine. The recent outbursts of uncontrollable rage which the Head had exhibited were certainly enough to make the juniors incensed. For Dr. Stafford, at times, was another man. Instead of being his own kindly self, he became a raving bully—a brute filled with every savage instinct.

And, during the Christmas holidays, Armstrong and Co. had got up this plot. It was really the scheme of Timothy Tucker. It had been T. T. who had thought out the plan—but Armstrong had organised it. Without T. T. the rebellion would never have occurred. Neither, for that matter, would it have occurred without Armstrong.

Working together, they had produced this result.

They had an idea that the new term would be worse than the last, and so they started this barring-out—taking possession of the Ancient House during the holidays. Thus they were able to fortify it, and make it into a veritable stronghold. It would be very difficult to drive them out.

Armstrong had assumed that nearly every fellow in the Remove would come in with him. But all the decent fellows still followed my leadership. In spite of the Head's strange behaviour, the best chaps in the Remove stuck to me—and I was frankly supporting the school authorities and the Headmaster.

And they did this without knowing the actual truth—which was very fine of them. I longed to tell them how matters really stood, but my lips were sealed. I could not give them any of the true details, for I promised Nelson Lee that I would keep everything quiet.

For example, it was impossible for me to tell the Loyalists that Mr. Trenton, the science master, was at the bottom of all the trouble. Mr. Trenton was not bad-looking, he possessed a smooth tongue, and his popularity was surprising. He had wormed his way into the graces of seniors and juniors alike, and had become the most popular master at St. Frank's.

Yet, actually, he was a black-hearted scoundrel. Hidden by his polished exterior, was a nature which stuck at nothing. His one object in coming to St. Frank's was to bring about the downfall of Dr. Stafford—to drive the

dear old Head out of the school in disgrace and shame.

And it was by the aid of some mysterious drug—probably of his own invention—that he was achieving his object. Before the holidays he had succeeded in secretly doping the Head with this terrible drug—each dose resulting in an exhibition of terrible violence and savagery.

Worst of all, Trenton had succeeded in getting at Dr. Stafford during the holidays, while we had all been at Dorimore Hall. This had really determined the Rebels to embark upon their adventurous plan.

And so, the previous day, Armstrong and his followers had disappeared from the Christmas-party. They had come to the deserted St. Frank's, and had taken possession of the Ancient House without any opposition. We arrived on the scene just after dark.

And our attempt to drive the Rebels out proved futile. We had been driven back, and had sought refuge in the College House. And that was how the position stood now. But Armstrong and Co. were even stronger than before.

In a way, I could not help admiring their enterprise. Armstrong was displaying qualities which I had never given him credit for. He was proving himself to be an excellent leader, and he was not forgetting important details.

Many a junior would have quite overlooked the fact that these first hours were of golden value. Armstrong didn't overlook it. He realised to the full that he would never get such a splendid opportunity again.

And so, during the night, his force had been continually at work. Barricades had been erected at a dozen different points. All the lower windows were nailed up so that entry from without was impossible.

Armstrong himself had gone round, examining every doorway and window. The Rebels had time now—and before any determined attempt to hurl them out could be made, they were making their position stronger and stronger.

It was the best of generalship on Armstrong's part, and if the position had been different, I should have commended him highly. He wasn't at all a bad chap—one of the best at heart. But he was working for a wrong cause, as he would certainly discover before many days had elapsed.

His followers were not a particularly brilliant lot. Included under his command were such cads at Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell, and Merrell, and Marriott—and all the weaklings of the Remove—the easily swayed crowd such as Hubbard and Clifton and Shelton. Many of these juniors were quite decent. But now they were influenced by the worst fellows of their party. They thought they were very big men indeed to defy authority in this fashion.

Having possession of the Ancient House, the Rebels lacked nothing. They even had all the nails and screws they required to fix up the barricades. And floorboards were obtained in plenty from a couple of empty store-rooms on the ground floor.

Outwardly, the Ancient House was hardly changed. But, within, great alterations had taken place. And Armstrong saw to it that half his force was constantly on the watch while the other half slept or rested.

"Yes, we're going to have a pretty stiff job!" I said thoughtfully, as I stood looking at the Rebel stronghold. "It won't be an easy matter to drive these bounders out. For us to attempt it ourselves would be ridiculous."

"Do you think we ought to try it?" asked Pitt. "After all, we're all in the Remove, and it does seem a bit shabby for us to——"

"Are you influenced by what Armstrong said?" I asked sharply.

"Well, a bit," admitted Pitt. "Mind you, I'm just as strong as ever in your favour, Nipper. But don't you think we ought to let these silly fatheads fight out their own battle, instead of interfering? It would be a lesson to them."

I shook my head.

"No," I replied. "They're absolutely in the wrong. They have no justification for acting in this way. And it's up to us, as loyal supporters of the school authority, to do all we can to bring about their downfall. We shall be doing them a good turn, as a matter of fact."

Pitt nodded.

"Good enough!" he said briskly. "You're the general; I'm only a humble cog in the giddy machinery. The great man has spoken—all is well. From now onwards we'll set ourselves to the task of giving the Rebels what-ho!"

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Handforth heartily. "Now, I've got an idea——"

"Boil it!"

"You silly fathead——"

"This idea is absolutely terrific!" grinned Pitt. "It's one of Handy's specials, and——"

"Are you going to let me speak, or not?" bellowed Handforth. "This scheme is one that will result in——"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tommy Watson. "What's that noise? There's a car, you chaps, up the lane! Listen! Perhaps it's Mr. Lee——"

The fellows didn't wait to hear any more, but made a rush for the gateway. But I was there first, and I was in time to see a big racing-car pull up. In it were two figures, well wrapped up.

One was Dr. Malcolm Stafford, and the other Nelson Lee.

CHAPTER II.

OPEN DEFIANCE!



JOSH CUTTLE, the porter, appeared from his lodge with alacrity, to say nothing of a big key. He opened the great gates, and Nelson Lee did not fail to observe that Mr. Cuttle's expression was unusually cheerful.

"Back rather sooner than you expected—eh, Cuttle?" said the famous detective, with a smile. "Well, Christmas is over, and we shall soon be settling down to hard work again. Things seem to be rather peculiar here just now."

"There was trouble, sir," exclaimed Cuttle solemnly. "Why was there trouble? Ask me! Because the boys was up to some of their impish games. They was doing bad things in the Ancient House—they was barring up the winders, and nailing up the doors. There was going to be big trouble!"

"You needn't make such a big thing of it, Cuttle," smiled Nelson Lee. "I fancy we'll soon bring these foolish youngsters to their senses. They are reckless and high-spirited, and they probably don't realise the seriousness of this escapade. The arrival of Dr. Stafford will probably make a big difference."

"I was full of misgivin'," muttered Mr. Cuttle. "I was afraid things won't turn out just right."

Nelson Lee left the porter gloomily shaking his head, and the two new ar-

rivals came into the Triangle in full view of the Ancient House. The Rebels had gathered in force along the main parapet of the roof, and were all looking eagerly down. They knew well enough that something unusual was happening.

I half expected a demonstration. But Armstrong had warned his followers not to start any noise just yet. And a dead silence greeted Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee as they walked across the Triangle.

"Well, Nipper, our little holiday seems to have taken a dramatic turn," said Nelson Lee. "It is very unfortunate, and I hope these foolish boys will listen to reason. I want you to tell me just what has happened here."

"That won't take long, sir," I replied. "Where are we going to now?"

"To the Headmaster's quarters," said the gov'nor. "A telegram was sent early this morning to Mrs. Poulter, and she ought to have everything ready."

"I don't know whether she received the wire, sir," I said. "These Rebels have turned everybody out of the Ancient House, including the matron. The rest of us are in the College House, marking time, so to speak."

We went straight towards the Head's private door. Before we reached it, the door was opened wide, and the portly Mrs. Poulter stood there, smiling rather nervously. And when we got into the Head's study we found a cheerful fire burning, and everything was looking tidied and dusted.

There was a passage from the Head's private quarters which led straight into the Ancient House. But the big communicating door had been strongly barricaded by the Rebels, thus making an attack from this quarter impossible. The Head was shut off completely.

I was the only fellow to accompany Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee in. The Head sat down rather heavily after removing his coat. His face was lined and worried, and he looked altogether broken—very different figure from the upright, robust Dr. Stafford of a month back. But his face still wore the same old kindly look. There was nothing of the tyrant or the bully about the Head now.

"All this is—terrible, Mr. Lee—too terrible!" he muttered. "And I cannot help feeling that the fault is entirely my own. I do not feel strong enough to face all this trouble and anxiety. Would



Out in the cold Triangle we stood in a roped line, uncomfortable and smelling of paint.

it not be better for me to send in my resignation? The boys might then—"

"Dr. Stafford, such an event is not to be considered for a moment," interrupted Nelson Lee. "These boys have taken an unpardonable step, and they must be brought to their senses. No matter what they have suffered, they have absolutely no excuse for embarking upon such a mad enterprise as this. To storm the school during the Christmas holidays, and to forcibly take possession of the Ancient House, is an unheard-of liberty. They must be punished as they deserve."

"I'm afraid it'll be a bit of a job to get the bounders out, sir," I put in. "They've done it properly—barricaded themselves in, and all the rest of it. They're in a fighting mood, too."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"I do not consider for a moment that our task will be an easy one," he said. "But to surrender to these boys would be fatal. It would mean the loss of all authority and discipline. The only possible solution to this problem is to make these misguided juniors give in. If we can bring them to reason without violence, all the better. I shall certainly attempt to make them listen to reason. Now, Nipper, you must tell us what has taken place."

"There's not much to tell, sir," I replied. "When we arrived last night we found Armstrong and his supporters in the Ancient House. We tried to pitch them out, but they had all the advantage of the situation."

"In what way did you go to work, my boy?" inquired the Head.

"Well, we thought we might as well do it properly, sir. So we got planks and ladders, and made a rush," I replied. "We tried to force our way in at the first onslaught, but the Rebels pelted us with snowballs, threw pails of icy water down, and broke up the attack."

"And in the end you had to retire?"

"We retreated to our own trenches in disorder, sir," I said, grinning. "What else could we do? A frontal attack was obviously no good. And so I decided that our best course would be to spend the night in the College House, and wait for you to turn up. So that's what we did."

"Quite right," said Nelson Lee. "And the Rebels?"

"They've been fairly quiet, but they were at work most of the night," I replied. "They've fixed up barricades on all the lower windows, and it would take a force of tanks to smash through those defences. And the upper windows are constantly guarded. It'll be an awful job to get these fellows out by force."

"We don't want to use force," said Nelson Lee gravely. "A pitched battle at St. Frank's would cause great excitement in the neighbourhood, and the story would, naturally, be exaggerated by all the newspaper reporters. It would be a great pity for such unsavoury publicity to be given to the affair. It would be far better, therefore, to get Armstrong and these other boys out of the Ancient House without any fight. I intend to have a word with the Rebels at once."

I shook my head dubiously.

"I'm afraid they won't listen, guv'nor," I said.

"We can only hope for the best," said Nelson Lee. "If these boys will not listen to reason in any shape, then I shall have no compunction in adopting different tactics. But we will try gentle methods first."

Nelson Lee only remained a few moments longer before sallying out. I accompanied him, and we found the Triangle full of excited Loyalists, who were all waiting eagerly to see what would happen. The Rebels were on the alert, all of them leaning against the parapet of the roof.

Nelson Lee approached fairly close, and looked up.

"Armstrong!" he called quietly.

"Speaking to me?" inquired Armstrong, leaning over.

"Yes, I am speaking to you, and I understand that you are the ringleader in this affair?" said Nelson Lee. "Is that so?"

"I'm the leader, if that's what you mean, sir," replied Armstrong.

He had evidently made up his mind to be studiously disrespectful, to judge by the tone of his first utterance. But Nelson Lee's very attitude soon brought about a change, and there was now a marked difference to be detected.

"You are the ringleader, and I take it that you are fully aware of the seriousness of this situation," went on Nelson Lee. "Do I understand that you have locked yourselves up in the Ancient House, and that you are barring everybody else out?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is your object in doing this?"

"Because we're not satisfied with the conditions," replied Armstrong boldly. "We have taken this course because there was no other way of attaining our object."

"Indeed!" said Nelson Lee, in mild surprise. "Are you quite sure, Armstrong? Was it necessary for you to lead your companions into such paths of foolishness and recklessness? If you have any grievance against the school, or against any particular individual, why could you not state that grievance?"

Armstrong didn't answer for a moment. As a matter of fact, he and his supporters were rather taken aback by Nelson Lee's calm attitude. They had expected an outburst of rage—a series of sharp orders to surrender, and so forth.

And they were quite ready for such events. They were prepared to defy all orders, and to treat authority with contempt. But this was different. It was impossible to shout defiance at Nelson Lee.

Armstrong answered at last.

"Why, sir, we—we knew that it wouldn't be any good," he said. "It isn't possible for the Remove to start complaining against the Head! And so we started right off by taking possession of the Ancient House. It was the safest way."

"Oh, I see!" said Nelson Lee calmly.

"Well, boys, you are foolish and wrong. If you have any sense of what

is right, you will give up this absurd nonsense and continue with your holidays. This escapade is the very height of folly."

"We're not going to surrender, sir!" said Armstrong firmly.

"Never!" shouted the Rebels, anxious to say something.

"Pray allow me to say a few words!" exclaimed Timothy Tucker, pressing forward, and leaning so far over the parapet that he nearly toppled into space.

"Dear, dear! Do you realise that your power has utterly vanished, sir?"

"I do not quite comprehend your meaning, Tucker," said Nelson Lee.

"Is that so?" said T. T. "I regret, my dear sir, that it should be necessary for me to point out to you that which is surely obvious to the meanest intellects. H'm! H'm! Quite so! The position is this. We have assumed complete control of St. Frank's, and the authority of every master is no longer accepted."

Nelson Lee received this information unmoved.

"You are a very foolish boy, Tucker," he said calmly. "I am sorry that you should have allowed such preposterous ideas to take a firm hold——"

"One moment, my dear sir—one moment!" interrupted Timothy Tucker, shaking his finger at Nelson Lee reprovingly. "Just one moment, my lad! You do not seem to realise that the regime of tyranny and bloated autocracy is over. In fact, the time has now arrived when the humble slaves come into their own. Hitherto the modern schoolboy has been downtrodden and enslaved. We have decided to end this state of affairs. Yes, my dear sir, we have decided to end it! And this great blow has been struck with the intention of setting an example for every other school in the kingdom to follow."

"Hurrah!" roared the Rebels wildly.

"Down with tyranny, that is our motto!" exclaimed Tucker. "You must remember, my dear sir, that we are in a position to dictate any terms we choose. Your power has gone. From henceforth the boys of this school will take the reins of government into their own hands!"

Nelson Lee laughed outright.

"If you were not quite so ridiculous, Tucker, I should be very angry with you," he exclaimed smoothly. "But you are so absurdly ludicrous that I can regard your talk as the ravings of a young idiot!"

"Dear, dear, dear!" said Tucker mildly. "This is most distressing! How dare you, sir? How dare you call me an idiot? Do you realise who I am? Do you not know that I am the very brains of this whole enterprise?"

"Rats!" shouted Armstrong. "I'm the leader, and you can take a back seat, T. T.! You mustn't take too much notice of what he's been saying, sir," he went on. "We've taken this step because we demand our rights. To put it bluntly, sir, we sha'n't surrender until Dr. Stafford has left the school for good!"

"Yes, and you as well!" shouted Fullwood and many other Rebels.

"Hear, hear!"

"Down with the Head!"

"Down with Lee!"

"We won't surrender until they've both gone!"

The Rebels were getting themselves excited now, and their loud shouts gave them encouragement. They were more prepared to defy Nelson Lee to his face. The Loyalists, crowding on the other side of the Triangle, yelled with anger, and shook their fists at the Ancient House roof.

"Ah, now we are getting to the truth!" said Nelson Lee, with a grim note in his voice. "It is just as well that we should understand one another. So I take it, boys, that you are demanding the resignation of both Dr. Stafford and myself?"

"Yes, sir!" replied Armstrong boldly.

"You will not surrender until we have left St. Frank's for good?"

"No!" roared the Rebels. "Down with tyranny!"

"I am very sorry to hear you carrying on in this absurd fashion," said Nelson Lee. "You cannot seriously mean what you are saying in these excited moments. You have deluded yourselves into believing that you can defy authority with impunity. That you are wrong, boys, ought to be obvious to you. You will never gain your ends by such methods."

"Won't we!" shouted Merrell. "Wait and see!"

"Hurrah!"

"If the school, as a whole, is anxious for the resignation of Dr. Stafford and myself, the school should have prepared a petition to that effect," said Nelson Lee. "Such a petition would have been considered in the right spirit, and neither

Dr. Stafford nor I would have refrained from sending in our resignation at once. But you surely do not imagine that we shall obey the commands of a mere handful of juniors from the Remove?"

The Rebels were silent.

"No, boys, you have gone the wrong way to work," continued Lee, "and you will find that your troubles will increase as time goes by. I do not anticipate that you will follow my advice, but I urge you to give up this absurdity at once——"

"Never!" shouted the Rebels.

"We've started, and we're going through with it, sir!" said Armstrong. "We can't surrender now——"

He paused, for at that moment Dr. Stafford himself emerged from his doorway, and came across to the spot where Nelson Lee was standing. He carried himself well, his back upright, his shoulders straight. At that moment Dr. Stafford looked his old, dignified self.

I half expected the Rebels to jeer and hoot, but they didn't. There was something about the Head's attitude which made them hold their voices. There was an almost breathless silence as the Head looked up.

"Boys, this saddens me greatly," he said, in his deep voice. "I am pained and grieved that you should act in this way, during the Christmas holidays of all holidays. If possible, I want to smooth these troubled waters."

There was a note of appeal in Dr. Stafford's voice, and a hope began to rise in my breast that the Rebels would listen to him, that they would take this speech in the spirit it was intended.

"I want you to listen to me for a few moments without interrupting," continued the Head quietly. "You have committed a grave wrong by coming to St. Frank's in this way, and taking unauthorised possession of the Ancient House. Under any ordinary circumstances, such a step would be punishable in the most severe manner, but I cannot help feeling that in this instance there is some justification."

The Head paused, and pulled himself up to his full height.

"Look at me, boys. You see me as you used to see me!" he exclaimed, his voice quivering slightly. "I am myself—I think I am considerate and just. I have always prided myself that I am just. On several occasions recently I have acted cruelly and harshly. For these

lapses I can offer no excuse, but I can assure you that the knowledge of them grieves me far greater than it has hurt you. I do not think there will be any further trouble of that kind. It is not for me to justify myself, or to humble myself before my own schoolboys. Such a thing would be degrading and shameful at any normal time. But, as I have already said, this is quite exceptional. Cannot we be friends? Cannot we forget these past troubles, my boys? It is a time of good fellowship, and it is painful to me that there should be any such breach. If you have suffered because of my strange actions of late, I have suffered torments a hundred times greater. Let it all be forgotten, and go back home and enjoy the rest of your holidays, and come back for the new term in a different frame of mind. Nothing will be remembered of this unfortunate incident."

It was rather a long speech, and every word of it had been uttered with deep, sincere feeling. I held my breath, and all the other Loyalists held theirs. The Head's appeal was one which could hardly fail. In those simple, kindly words, he had asked the Rebels to start everything afresh. Armstrong looked very uncomfortable, and many of his followers regarded him anxiously. They were ready to take their cue from their leader.

"What shall we do about it?" muttered Griffith.

"Better chuck it up, I reckon!" said Doyle. "It's a jolly good chance—no punishment, and we shall get out of it easily. If we stick out it'll lead to all sorts of trouble——"

"If we stick out, we shall win!" said Armstrong obstinately. "And what's the good of chucking up the game just because of these soft words? Once we've surrendered they can do as they like, and we shall never get another chance. And how do we know that the Head won't go off into his savage tempers again?"

"Friends and comrades, I urge you to refuse this proposal!" said Tucker urgently. "Dear, dear, dear! Surely you cannot be so foolish as to be influenced by the silky words of the arch-tyrant? It is impossible! It is a trick, my friends—a trick to place you in the hands of the bully! Didn't the Head do something similar to this weeks

ago—and didn't he have an outbreak only the day after? We have started this rebellion, and we must go through with it. Yes, we must go through with it! Comrades, I call upon you to stand firm!"

"Hear, hear!" said Merrell.

"Stand firm!"

"And what about our vast plans for the future?" went on Tucker anxiously.

"Dear me! Have you overlooked them? We are intent upon forming the Schoolboys' Union, and introducing new ideals. I call upon you, Armstrong, to refuse this offer!"

Armstrong nodded, and leaned over the parapet.

"I'm sorry, sir, but we're standing firm!" he said boldly. "We're not giving way until our demands are met. Mr. Lee knows what they are!"

Dr. Stafford seemed to droop as he heard the words.

"You refuse to respect my wishes, boys?" he asked painfully.

"Yes, we jolly well do!" roared Fullwood suddenly. "We don't want tyrants and savages at St. Frank's! Take that!"

Fullwood suddenly brought his arm round and hurled something with all his force. It was a large, creamy object which came floating down. By pure luck, rather than good aim, it struck the Head full in the face, and splashed away into a thousand blobs. For it was a kind of moist batter, made from flour and water, that Fullwood had thrown with such effect.

The Head staggered, the batter spreading over his face, and streaming down over his collar and waistcoat.

CHAPTER III.

THE SIEGE CONTINUES!



"O H!"

The Rebels themselves were startled, and they didn't laugh at Dr. Stafford's awful discomfiture.

Although defying him, they still had a certain amount of respect for him, and to see him treated thus tended to scare them.

The Loyalists literally shook with fury.

"You cads!" roared Handforth violently. "You snivelling rotters! By George, you'll pay for that one day!"

"Yah, you beasts!"

Nelson Lee stood quite still for a second, and I could see that his fists were clenched. He gave the Rebels one look—a look which was full of biting contempt. Then he turned to Dr. Stafford.

The Head said nothing. Bewildered and dazed, he attempted to wipe the wretched batter from his face. Nelson Lee led him across the Triangle to his own door, realising that the sight of the Head clearing away the batter would probably provoke the Rebels to ribald laughter and jeering.

No action on the part of Armstrong and Co. could have had more effective results. The Rebels had cast the die now, and there could be no drawing back. And the Loyalists were rendered ten times more loyal by this cowardly, unprovoked attack upon Dr. Stafford. It had been the action of a detestable cad.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar of ribald laughter from Fullwood, and Gulliver, and Bell. The other Rebels were silent. Handforth and a number of Loyalists ran forward, without hardly knowing why they did so. Handforth shook his fist fiercely, upwards.

"You wait till I get at you!" he thundered. "You cowardly curs! You unspeakable Huns—attacking the Head like that, after he's spoken to you so rippingly! You ought to be jolly well skinned alive, and then boiled in oil!"

"Go and fry your face!" yelled Fullwood derisively.

Swish! Swish!

Without warning, three of those portions of batter came shooting down at the foremost Loyalists. Two of them struck the snow harmlessly; but the third, as luck would have it, hit Handforth in just the same manner that the Head had been hit. It caught him in the face, and literally obliterated him. He staggered back, gurgling and gasping.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A yell of loud laughter roared out, and, sad to relate, quite a number of Loyalists joined in that shout. Although they were furious with the Rebels, the sight of Handforth struggling with that batter was too much. To see the Head

in such a predicament simply made the juniors cold with rage; but to see Handforth was a totally different matter. Rebels and Loyalists yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gug — gug — grooooh!" gurgled Handforth. "Oh, my goodness! I—I — Gug—gug—grrrh! Somebody's got to be murdered for this!"

And then, all in a moment, the Rebels started. They evidently had plenty of ammunition ready, for they gave it to us hot and strong.

The air became thick with flying objects—bags of soot, bags of flour, rotten apples, potato peelings, and swirling showers of water. Behind the parapet the Rebels had stored all manner of ammunition.

Being unprepared, we were taken aback.

The soot-bags and the flour-bags burst like miniature shells as they struck the ground, sending up showers of blackness or whiteness, according to the contents. And some of them burst upon the juniors themselves.

"Give it to them hot!" yelled Griffith.

"Rebels for ever!"

"Yah, Loyalists!" bellowed Hubbard. "Go back to your den!"

The Loyalists, having no method of retaliation, hastily got out of range. I came upon Tommy Watson and Reginald Pitt, and found them nearly collapsing with laughter. They had escaped untouched, and so had I; but Sir Montie Tregellis-West was truly a weird and wonderful picture.

Attired in his best Etons and topper, he had caught practically everything that had come whizzing down. And there he was, bespattered with soot and flour, with the remains of a rotten apple adorning his necktie. He was fairly smothered, and I couldn't help grinning.

"Hard luck, Montie!" I chuckled.

"Dear old boy, I—I have no words!" gasped Sir Montie. "Begad! Those frightful rotters shall pay for this—they shall, really! I have never felt so shockin'ly fearful in my life!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tregellis-West dashed indoors, and some of the other fellows followed him. Those of us who were untouched remained in the Triangle, staring up at

the parapet of the Ancient House, and watching the Rebels.

And we could see at once that something unusual was taking place. One or two wild yells came down, and we could see figures bobbing about. As a matter of fact, Fullwood and Co. were hardly enjoying themselves.

The instant we retreated, Armstrong had taken action. With a grim face he turned, and gave some sharp orders to some of his followers. They collected round, and marched further along the roof to the spot where Fullwood and Co. were cackling loudly.

"You miserable cads!" said Armstrong hotly.

"Eh?"

"I'm the leader here, and I'm not going to have my orders ignored!" went on Armstrong. "Grab them, you chaps, and hold them tight!"

Fullwood and Co. were grabbed.

"You fool! What's this for?" snarled Fullwood savagely.

"That batter stuff was made to chuck at the chaps—not Dr. Stafford!" rapped out Armstrong. "The Head behaved like a gentleman, whatever he might have been before. It was up to us to treat him with respect, and you cads go and sling that batter in his face!"

"He deserved it!" growled Fullwood. "I'm jolly glad I threw it!"

"You won't be glad by the time we've finished with you!" exclaimed Armstrong curtly. "Four fellows will remain on guard here. All the rest will escort the prisoners down into the Rebel Form-room—"

"Pardon me, my dear comrade—pardon me!" interrupted Tucker. "At present, the Remove Form-room is no longer called by that name. It is the Tribunal Chamber of the Revolution! There we shall deal with traitors to the Cause, and punish all prisoners that happen to fall into our hands. The Form Council of the Soviet—"

"Oh, dry up with your giddy Bolshevism!" growled Armstrong. "We can stand that sort of stuff to amuse us, T. T., but we're not taking it seriously. That's flat! Now then, you chaps, on the march!"

Tucker looked somewhat crestfallen, and Fullwood and Co. were frankly pale with fury. They feared that their punishment would be somewhat drastic.

too; and the cads of Study A were not particularly blessed with courage.

"What's the meanin' of it, anyhow?" demanded Fullwood savagely. "If--if we were wrong in chuckin' that batter at the Head, we're sorry——"

"Awfully sorry!" said Gulliver and Bell promptly.

Armstrong's lips curled.

"An expression of sorrow won't be enough for the Tribunal!" he replied. "It was a rotten piece of work. We've rebelled against authority, and we're openly fighting the Head; but that's no reason why we should act like blackguards. And we're going to teach you that cads aren't wanted!"

A few minutes later the Tribunal Chamber was reached. Tucker at once went and sat upon the judge's stand, which was simply a small table placed upon a larger table, with a chair behind it. But T. T. was soon deposed, and Armstrong sat in his place. Tucker felt rather grieved. He had been supplying all the ideas, and yet he was not allowed to lead! In moments of action, such as this, Tucker was swept aside uncere- moniously.

"Prisoners of the Council, we shall deal with you swiftly!" said Armstrong sternly, gazing at the three culprits. "You stand there without any possible defence. Your crime was witnessed by all our comrades, and any words of excuse from you would be out of place. Your sentence will be pronounced at once."

Fullwood struggled fiercely.

"You cad!" he shouted. "We've done nothin'——"

"Silence!" commanded Armstrong. "Brothers of the Council, we will con- sult!"

Armstrong, and Griffith, and Doyle, and Tucker put their heads together. These four juniors had appointed them- selves the ruling brains of the move- ment. They grandly styled themselves "The Supreme Council of the Revolu- tion." Their word was law; even the other Rebels were not allowed to dispute what they had decreed.

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" said Hubbard approvingly. "No messing about--no delay! In the neck--short and sharp!"

"Silence for the President!" said Simmons sharply.

Simmons was the Grand Usher of the Tribunal, and he rather liked himself. The Rebels, in fact, had thought out all sorts of grand, fancy names. The use of them seemed to give the juniors an air of importance.

Armstrong stood up at the table.

"Your punishment has been con- sidered by the Supreme Council, and it will now be announced," he exclaimed coldly. "You are guilty of an unwar- rantable offence—an offence which is likely to materially harm the great Cause; therefore, you will be spurned by all your comrades for the remainder of the day, and you shall exist upon a diet of bread and water for the period of twenty hours—that is, until breakfast- time to-morrow morning. The Supremo Council has decided!"

Fullwood snorted.

"Think you're clever, I suppose?" he sneered. "Talkin' in that potty way gives you an air of importance, eh? Well, its had no effect upon me, and you can go and eat coke!"

Armstrong ignored him.

"Release the three prisoners!" he commanded. "And remember, com- rades, that these three culprits are to be left entirely to themselves. They must not be addressed on any subject, and the Commander of the Food De- partment will have strict orders that bread-and-water rations only will be served to Fullwood, and Gulliver, and Bell. The Tribunal is dismissed!"

Fullwood and Co. protested hotly and loudly. Nobody took the slightest notice of them. Armstrong had used rather grand terms, but in ordinary schoolboy language, the cads of Study A had been sent to Coventry until the fol- lowing morning.

The precious trio had an idea that the bread-and-water punishment would not actually materialise. But, when dinner-time came, the Rebels were able to sit down to quite a respectable meal. The Food Department was presided over by Clifton, of Study K, who considered himself a good cook. He, with a couple of assistants, had prepared a passable meal. The potatoes were somewhat watery and gritty, but the hungry juniors did not notice this much; and there was tinned meat in plenty, and excellent pudding to finish with. Con- gratulations were heaped upon Clifton's head—until it was revealed that the

puddings had been found all ready made in the store-room. The juniors did well.

Fullwood & Co., with healthy appetites, had to content themselves with several slices of bread and some water. Bribery and threats were useless. Fullwood used every method within his power, but nothing could be done. The Rebels were firm, and the full sentence was carried out.

It was obvious that Armstrong was intent upon conducting his affairs sternly, and he was proving himself to be an able leader. He was not going to allow his followers to do just as they pleased. He was in command, and he was determined that his orders should be obeyed to the letter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REBELS' MANIFESTO!



MORROW, of the Sixth, grinned rather broadly.

"My dear kid, it's no good trying to pull my leg—it can't be done," he observed. "You can take that yarn to the marines. And I don't seem to recollect that this is the first of April!"

Handforth glared.

"But it's the truth, I tell you!" he roared. "Armstrong and a whole crowd of other fellows have pinched the Ancient House and are barring everybody else out. They've been on the job for nearly a week!"

"Rubbish!" laughed Morrow. "Don't be a young ass!"

He brushed past Handforth and walked into the Triangle. Handforth stood staring after him with a face that was red with wrath. It was the first day of the new term, and the morning well advanced. Fellows were just beginning to arrive, and very soon they would be pouring in by every available train.

Morrow was one of the first, and Handforth had stationed himself at the gates in order to reveal the startling news. It was rather disappointing, to say the least, to find that he was only ridiculed.

Of course, Morrow had heard nothing. Not a single word had been allowed

to get into the newspapers, and, as a consequence, all the fellows coming to St. Frank's for the new term were in ignorance with regard to the real state of affairs. It was only natural, perhaps, that they should doubt the extraordinary story when they first heard it.

Four days had elapsed since the Ancient House had been seized, and the situation was very much the same as it had been at the first. The Rebels were still in undisputed possession of their stronghold. There had been no determined attempt to drive them out.

Quite a number of the Loyalists had gone home for the last three days of the holidays, and these, of course, would be returning to-day. But I had remained at St. Frank's with Nelson Lee, bubbling with indignation and helplessness, it is true, but still determined to beat Armstrong in the long run.

As Nelson Lee had told the Head, it would be the best policy, perhaps, to leave the Rebels to themselves—to virtually ignore them. They would probably tire, and would be more likely to listen to reason.

Another motive of Nelson Lee's was that by taking no action the outside public would learn nothing of the truth, for if this story got into the newspapers it would naturally be greatly exaggerated, and it would be very bad for the good name of St. Frank's to have a story published broadcast that a serious rebellion had taken place.

And so, as I have said, things were in practically the same state.

Armstrong & Co. were rather depressed, however. They were getting tired of being couped up in their stronghold, which had now become a prison. They were besieged, and it was impossible for them to venture forth without taking the grave risk of instant capture.

Part of the time had been utilised in strengthening the defences, for the Rebels had no thought of giving in. Having gone so far, they would go the "whole hog." As Armstrong pointed out, they might as well have their fling, the punishment would be no greater.

And now that the first day of term had arrived the Rebels were feeling

quite elated. They knew well enough that there would be some excitement—probably an attack upon their fortress. Well, they were ready for it. Any such diversion would be welcome. The inactivity was very irksome.

Morrow, just the same as all the other seniors, was not merely sceptical, but he laughed at the whole story—until he found out that it was actually true. It was only necessary for him to approach the Ancient House to satisfy himself upon this point.

For he could see that all the windows were barricaded, and that the main door was locked and bolted and heavily barred. There was no admittance. And there, on the roof, the Rebel sentries constantly paraded to and fro, always on the watch.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Morrow amazedly. "It—it's almost impossible!"

Many other seniors arrived, to say nothing of Removites and fags; and as the day progressed excitement ran high; and not only excitement, but anger and indignation.

For these fellows were shut out from their own house. All the Ancient House boys found that they would have to go into the College House for the time being. As a consequence, the College House was likely to be very well filled.

However, Nelson Lee had made special arrangements. Rooms had been altered. The College House common-rooms, for example, were converted into bedrooms, and there had been considerable changes in the domestic quarters. By careful arranging there would be plenty of room for everybody at night, but there would certainly be great difficulties when it came to lessons, for most of the class-rooms were in the Ancient House.

Almost the first move on the Head's part, as soon as the school had collected, was to call everybody into Big Hall. Both Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee made speeches, stating exactly what the Rebels had done, and what they were demanding. The school received the information with mixed feelings. The fact that the Head was himself caused the Upper School, in a body, to cast their vote against the Rebels.

And, amid much cheering and ex-

citement, the school was dismissed, quite prepared to undergo all sorts of minor hardships, rather than let the Rebels have their own way.

"There's no need to worry!" declared Chambers, of the Fifth. "We sha'n't be barred out of the Ancient House for long, I'll guarantee. It won't take us more than an hour or two to shift those young rotters!"

"How are you going to do it?" asked Bryant.

"Oh, leave it to me!" replied Chambers, with a mysterious nod. "I've got several first-class ideas in my head. When I've got them all mapped out I'll soon show you that I mean business."

Bryant was not very hopeful; he knew what Chambers' ideas were like.

Out in the Triangle seniors and juniors had gathered in groups, and all were staring up at the Ancient House roof, which was now lined with Rebels. Fists were shaken, threats were uttered, but Armstrong & Co. merely smiled. It was a somewhat nervous smile, it is true, but they held the upper hand, and they knew it. But the knowledge that the rest of the school was against them did not exactly add to their peace of mind.

And then Armstrong played one of the cards which he had been hiding up his sleeve. While the light of the winter's afternoon was still quite good, he hung forth a great notice, so that all could read. It had apparently been painted upon a couple of large linen sheets, sewn together; and this manifesto was hung out from two upper windows. It was stretched tight, and weights had been placed at the bottom in order to prevent the thing flapping in the breeze.

"Hallo, what's all this?" asked Handforth, as he heard sounds of excitement in the Triangle. "By George, those rotters have hung something out of the windows! Let's go and have a look!"

"Some rubbish, I'll warrant!" I said gruffly.

We got outside and pushed our way through the crowds, until we were at short range; and then, gazing up, we read the precious effusion quite clearly.



"Fire — fire! Help! Help!" I screamed. Suddenly we heard clattering footsteps, and then the door was wrenched open.

It was painted in black, with a red heading, and it ran in this way:

"FOR THE CAUSE OF LIBERTY!"

"Whereas divers juniors have thrown in their lot with the great cause of the peaceful revolution, we, the supreme council, wish to make certain definite and reasonable proposals.

"It was originally demanded that Dr. Malcolm Stafford and Mr. Nelson Lee should leave the school; but we, the supreme council, have now decided that this stipulation shall be withdrawn. We make other and more original proposals. The Rebels under our command are all members of the new schoolboys' union, a body which has been organised and invented for the good of every British schoolboy. In this manifesto we, the supreme council, set forth the aims and objects of this vast society.

"It is the aim of the union to run the school. Masters must unconditionally surrender all control to the boys. Form councils will be inaugurated, and we, the supreme council, will undertake to supervise

the whole work of propaganda and organisation.

"It is impossible to set forth the full aims and hopes of the union; but we, the supreme council, are prepared to send a deputation at any given time to interview those in authority—always providing that the said deputation shall be given full and complete guarantees that they will not be seized.

"The schoolboys' union will immediately organise the form councils, and the form councils will run every Form; but, of course, we, the supreme council, shall rule. The Ancient House will be surrendered at once if our terms are granted. Masters and boys will be allowed to enter—but only on the distinct understanding that the full control of the school is to be given over to the boys themselves.

"Freedom is demanded! Liberty is the right of every one of you! We, the supreme council, urge you to join our ranks! We impress upon you the fact that it is all for your advantage! Roll up! Join the schoolboys' union! The more powerful we become, the more certain will be the victory! Once in full control, the boys of St. Frank's will have advantages which no other school in the kingdom possesses. In the name of the revolution we, the supreme council, urge you to join our ranks! No time is too soon—no time is too late!

"We, the supreme council, await the result of this manifesto with confidence.

"(Signed) **TIMOTHY ARMSTRONG,
LOUIS GRIFFITH,
HAROLD DOYLE,
TIMOTHY TUCKER.**

(Supreme Council of
the Revolution)."

This extraordinary statement was accepted in various ways by the crowds in the Triangle. Yells of derision, roars of laughter, and outbursts of anger were the general order. Some of the fellows, on the other hand, seemed to take it seriously, and talked together in grave tones. But, on the whole, the general opinion was that Armstrong & Co. had gone completely off their rockers.

"Mad—absolutely dotty!" exclaimed Owen major bluntly.

"Say, you're sure right!" agreed Farman, nodding. "Gee! I'm allowing that them guys are real loco! Say, when it comes to fool notions, I'm figgerin' that this durned stunt is sure the limit! I guess there'll be a heap of trouble over this racket!"

"Your guessing-box is in full working order!" said Pitt grimly. "Yes, there'll be trouble all right, my sons!"

"Of course, Tucker is responsible for this," I said, frowning. "He wrote that precious manifesto—it breathes of him in every line. The fat-headed young ass! And Armstrong's a fool to pander to him like this! The Rebels are riding for a fall, or I'm mistaken!"

But there was no doubt that the manifesto had caused a sensation. Most of the decent fellows were furious, but they could not continue to take the thing seriously; it had a humorous side. The very wildness of the Rebels' impossible ideals took the breath out of most fellows.

I was looking rather grim as evening descended, and I gathered a number of trustworthy juniors around me.

"We're going to hold a pow-wow," I said shortly. "To-night, my sons, we've got to get these Rebels out of their burrow!"

"Easier said than done!" remarked Bob Christine, shaking his head.

"Well, we shall never do it unless we make an attempt," I replied. "I've got a scheme, and I'm going to put it into execution as soon as darkness falls. Come on; we'll go and work out the plot in every detail!"

And we proceeded to plot.

CHAPTER V.

LOYALISTS ON THE JOB!



PHEW! A bit of a squeeze, but I expect we shall manage!"

Bob Christine looked round Study Q in the College House, and then managed to find a place on a corner of the table. All the chairs were filled, to say nothing of the window-ledge, the coal-box, and the side cupboard.

Study Q was not particularly big, and

it was made to accommodate three juniors. Its real occupants were Christine and Talmadge and Yorke, of the Remove. But, owing to the fact that Study C was not available, Tregellis-West and Watson and I were sharing the study with its rightful owners.

And, just at the moment, we had visitors in the persons of Handforth and Co., Pitt, De Valerie, and one or two others. We almost expected to see the walls of Study Q bulge outwards for we were packed into the room like sardines.

"Now, out with the idea!" said Pitt briskly. "It's nearly bedtime, and we might as well get it all out and dried before we eat. Trot it out."

"Right!" said Handforth promptly.

"I'm talking to Nipper, you ass!"

"My idea's the best," said Handforth. "I'll just explain—"

A howl of many voices drowned him.

"You dotty asses!" roared Handforth above the din. "What's the idea of trying to smother me like that? My idea is quite simple—I shall want about fifty chaps, and we'll all storm the Ancient House by force. We'll break down the main door by using a tree trunk, and then we'll light a fire in the lobby. That'll smoke the rotters out!"

"Wonderful!" said Bob Christine admiringly. "Did you think of that all by yourself?"

"Of course I did, you duffer!"

"Then you deserve to be boiled!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—"

"My dear Handy," I interrupted gently, "that idea of yours seems to have one serious drawback, otherwise it's all right. If you light a bonfire in the lobby, it's more than likely that the whole Ancient House will become a bonfire. We should certainly get the Rebels out, but don't you think it would be a bit too expensive?"

Handforth stared.

"Well, I'm blessed!" he exclaimed. "That's queer! I hadn't thought of that, you know! Yes, the Ancient House might catch alight. But, still, we could prevent that by using the hose as soon as the smoke had driven the Rebels out of their giddy burrows—"

Handforth was unable to proceed further, for he was once more howled down. As he still showed signs of activity, he was seized, jammed in a

corner, and sat on by about six juniors. After that Handforth decided that the game wasn't worth the candle.

"Jealousy—that's what it is!" he said bitterly, as he tried to straighten himself. "Rank jealousy! You know my wheeze is terrific, but you're all envious of me. All right—my hour will come some day!"

Order was restored at last.

"Now we're going to talk seriously," I said in crisp tones. "We can't allow this rebellion to continue, you chaps. I've only been waiting until I could get hold of a good crowd—and now I've got it. If we're going to smash Armstrong and Co., we shall have to use a large force, and I think we can count upon the Fifth lending a hand."

"We don't want the Fifth in this!" said Watson bluntly.

"Perhaps we don't—but we've got to have them!" I replied. "It's a matter of necessity. There aren't enough of us in the Remove to do the job effectively. Chambers and his set are tearing their hair because they're barred out of the Ancient House, and they'll be only too willing to join in the fray. They're hefty chaps, and just the kind we need."

"Nipper's right!" said Christine. "The bigger the force, the more certain the success. And, after all, this isn't merely a Remove show. The whole school's involved. We'll have as many Fifth Form chaps as we can get. Go ahead, Nipper."

"It'll be pitch dark to-night," I said. "There's no moon, and the sky is clouded. At seven o'clock to the minute a frontal attack must be launched upon the Ancient House. We'll have ladders and planks, and all the rest of it. Armstrong and his men will probably use snowballs and soot, and whiting—"

"And buckets of cold water!" said Watson, shivering.

"Yes, that's pretty certain," I agreed. "But we're prepared this time, and we shall know what to do. There are plenty of oilskins obtainable, and those chaps who lead the attack up the ladders can be well protected against cold water. I sha'n't take any part in this attack, neither will half of you fellows in this room."

"What shall we do—look on?" asked Pitt.

"No, we shall be engaged upon a more dangerous enterprise," I replied. "At seven o'clock—at exactly the same

moment as the big attack starts—I shall be leading an assault upon the enemy's rear. I don't mean that I shall be at the back of the Ancient House, but underneath it."

"Eh!"

"Underneath it?"

"In the cellars, to be exact."

The juniors stared at me.

"And how do you propose to get into the cellars without beating the Rebels first?" asked Pitt sarcastically. "I suppose you'll burrow under the earth, and make a secret tunnel—"

"No, there's one already made," I interrupted calmly.

"What do you mean?"

"I think some of you fellows know about it," I said. "There's a secret passage leading from the old tower right down into the Ancient House cellars."

"That's right," said Tommy Watson, nodding. "We've used it two or three times."

"Well, that secret passage continues, and leads from the cellars right down into the old vaults underneath the monastery ruins," I said. "I suppose you're beginning to understand now? My scheme is simple. Six of us will go down into the vaults, and at exactly seven o'clock we will go through into the Ancient House cellar. Then, while the Rebels are all busily engaged in repulsing the main attack, we'll strike a swift blow from the rear. It'll mean instant confusion in the enemy's ranks—and during the muddle it'll be a pity if we can't storm the fortress."

"Great!"

"First-class!"

"Ripping!"

All the juniors approved, and there wasn't a single fellow who had any objections to make. Handforth declared that he had thought of the very same idea himself, and if he'd been given a minute longer, he would have trotted it out.

Handy was quite surprised when we laughed at him, and was decidedly indignant when I suggested that he should take part in the main attack.

"Rather not!" he declared. "I'm going with you—down into the cellars. That's the most important work, and it's only right that the best brains should be used on such a job."

Personally, I didn't quite approve of Handforth coming with me. I even offered him the leadership of the Re-

move forces for the occasion, but he refused. And, at last, in order to keep him quiet, I agreed that he should accompany us upon the underground trip. Fateful decision!

The next two hours were filled to the brim with active preparation. Chambers and Co. were approached, and were only too eager to join in. In fact, they had been getting up some sort of scheme of their own to attack these insolent holders of the Ancient House.

Naturally, Chambers wanted to be the leader, and for the sake of peace he was allowed to think that he was the leader. As a matter of fact, I entrusted Reginald Pitt with the task of directing the main attack.

At half-past six, after a hasty tea, the secret party got prepared. It consisted of Tregellis-West, Watson, Handforth, De Valerie, Church, and myself. We were thoroughly armed with pea-shooters, pepper, and siphons of soda-water. A somewhat extraordinary assortment of ammunition, but likely to be effective.

The pea-shooters could only be used at long range, for such weapons were useless in a hand-to-hand fight. I considered that we were quite justified in using the pepper. It wouldn't do any harm, and it would seriously affect the morale of the enemy. It would act, in a way, in something after the same style as poison-gas. And the soda-water siphons were our trump card.

We each carried two, slung in a kind of satchet over our shoulders. It was not necessary for us to do any running or strenuous exercise, so we could carry the syphons with safety and with ease. At close range the hissing jets of water would drive off the Rebels very effectively.

"They'll never be able to stand up against us," I declared. "Just imagine for yourselves what it'll be like—six hissing jets of soda-water. We can use the stuff in spurts, so to speak, and each siphon will last a long time. Two or three minutes will be ample, I expect—time enough for the main attackers to get in."

We were all ready, and we made our way to the old monastery ruins, and then, using electric torches, passed down the crumbling circular staircase to the vault. The Triangle had been quiet and peaceful as we crossed it, and Armstrong and Co. had not the slightest indica-

tion that a big attack was being prepared. The Ancient House was ablaze with lights, and the Rebels were in great evidence.

At last we arrived down in the vault. Here I led the way across to a part of the old stone wall which looked absolutely solid. It only took me a few moments to locate the spot upon which to press. I did so, and a portion of the wall swung back revealing a narrow, black cavity. A dank, earthy smell came out to us.

"Looks jolly creepy," said Watson, in a low voice.

"There's nothing to be scared of——"

"Who's scared?" demanded Tommy hotly.

"Keep your hair on, my son," I grinned. "This passage leads straight through the ground to the Ancient House. We've simply got to mount some steps, and then we shall find ourselves in the main cellar."

We passed along the underground tunnel in single file. I led the way with an electric torch, and Church brought up the rear, with another. And at last, without incident, we arrived at the foot of some steep stone steps, which led straight upwards into pitchy darkness. We continued on our way, and then further progress was barred by a blank stone wall.

"Here we are!" I murmured, pulling out my watch. "It's just six minutes to seven, so we haven't got long to wait. I put this watch right by the school clock before we came down, so there can't be any bloomer. I think we'd better pass through this doorway and get into the cellar as a start. It's bound to be empty, and we shall just have time to have a look round."

I had an idea that the door leading into the building itself would be locked. If this turned out to be the case, I might be able to pick it before the appointed hour. Nelson Lee had taught me something of the art of conquering locked doors.

We were soon in the cellar, and, as we had anticipated, it was bare and empty. But when we arrived at the top of the stairs, we found that the door was closed but unlocked. I ventured to open it a trifle, and faint sounds came to us. It was just about two minutes to seven now.

"Get yourselves ready!" I murmured softly. "We shall soon be off!"

"Let me have a look!" said Handforth. "I'll lead the way—"

"Not so loud, you fathead!" I hissed.

"Oh, don't rot!" said Handforth. "Who's going to hear? This part of the house is deserted— Yow—yaroooh!"

Handforth gave a mighty howl as De Valerie accidentally stepped on his toe in the darkness. There was not the slightest necessity for Handforth to make such a din. I caught my breath in sharply.

"You—you idiot!" I panted. "Don't make that noise—"

"Who trod on my toe?" roared Handforth.

Before anybody could answer him there came a rush of feet along the corridor. The next instant the cellar was flooded with light, for somebody had pressed the switch outside. Then the door opened, and Griffith looked in upon us with startled, goggling eyes.

"Grab him!" I said desperately.

But Griffith dodged back, and ran like mad.

"Help, help!" he bellowed. "Loyalists! Help! They've got in through the cellar! Rescue, Rebels!"

He created enough noise to awaken Rip Van Winkle, and I gritted my teeth with rage. Without actually in-

tending to do so, Handforth had messed up everything. The frontal attack hadn't commenced yet, and we should therefore have the entire Rebel forces about our ears. I made up my mind on the instant.

"There's no help for it—we've got to retreat!" I snapped. "Quick! We'll get through into the tunnel again."

"Rather not!" snorted Handforth. "We're going through with it now—no backing out!"

Handforth was obstinate—it was the breath of life to him to oppose everything that anybody else said. If I suggested staying he would certainly have declared that our best policy was to retreat! He just loved being different.

"Look here Handy, you've caused enough trouble!" I said curtly.

"I've caused trouble!" roared Handforth indignantly. "Why, you prize dummy, some fathead trod on my toe—"

"We won't agree!" I cut in. "We'll get out while we can."

I decided on this as the best policy, because it would give the main attack a good chance to get going. Not finding us in the cellar, the Rebels would dash off again upon hearing the turmoil from above. We could then enter again and proceed with our original programme.

While talking, we had descended the stairs, and now arrived at the secret door. Handforth seized it, and swung it to.

"It's all rot, going off like this!" he growled. "I don't believe in backing out of a thing—"

"You silly idiot, it's simply a piece of strategy!" I hissed, exasperated beyond measure. "Let me come!"

I hastily felt for the door. But, in spite of all my efforts, I couldn't get it open. Handforth had closed it hard, and probably the catch had jammed. Given five minutes, I could have opened it, but I was hardly allowed five seconds.

For just then the Rebels came pouring down into the cellar in full force—thirteen or fourteen of them—with Armstrong in the forefront.

"Loyalists!" he ejaculated in amazement. "How the dickens did you get in here?"

It wasn't likely that we should tell him, and he certainly did not imagine that we had come through an under-

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ground tunnel. for the Rebels knew nothing about it. They must have assumed that we had entered by some other means, and had then crept down into the cellar to conceal ourselves.

Armstrong and Co. had come fully armed, and we were taken at a distinct disadvantage—we had never imagined that we should be compelled to deal with such a force as this.

Even as they were rushing down the stairs, they commenced battering us with bags of soot, which burst with blinding effect. In a moment the cellar was trying to convert itself into a fine imitation of a London fog—only about ten times more so. And this, finally, ruined our chances.

For, in this smother, it was practically impossible for us to use our soda siphons. And to hurl the pepper would have been to hurt ourselves as much as the enemy.

And so, in a very short time the battle resolved itself into a hand-to-hand affair. Outnumbered as we were, the result was inevitable. We were overpowered.

And then, in the middle of all the excitement, one of the Rebels came tearing in with the news that a big attack had started from the outside. Armstrong acted on the instant. Handkerchiefs were whipped out, and our wrists and ankles were bound. Then all the Rebels except one rushed off. This last one stayed behind on guard, and any attempt on our part to free ourselves was doomed to failure.

Our feelings were rather tense.

Through no fault of our own—although, perhaps Handforth was rather to blame—our part of the attack had failed. How were the others faring?

CHAPTER VI.

PRISONERS OF WAR!



ARMSTRONG came down into the cellar with a glitter in his eye, and with flushed cheeks and disarranged clothing. I regarded him eagerly, and with a sinking feeling, for his very attitude told me that things had gone well—for the Rebels.

Only twenty minutes had elapsed.

We had remained down in the cellar, bound up and guarded, and we had heard

echoes of the conflict which was raging above. Had we been alone it would have been an easy matter for us to wriggle out of our bonds. But with one of the enemy on sentry duty we could do nothing in this line.

Armstrong regarded us with grim amusement.

"Oh, so you thought you would spring a surprise on us, eh?" he asked. "Well, my sons, it failed—it failed horribly! And we're going to make an example of you that'll cause all the other fellows to open their giddy eyes."

"You—you rotters!" shouted Handforth. "If we'd had another ten minutes we could have wiped you up—"

He was interrupted by a yell of derision. Other Rebels had come down, and this fact alone proved that the peril from above had been dealt with. Armstrong gave an order, and we were jerked to our feet and stood in a row.

"Take them straight into the Tribunal Chamber!" said Armstrong sharply. "They will be placed on trial at once, and sentenced. They are prisoners of war, and will be treated as such. The court-martial will not be delayed!"

We were forced to march out of the study. Our ankles had been freed, but our hands were still tied behind our backs. And, in due course, we arrived in the Tribunal Chamber. The lights were full on, and everything was looking rather impressive. There was no sound of conflict from our side. The rapid manner in which the Rebels had dealt with the main attack surprised me. I couldn't imagine how it was that the Loyalists had been beaten off so effectively.

Armstrong mounted to the raised table, and Griffith and Doyle and Tucker stood round. Other Rebels guarded us closely. All our weapons and ammunition had been taken from us in the cellar.

"The Supreme Council will hear this case!" declared Armstrong. "Nipper, as chief of the prisoners, will be the only one allowed to speak. All the other captives must remain silent!"

"You'll have a job to keep me silent!" snorted Handforth.

"Or they will be gagged!" concluded Armstrong grimly.

Handforth said no more, and I decided that it would be better to face this thing

with an easy manner. There was nothing to be gained by showing Armstrong that we were alarmed. That was just what he wanted.

"You've whacked us this time, just when we were expecting to whack you," I said. "How did you manage to do it, Armstrong?"

The Rebel leader grinned.

"Well, you gave yourselves away," he replied. "Handforth yelled, I believe, and one of our scouts heard him. That brought about your downfall. With regard to the other attack, we polished it off in no time."

"How?" I asked. "Their forces were much greater than yours."

"About three to one, I should judge," said Armstrong calmly. "But holding a fortress is different from attacking it, as you ought to know. And we didn't merely rely upon soot and buckets of water. You probably have some dim recollection that we've got fire hydrants in the Ancient House."

"By Jove!" I muttered, taking a deep breath.

"We knew that something was coming—our scouts scented it soon after half-past six," went on Armstrong. "And when the attack was launched we simply turned on the hoses from six different quarters. The attack fizzled out in next to no time! Every chap who came near was drenched to the skin. There are four fellows at the hoses now—ready to turn on the water at the first alarm."

"You boulder!" I exclaimed half admiringly. "That was certainly the best thing you could do. But it won't always be like this, Armstrong. Sooner or later, we're going to have you out of the Ancient House. You ought to have sense enough to realise that you can't defy the whole school."

"Before long we hope to gain many new members," said Armstrong grimly. "In fact, I'll predict that the Rebels gain at least three dozen new recruits before two days have passed. And once we've got a majority we shall be certain of victory. We're just holding out until our time comes. But I'm not going to talk to you about these things—I know you can't be converted. How did you get in here?"

"You'd like to know—but you won't!" I replied.

"You were pretty smart, anyhow," said Armstrong. "I've searched every-

where, but our defences seem sound. I can only conclude that you sneaked in through some window, and put the barricade up again. Anyhow, we needn't waste time on that. You walked into the trap, and now you've got to suffer. Comrades, what shall the sentence be?"

"I reckon we'd better tar and feather the bounders!" said Griffiths.

"Good idea, but we haven't got any tar," said the Rebel chief. "But there's something else we have got—red and white paint! There are three or four tins of it in the storeroom."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The other Rebels yelled at the suggestion.

"Prisoners at the bar, I hereby sentence you to be painted red, roped together, and sent back to your own territory," exclaimed Armstrong solemnly. "You will serve as an example to all the others—they will learn that our power is great!"

"You'd better not paint me red!" roared Handforth. "You—you rotters! Why, that stuff will poison us!"

"Rats!" said Armstrong. "It won't be on long enough to hurt you. You only need to wash yourselves in turpentine for about an hour, and you'll be all right. But we can't afford to miss a chance like this. Your beloved friends have got to see what we can do!"

"Rebels for ever!" shouted Doyle.

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for the Schoolboys' Union!"

The Rebels made a great din, and then the preparations were commenced for our punishment. We were helpless with rage. Against such numbers we could do nothing. Even if our wrists had been unbound we should not have stood an earthly chance. As it was, we had to submit to every order.

Some of the Rebels went out, and returned in a short time with two big tins of paint and all sorts of other things, including brushes. We looked on with growing alarm and uneasiness.

"You don't really mean that about the paint?" asked Watson hotly.

"Don't we?" said Armstrong. "You'll soon find out whether we mean it or not, my lad! We're going to make you thoroughly understand that it doesn't pay to come butting into our affairs. You've attacked us, and you've failed. Therefore, you've got to undergo the

usual punishment meted out to prisoners of war!"

Handforth snorted.

"Of course, it's usual to paint prisoners of war red all over?" he demanded sarcastically. "Well, we can't do anything now, but just you wait! By George! Just you wait until our turn comes! We'll paint you inside as well as outside!"

The Rebels laughed jeeringly. It was their turn now. They had always been under my leadership in the Remove, and it afforded them particular delight to treat us just as their humour dictated.

And, apart from all this, they seemed to take the whole thing very seriously. We were prisoners, and, as it was impossible to hold us, the Rebels were determined to send us back to our own forces—but we should be somewhat decorated.

"Take the first prisoner and stand him forward!" commanded Armstrong.

The first prisoner in the line happened to be Handforth. He was moved into the centre of the room, and the bonds were removed from his wrists. The expected happened. Without pausing for an instant Handforth let fly. He probably knew at the outset that the case was hopeless, and that the odds were overwhelming. But it afforded him huge satisfaction to punch a few noses.

Crash! Biff! Bang!

"Yow—yaroooooh!"

"Ow—ow!"

Clifton and Hubbard went reeling back, Handforth's lightning-like punches having caught them on their noses almost before they knew it. Another Rebel received a heavy drive, too, but it struck him on the chest, and he staggered back, grunting. Clifton's nose was already streaming red.

"Hold him!" shouted Armstrong. "Grab him, you asses!"

But it was easier to give such an order than to carry it out. Handforth was like a whirlwind. He simply let fly in every direction at once. But he was very foolhardy nevertheless. He might have known that he would ultimately suffer more than his victims. He descended to the floor like a sack of potatoes, and the back of his head met the boards with a thud which nearly shook the room.

Two rebels sat on Handforth's chest, two more sprawled over his legs, and finally, another took a seat on Hand-

forth's face. The impulsive leader of Study D was very effectively silenced.

"Got him!" said Armstrong. "Pull him to his feet!"

Handforth was roughly jerked up.

"Had enough?" demanded Armstrong curtly.

Handforth seemed rather dazed. But this experience was quite enough for him. He was not likely to go off into another outburst of violence.

"Strip him!" ordered the Rebel leader.

"I say, Armstrong, that's a bit too thick!" protested De Valerie. "Dash it all, you're not going to paint us all over, are you?"

Armstrong took no notice.

"Strip the prisoner!" he repeated curtly.

And, in spite of Handforth's weak protest, the order was put into execution. Handforth's jacket and waistcoat were torn off, and then his trousers were removed. He stood shivering in his shirt and underclothes. The rest of us looked on with growing alarm and indignation. But it was not quite so bad as we had feared.

"Turn all his clothes inside out, and make him put them on again!" directed Armstrong. "Waste no time over it. If he struggles, punch his nose!"

Naturally, Handforth struggled at once, but not for long. Clifton and Hubbard were only too pleased to get their own back. They could do it easily, and without danger, for Handforth was held. They both delivered hefty punches upon the mark, which was certainly quite big enough to hit with accuracy. Handforth's nose was not precisely insignificant.

He roared and struggled in vain. The threats he uttered were truly blood-curdling, and the fate of Armstrong and Co., according to Handforth, would ultimately be of the most dire and horrible description.

He apparently thought it wiser to submit tamely after that, and it was certainly far less painful. His clothing was all turned inside out. And then he was forced to dress. By the time he had got into his things, he presented such a diverting spectacle that the Rebels howled. There is something extremely ludicrous about a person attired in clothes that are turned inside out.

"Good!" chuckled Armstrong. "Now take the second prisoner!"

"Begad!" ejaculated Sir Montie in dismay. "This—this is frightfully awkward, dear old boys! These Rebels are positively fiendish—they are, really! I can think of nothin' more diabolical than to make a fellow turn his clothes inside out! It's the most shockin' sentence that could be passed!"

Montie was the next in line, and he had more sense than to resist. Handforth's condition was a walking example of what resistance led to. With such numbers against us, we could nothing but obey.

And so, one by one, we were taken and treated as Handforth had been treated. All our clothing was turned inside out, and after we were dressed in this weird fashion, our wrists were once more bound.

Then the Rebels proceeded with the next part of the programme. The tins of paint were opened and brushes were flourished. And then the ordeal began. Red paint of a particularly startling brilliance was daubed over our faces and necks. Certainly the Rebels had a little consideration, for they left our eyes clear, and only put two or three brushfuls in our mouths. And then, to complete the ornamentation, they took other brushes, and smeared our heads with white enamel! The result of this can easily be imagined.

The enamel was thick, and it matted our hair in the most frightful manner. And with red faces, red hands, and white heads, we were placed in a line. The Rebels roared with laughter, and we felt like sinking through the floor with shame. This ordeal was hard to go through. But, inwardly, I told myself that one day we should get even with Armstrong and Co. for this outrage.

Our clothing, of course, was utterly ruined. The paint had been daubed on carelessly, and great blobs and smears were decorating every part of our attire. Then, as a final move, a long length of rope was brought, and we were all tied round each leg, and when we walked it was only possible to take tiny paces. This made it necessary for us to progress with a kind of hop and a jump.

And, in that fashion, herded by the Rebels, we were taken to the side door of the Ancient House, where the barricades had been removed. Two Rebels

stood by with a hose, in case any of the Loyalists happened to be outside.

But all was quiet, and we were thrust out into the darkness.

"So long!" grinned Armstrong. "Hope your pals find it amusing. And the next time we catch any prisoners, we'll go one better!"

The door slammed, and it was bolted and barred and barricaded. Out in the cold Triangle, we stood in a roped line, uncomfortable, smelly with paint, and hardly daring to move. Our chief thoughts were to get away and clean ourselves in secret. But this was not to be, for, as luck would have it, a figure came lumbering across the Triangle, carrying a storm lantern. The extremely bowed legs of the newcomer told us at once that it was Mr. Cuttle, the porter.

He came on, dimly aware that some figures were in front of him.

"There was something going on here!" said Josh Cuttle gloomily. "Why was there something going on? Ask me! Because these here youngsters was having high old jinks in the Ancient House!"

The porter came nearer, and the light from his lantern gleamed upon us. The effect was rather startling. Mr. Cuttle stopped dead, we heard him catch his breath in, and then the lantern clattered to the ground, and went out.

"There was demons about!" shouted Mr. Cuttle hoarsely. "There was star-ing red hobgobberlins running wild! Things was bad!"

He rushed away, shouting at the top of his voice. And, of course, a number of fellows near the College House heard him, and were attracted. Pitt was among them, and they came hurrying forward.

"That's done it!" groaned De Valerie. "No escape now! Oh, my goodness! Won't they yell?"

The fellows crowded round Mr. Cuttle, and then came rushing towards us. Two or three of them had electric torches, and they flashed these out. We were revealed in the full brilliance of the white light. Gasps and shouts went up, which rapidly turned to yells of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who—who are they?"

"My only hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

We were forced forward into the light from the windows of the College House. And there we were surrounded by an

ever increasing crowd. They surged round us, roaring with laughter.

But some of them calmed down after a while, and gradually realised that the situation was not quite so humorous as it seemed. The Rebels had done this! Armstrong and Co. had gained the first victory of the campaign.

Without the slightest doubt, the Rebel were more than holding their own!

CHAPTER VII.

THE REAL ENEMY MAKES A MOVE.



NELSON LEE glanced over his shoulder, and paused in his stride. I had just called to him, and he waited until I came up.

"Going out, Guv'nor?" I asked.

"Merely down to the village, young'un," replied Nelson Lee.

"Can I come with you?"

"If you like."

I fell into pace beside the guv'nor, and we passed out of the Triangle into Bell-ton Lane. It was the following afternoon—a half-holiday. Strictly speaking, this ought not to have been a half-holiday, but the disorganisation at St. Franks was so complete that lessons were almost impossible. There was still an odour of paint about me, although I had removed all traces so far as appearances went.

We had had an awful task the previous evening, removing that paint. It had taken us nothing short of three hours, and by the end of that time we were sore and ruddy and decidedly out of temper. But all things come to an end in time, and when we went to bed we were feeling more like ourselves.

All the morning the Rebels had been quiet, and no sign of activity had been displayed by either side. Armstrong and Co. were rather inclined to gloat over their success. A big attack had been launched upon them, and they had repulsed it with astonishing ease.

I had learnt a few details of the Loyalist disaster. Pitt had led his forces well, and, with the aid of the Fifth, it ought to have been comparatively easy to break through the Rebel defences. But those jets of water from the hoses had taken the attackers completely by surprise.



We gradually got the Head into the chair. He fought like a tiger, scratching and trying to bite. While Nelson Lee held him, I tied him up.

Blinded by the icy sprays, they had been unable to approach the enemy stronghold, let alone force an entrance.

Nelson Lee was looking rather grave and troubled as he walked along, and I was not surprised to see this. Things were in rather a bad state in the school, and there was little likelihood of a rapid change coming.

"What do you reckon the result will be, guv'nor?" I asked.

"My dear Nipper, I cannot imagine," said Nelson Lee. "Fortunately, we have succeeded in keeping this rebellion quite private. Certain people in the village know about it, but no reports have reached the newspapers. I think Armstrong and his supporters will soon be conquered, but I am not worrying about that aspect of the case at the moment."

"You're thinking about Trenton?" I inquired.

"Yes, Nipper, I am confining my attentions to our unworthy science-master," said Nelson Lee grimly. "Mr. Trenton is an interesting problem, and I have at last succeeded in clipping his wings. He is rather helpless, for he is unable to use his evil drug against Dr. Stafford."

"With you always on the spot, he doesn't get a look in," I said, "and the Head, as a consequence, is his old self. That's all to the good, sir, because

nothing is happening to justify the Rebels in their action."

"Exactly, my boy," said Nelson Lee. "I am in a position to arrest Trenton just when I like, on a charge of conspiracy and calculated assault!"

"Then why don't you do it, sir?"

"Because the time is not yet quite ripe," said Lee. "There are other men in addition to Trenton—more important men. I have come to the conclusion that Trenton is only a tool in the hands of more dangerous people. What is the use of my causing the arrest of this tool and letting those who wield him escape? I am after the larger fry, Nipper—and I shall get them!"

"Who are they, sir?"

"They are a powerful, secret organisation of intellectual men," replied Nelson Lee. "They are clever and cunning, and their designs are a danger to the whole community. That is why I am content to let this insufferable state of affairs to continue. The ultimate reward will be well worth it. Dear me! How extremely absurd of me! I have left my pipe on the study table, Nipper."

Nelson Lee came to a halt, feeling in his pockets. We had progressed only a short distance down the lane.

"Shall I run back and get it, guv'nor?" I asked promptly.

"That is just what I was waiting for you to suggest!" smiled Lee drily. "I am not exactly a slave to tobacco, Nipper, but I always enjoy a pipe while I am out walking. It won't take you a couple of minutes. I'll be walking on, and I'll wait for you by the stile."

"Right you are, sir!" I said. "I'll be back in a couple of shakes."

I hurried off, eager to hear more concerning Mr. Trenton's intellectual allies.

Nelson Lee continued on, and soon came to the little stile which was half-hidden by the hedges. On the other side of that stile there was a footpath which led through the heart of Bellton Wood.

The afternoon was cold, and rather blustery. Heavy banks of clouds in the sky gave promise of more snow. Nelson Lee leaned against the stile thinking deeply. He had only been there a few moments when he fancied he heard a slight sound. Certainly, he was not expecting any attack at such a moment. But, as he turned he was rather stag-

gered to see two men towering over him. They were both attired in heavy overcoats and mufflers and they wore motor-ing goggles. It was impossible to recognise their faces.

Crash!

Something solid struck Nelson Lee on the head, crushing his hat, and sending a thousand flashing lights before his eyes. He was just aware of a sickening pain, and the blinding lights turned to inky blackness. The famous detective crumpled up into a heap against the stile.

"Got him first time!" muttered one of the men. "Confoundedly risky, but we've waited long enough, and we might not get another chance. It's worth a little risk."

The two men, as a matter of fact, had been watching the entrance of the school for some hours—carefully concealed by the hedge on the other side of the road. And they had seen me leave the guv'nor. Acting on the impulse of the moment, they had crept down behind the hedge, and had sprung upon Lee without warning.

And even as they hoisted Nelson Lee up, and held his limp form between them, one of the men took a whistle from his pocket and blew a shrill blast. Only a minute elapsed before a powerful landaulette came out of a gateway lower down the lane, and roared up. Until then the chauffeur had been busily engaged in making imaginary repairs to the engine. Any chance passer-by would never have imagined that the car was there for a set purpose.

"Quick!" said one of the men. "Inside with him!"

Nelson Lee was bundled into the back of the landaulette, and the two men followed, and the door was slammed. Then the car leapt forward, a trail of filmy blue smoke issuing powerfully from the rear exhaust.

And just at that very moment I came trotting down the lane. My heart was in my mouth, my face was pale, and a tremendous alarm overwhelmed me. For I had just caught a glimpse of this dastardly work. I had seen a limp bundle being pushed into the car. I had seen the two figures scramble in after it. And I had seen the landaulette shoot forward like a greyhound released from the leash.

"Good heavens!" I gasped. "The guv'nor!"

In a second I knew the truth. That limp form had been the guv'nor! And he had been captured by Trenton's allies! Just when we were discussing these men, they came along and brought evidence of their reality!

I raced down the lane like a madman. Why I did so I couldn't tell, for it was obviously impossible for me to overtake the car on foot. Already it had passed round the bend towards the village.

And, after a moment or two, I came to a halt, breathing hard, and nearly choking with helplessness. I had seen Nelson Lee kidnapped—and yet I could do nothing! A hundred desperate thoughts chased themselves through my fevered mind.

The best thing, perhaps, would be to tear into the village and 'phone up the Bannington police. But, even so, what could they do? At the best of times they were not a particularly bright lot, and I had not the slightest confidence in them. How would they be able to get on the track of this motor-car?

And while I was thinking in that way—only a few seconds after the car had disappeared—a strident roar fell upon my ears. And then a motor-cyclist came shooting round the bend towards me. He was travelling at great speed—recklessly, in fact, and he was evidently on his way to St. Frank's.

My heart leapt into my throat as the possibilities presented themselves. I could have yelled aloud with joy, for I recognised the man who sat astride the cycle. He was Simpson, the young manager of the big motor garage at Bannington. I knew him fairly well.

I waved my hands wildly, and ran forward. He at once shut off the throttle, and applied his brakes. He came to a smart standstill, and grinned at me amiably. I ran to him.

"Why, what's the matter, Master Nipper?" asked Simpson. "You're looking properly scared. I'm just on my way to the Mount—"

"I want you to lend me your jigger!" I gasped.

Simpson stared.

"What's the joke?" he asked.

"Joke!" I shouted hoarsely. "It's the most urgent thing I've ever needed. Did you pass a big landaulette a minute ago?"

"Yes; it took the Bannington Road."

"My guv'nor's in there—Mr. Nelson Lee!" I exclaimed. "He's just been kidnapped by three of his enemies, and they're carrying him off! Lend me your bike, and I'll chase them! Don't stop to talk; let me have it!"

Simpson acted with commendable promptitude. He leapt out of the saddle, and pulled off his thick gloves.

"Here you are!" he said briskly. "I don't know what my boss'll say, but I'll leave that for Mr. Lee to settle. I know you're an expert on a motor-bike, anyhow. Take it, and good luck!"

If I had had more time I would have hugged him on the spot. I didn't even wait to take the gloves he offered me, but leapt into the saddle, opened the throttle, and roared away. Simpson stood looking after me, scratching his head. Probably he regretted his action already. But my tone had been so urgent that he had hardly been able to refuse me.

The machine was a high-powered one, and really belonged to a big side-car combination solo. It was capable of going at any speed up to sixty miles an hour. I simply went through Bellton Village like a flash.

Those few people who were in the High Street stared after me in astonishment, and with strong disapproval. As a matter of fact, I was riding recklessly, and qualifying for a severe summons.

But my only thought was to overtake that car. I opened the throttle to its widest extent, and along the straight stretch out of the village the motor-bike simply leapt from under me, roaring over the ground like something alive.

I don't think I've ever travelled quite so fast before. Fortunately, the road was as hard as a rock. The frost was severe, and the snowy surface had been beaten down by continual traffic. And there were no other vehicles on the road.

I sped along, the wind whistling past me like a hurricane. My ears were icy, my hands numb, but I never thought of this. I rounded a gradual bend, and in front of me lay a long, straight stretch

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of nearly a mile, with a sharp hill in the distance. At the foot of this hill the landaulette was speeding along quite sedately, and I was overhauling it at a great pace.

To tell the truth, the car was travelling fast, but in comparison to my speed it seemed to be crawling. I think I must have been doing fifty as I tore along in the landaulette's wake.

It reached the top of the hill just as I was at the bottom, and I hurled myself up that rise like a car on a switch-back. The powerful motor beneath me throbbed with the very joy of being let out for once. And when I topped the rise, I found myself only a few hundred yards in the rear of the car.

I overhauled it rapidly, and at the precise moment throttled down. In my desperation I had already decided what I should do. It was foolhardy and risky, but I didn't care. If I had not been quite so eager, it would have been all the better. Later reflection told me that my best policy would have been to overtake the car, keep just ahead of it, and have it stopped in Bannington. But my sole thought at the moment was to get at grips with these kidnapping scoundrels.

I came alongside, and for a brief second the landaulette and my motorcycle travelled parallel. Then, before I could change my mind, I hurled myself out of the saddle. At that second I was travelling only a bare foot away from the car's running board. I grabbed desperately at the door handle, and I don't exactly know what happened afterwards.

I got my grip all right, was lifted clean out of the saddle, and jammed against the side of the car. My feet found the board, and I clung there—safe. The motor bike had crashed over into a heap near the frozen ditch on the near side of the road.

The landaulette swayed dizzily for a second, and then the brakes were applied. I collected myself together, forced my way into the driver's compartment, and attacked him. I struck at his head, and delivered a punch which must have hurt him considerably. His hands were forced from the steering-wheel, and the car lurched up the grassy bank, and came to a stop at a dizzy angle—but quite unharmed.

"You infernal young hound!" snarled

the driver harshly. "What in the name of thunder——"

He spluttered as I struck him again. Then the door at the rear was flung open, and the two men in goggles came out. Before I could turn, my legs were seized. I was hauled out backwards, fighting like a wild cat.

Then, helpless in the grasp of the two men, I was pushed bodily into the interior of the car. One of the men whipped a muffler round my body, fastening my arms to my sides.

"The little brat!" snapped the man. "It's Nipper—Lee's youngster! I never dreamed he'd have the nerve to do anything like this! We shall have to take him along now—it's the only way."

I fell back, limp and sick at heart. The only ray of comfort for me was that Nelson Lee was now conscious. He was close against me, bound up and gagged. I realised that I had been a fool to act as I had done. But it was too late now to regret. Impulse had led me astray only on one or two occasions. This was one of them.

Two minutes later the car was once more speeding along. I had caught Nelson Lee's kidnappers—but they had retaliated by catching me!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ESCAPE!



DARKNESS enveloped the countryside.

And the big landaulette was still speeding along. Exactly where we were I couldn't imagine, but I had a kind of idea that we had not been going in a direct line all the time.

I believed, in fact, that our captors had driven along by-lanes in order to kill time—until darkness fell. And now evening was upon us, and the clouded sky rendered everything inky black.

I wondered how long it would be before it came to an end. By this time, had we been going straight, we should have reached a spot fifty or sixty miles away. It was impossible to see anything, for the car blinds were closely drawn. And those two men in the goggles were grim and silent. They smoked almost continuously, but exchanged no words.

Nelson Lee had recovered, I believed. But, being bound up and gagged, he

could not speak or make any active movement.

And then, while I was still thinking, the landaulette gradually came to a standstill. The door was opened, and one of the men got out. I heard him talking with the driver in a low voice. Then the pair of them came to the door.

"We'll take Lee first," said one of the pair. "The boy can remain here for the time. He can't escape while he is guarded."

Nelson Lee was lifted out of the car, and then the ropes round his ankles were loosened, so that he could just walk. He noticed that the car was standing in pitch darkness, with no light showing.

A keen scent in the air—sharp and fresh—told Nelson Lee that the sea was near at hand. And, indeed, he was able to detect that he was on the top of a cliff. Twinkling lights in the distance revealed a town or a village. And the faint phosphorescence from the sea enabled the detective to make out that there was a bay here.

He smiled grimly to himself, and wondered why he had not been blindfolded. Perhaps these men thought that there was no chance of the prisoners recognising the spot in the darkness.

But Lee did recognise it.

The twinkling lights were those of the little town of Caistowe—only three miles from St. Frank's! And the stretch of water was Caistowe Bay, a quiet, well-protected harbour for small vessels. Caistowe Bay was well known along the coast for its snugness during rough weather.

The landaulette had obviously toured all over the countryside in order to waste time. And now it had come along to the cliff edge, unobserved in the pitchy darkness. Nelson Lee was wondering what the next move would be.

It was not long before he found out.

His two captors forced him down a cliff path—a path he knew quite well, for he had traversed it on many an occasion. He was beginning to understand that these men did not care whether he recognised the spot or not.

Arriving at the foot of the path, the shingly beach was reached. The tide was fairly low, and the sea only moderate. The wind had dropped, and

the waves which were breaking were perfectly harmless.

And there, drawn up just out of reach of the surf, was a small rowing-boat. Nelson Lee was led straight to it, and lifted in. A burly individual in a reefer jacket and peaked cap was standing near. He had a red, beery face, and a clay pipe was projecting from a corner of his mouth.

"Look after this man, and wait until we return!" said one of the captors. "We are bringing another one."

"'Ere, guv'nor, that wasn't in the contract, swab me, if it was!" growled the burly individual. "You reckoned as only one——"

"I can't help that; we were compelled to bring a boy as well," interrupted the other. "He won't make any difference. It'll be just as easy for you to look after the two as one. I'll pay you more!"

The burly one grunted, and said nothing. And, seven minutes later, I was removed from the landaulette, and taken down the cliff path to the beach. And I was placed in the boat beside Nelson Lee.

"I'll stay here for the time being," said the man who had been doing most of the speaking. "You others had better take the car away at once. Go direct to London, and wait for me there. I shall come up by the last train from Caistowe."

The car driver and the other man left almost at once, and there was now no doubt that our captors had no fear of our knowing where we were. The leader stepped into the boat, and the man in the reefer jacket pushed off, and picked up the oars.

As we went across the bay my thoughts were busy. I could see exactly what had been done. The men of the car were smooth-tongued and educated. They were Trenton's allies. And they had evidently planned to capture Nelson Lee, and had fixed things up in advance.

This rough seafaring man was being paid, no doubt, to keep Nelson Lee locked away. And the idea was to hold him a prisoner while Trenton completed his scoundrelly work at St. Frank's. It was quite a simple plot, and certainly looked as though it would be successful.

I wondered where we should finally arrive—probably an old tramp steamer. But this did not seem very likely, after all, for there were too many men on a

steamer. It would be something smaller—perhaps a mere tug.

In the end it proved to be a fairly big motor launch.

The vessel was lying there in the bay, at anchor, with her lights showing, and everything in order. One man was on the deck as we came up, and he helped to make the boat fast.

We were taken on board, and the hatchway was raised. Immediately afterwards we found ourselves in the little after-cabin. It was very comfortable, a cheerful fire was burning in the stove, and the light was quite good.

Nelson Lee and I were placed upon a comfortable lounge, and then the two rough men retired, leaving us alone with the other. He took care to remain in the shadow, so that we could not see him distinctly.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Lee, that it should be necessary to treat you in this manner," he said coldly. "I need not go into any explanations. It will be sufficient for me to say that you will not be harmed, and that your bonds will be removed almost at once, so that you will be free to move about this cabin. But you will be locked in, and at the first attempt to escape you will be rebound, and kept helpless."

Neither the guv'nor nor I said anything—we couldn't.

"The two men in charge of this launch have received definite instructions from me to treat you well," went on the man. "But, as I have already said, if you cause trouble, it will be rather serious for you. In the morning the launch will depart from this anchorage, and go further along the coast."

Without another word the begoggled man turned, and passed out. I glanced at Nelson Lee, and he returned my look. Then the door opened again, and all three of our captors came in.

I was seized, and my bonds were loosened. At the same time I was searched—only roughly, and it was clear that the men were looking for weapons, and nothing else. They found none. Nelson Lee was also searched, and his revolver was taken from him.

"They're pretty helpless now," said the burly man. "I don't reckon they'll give us much trouble, mate. The little 'un can soon get out o' these 'ere ropes, and free the other. And if they try

any dodges it won't take us two shakes to give 'em something to be going on with."

They all retired, and the door was closed. It was a much stronger door than was usually fitted to the cabin of a motor launch. It was locked, and two heavy bolts were shot into position.

The very instant we were alone I struggled free from my bonds, and hastened to free Nelson Lee. Then we stood up, worked our arms and legs about, and looked at one another.

"Well, this is a pretty go, guv'nor," I said, at length.

"You are right, Nipper," said Nelson Lee. "Why on earth did you jump on the car in that reckless fashion? You ought to have shown more strategy. Your best plan would have been to wait until we were in Bannington—"

"And then stop the car there," I interrupted. "Yes, I know that, guv'nor. But you don't think of these things when you're nearly dotty with worry. I knew they'd got you, and all I wanted to do was to get to your side."

Nelson Lee patted me on the shoulder.

"Well, Nipper, I can't scold you," he smiled. "We're in a pretty tight corner, but not necessarily helpless. There seems to be no way of escape from this prison, but we have been in worse fixes before now!"

He glanced round as he was speaking, and I noticed that the skylight above was completely covered by a heavy wooden casing. This was battened down securely, making escape by that means out of the question. The only other way out of the cabin was by the door—and that, as we knew, was too strong for us.

There was a little ventilator, but it was a cunningly contrived one, and did not look directly out into the open. We might have been able to smash the door down if we had been left alone, but those two men were on board. At the first blow they would be down.

"We can't do anything, guv'nor," I said miserably. "Of course, there might be a chance when those blighters come and give us some food—"

"No chance whatever, Nipper," interrupted Lee. "The door will only be opened a short distance, you may be sure, and both the men will be carrying revolvers. We sha'n't be able to attack them. Besides, there seems to be plenty

of food in the little cupboard here, and we may not be disturbed for three or four days."

I looked rather blank.

"Well, that's done it!" I exclaimed. "Of course, you're right, sir. That's the very idea. They've given us plenty of biscuits and tinned stuff and bread and water, and we can do all our own cooking down here. We sha'n't be let out until the bonders are ready to set us free. I say, guv'nor, it's awful! And what about those villains who brought us here? What will they get up to while we're in captivity?"

Nelson Lee looked grave.

"It is not what they will get up to—but what Trenton will get up to!" he said grimly. "There is not the slightest doubt, Nipper, that we have been brought here so that Trenton can have a free hand at St. Frank's. Of late, Trenton has been helpless, because I was always on the spot. I was never far from Dr. Stafford's side. But now it will be different. Trenton will have the Head at his mercy!"

I said nothing. The possibilities which presented themselves made speech seem ridiculous. And here we were, helpless!

I jammed my hands into my pockets, and paced up and down, frowning ferociously. Then my face became flushed, and my eyes glittered. In one of my pockets I had felt three round objects like pill-boxes. Only a few minutes before meeting Nelson Lee at the school gates I had called myself an ass for leaving those objects in my pocket. I had intended removing them at once.

And now I was thankful that I had not done so, for I could see that they might be of great use to us in this extremity. I had left them in my pocket from the previous night—for they were to have been used during our attack upon the Rebel stronghold. And what were they?

Simply three little fireworks—red flares, to be exact.

My original idea had been to use them in order to confuse Armstrong and Co., and to make them think possibly that a fire had broken out in one of the Ancient House passages. A panic might have resulted—and it's always easy to overpower an enemy who is in a panic.

And my heart leapt up as I realised that the very same thing might be done here!

What a lucky thing I had left those little flares in my pocket—quite carelessly, unconsciously, with never a thought of how they might be used. And how lucky that these men had not taken them while I was being searched. They had not even taken them out to see what they were.

"Guv'nor!" I panted. "I've got an idea!"

"Good gracious, Nipper, you startled me!" said Nelson Lee, as I grabbed his arm. "What is the matter? What idea is this——"

"Look here!" I exclaimed, thrusting the red flares before his eyes. "All we've got to do is to make a fake fire! These things make a tremendous glare, and cause clouds and clouds of smoke. We'll light these and then scream for help. Don't you see——"

"Upon my soul!" interrupted Nelson Lee quickly. "My lad it's a brain wave! You're right! It might work! Let me see them!"

He took the flares, and examined them closely. They were not the ordinary cheap kind, but an expensive brand that I had obtained for the one purpose of mimicking a fire. The glare they gave forth was not the dazzling ray of the ordinary firework, but a kind of orange glow. These men might not have been deceived by an ordinary display of red fire.

"Yes, they ought to work splendidly," said Nelson Lee tensely. "But we must make a few other preparations, too. For example, we'll leave the fireplace open, and place some damp paper on it—perhaps that'll cause an additional smoke. And we must rehearse the whole thing to begin with."

For the next twenty minutes we were busy, and then everything was ready for the working out of our plans. The flares were placed in three positions where they would be quite safe—where they could not possibly cause a real conflagration. And in front of them were placed smaller objects which would hide the actual source of flame from the eyes of the two men.

And then, at the right moment, matches were placed to the little fuses. Although small, these flares would burn for at least two minutes, giving forth a brilliant, blinding glare and volumes of acrid smoke.

I hardly expected the result to be what it was.

Simultaneously the three flares burst forth. They flickered and hissed, and smoke rolled up in clouds. Anybody entering that cabin suddenly would certainly believe that the whole place was a raging mass of flames.

We started the chorus without delay, hammering and battering upon the door with all our strength, and creating a tremendous din.

"Help! Help! Help!" I screamed. "Fire—fire! Help! Help!"

Nelson Lee went on in the same way, and we waited anxiously. Our only fear was that the men would suspect a trick, and would take no notice. But suddenly we heard clattering footsteps come tumbling down the companion. The door was unbolted, unlocked, and wrenched open.

"By the Blue Peter!" shouted the burly man hoarsely.

A dense volume of smoke billowed out as he opened the door. The cabin within was a raging inferno of lurid fire. It was so realistic that even I began to believe that the launch had actually caught on.

Nelson Lee was on his knees on the floor, groping feebly. He reached out a distant hand to the man.

"Help!" he panted huskily. "Save the boy! Don't mind me—save the boy!"

It was beautifully done, and the result was exactly as we had anticipated. Instead of making any attempt to save me; the burly man flew into a terrified panic. It wasn't surprising. The fire looked ghastly. It seemed as though the whole launch enveloped into a roaring furnace within a minute.

The man turned, breathing hard, and blundered up the companion.

"Get the boat, Jim!" he shrieked. "The blamed launch is afire! Get the boat ready! We'll be burnt up if you don't!"

Nelson Lee gave me a swift glance, and we moved out of the doorway, and half-ascended the companion. We could hear the frantic efforts of the men to get the boat away. We didn't care a jot now what happened. Even if the rascals realised the truth we were all right.

And we had got out of our prison in less than an hour! Considering everything, it was rather extraordinary. It was just an example of how ingenuity could overcome the most overwhelming odds.

Nelson Lee only paused for a moment while he made sure that the flares were perfectly safe, and could do no harm. Then he led the way up the companion, and we found ourselves on deck. The boat was rowing away seawards.

"The cowardly scum!" said Nelson Lee curtly. "They were quite ready to save their own skins, and to leave us to our fate!"

"It's rather a good thing they did, guv'nor!" I grinned. "If they'd started making efforts to rescue us, they would have rumbled the whole giddy show! What do we do now?"

"Swim ashore!" replied Lee shortly.

I was rather taken aback, but there was no help for it. It would take too long to get the launch into motion. It was rather a big one, and the engines, probably, were not primed for immediate action.

And speed was essential. The guv'nor seemed tremendously anxious to get ashore without the loss of a moment. Together we stood on the deck, and took the plunge. The water was icy, and chilled us to the marrow.

We struck out strongly for the shore.

CHAPTER IX.

NELSON LEE USES FORCE!



"THANK goodness!" I said fervently.

We were on our way to St. Frank's. Things had been happening swiftly. Upon getting ashore, after our swim, we found ourselves only a short distance from the promenade. And we knew a certain Mr. Fielding, who lived in a house just on the water front.

He was the owner of several powerful motor-boats. Nelson Lee had hired one of these once or twice, and Mr. Fielding was quite a decent gentleman. We went straight to his place, briefly explained, and he provided us with warm clothing. And a brisk rub down and a complete change made us feel ourselves.

We had come to no actual harm because of our wetting—although we should probably develop colds on the following day. But, after all, a cold is nothing to worry about.

What the two men were thinking now we could not imagine. They must have

discovered that the fire had been a fraud. Ten minutes would have been sufficient for that. They had probably returned to the launch, and were now on board—viewing the means by which we had fooled them, and heartily cursing themselves, to say nothing of cursing us.

And so it was still comparatively early in the evening, and, in a hired motor-car, we were hurrying towards St. Frank's. Nelson Lee, in spite of the fact that we had escaped, was looking grave and worried.

For my part, I was ready to hug myself with glee. The way we had bested our captors was the richest thing I had known for many a day. And it had all happened so quickly that we hardly had time to know where we were.

"What's the matter, guv'nor?" I asked. "There's no need to be so glum, is there? We've diddled the bounders —"

"Yes, we have certainly succeeded in doing that, Nipper," agreed Nelson Lee. "But I am filled with anxiety and worry. Trenton is not likely to have lost much time, and we can fairly take it for granted that he has been up to some of his devilry."

I whistled.

"You mean the Head?" I asked.

"Yes, I mean the Head," said Nelson Lee quietly.

"But don't you think Trenton will have waited until late?"

"I do not think so," replied the guv'nor. "It is more than likely that he has taken advantage of the first opportunity. Frankly, Nipper, I am fearful of what we shall find at St. Frank's!"

"My hat! It'll be pretty rotten if the Head's gone off into one of his attacks!" I said breathlessly. "It's just the very thing that's needed to drive dozens of fellows into Armstrong's band of Rebels. If the Head starts any of his tricks, half the Fifth will join the Rebels at once—to say nothing of the fags. It'll be simply awful if anything like that's happened, sir!"

Nelson Lee made no reply, but I knew well enough that he was certain in his own mind that we should find St. Frank's in a state of chaos and turmoil. It is always better to anticipate the worst.

And at last we arrived at the main

gateway. Nelson Lee pulled the driver up, and we alighted, dismissing the car there.

We walked in through the gateway, and I clutched at the guv'nor's sleeve.

"All quiet, sir!" I murmured.

"Yes, so it seems," said Nelson Lee. "Splendid, Nipper! This is better than I thought. But we must lose no time in going to Dr. Stafford—and we must not be deceived by this apparently quiet state of affairs. There may be serious trouble inside."

We walked across the Triangle, and two or three juniors looked at us rather curiously from the College House doorway. One of them was Bob Christine, and another Tommy Watson. They probably recognised me, and wondered where I had been all this time, and why I was now going towards the Head's door with Nelson Lee.

But I let them wonder, and they did not come across to question me. Nelson Lee's presence prevented them—and I was glad. We arrived at the Head's door, and passed in.

And then, a minute later, we entered Dr. Stafford's study.

As we did so Nelson Lee gave a quick, keen glance. The Head was within the apartment. So far so good. At all events, we were in time to prevent anything serious happening. The Head had not ventured forth to spread disaster.

But the first glance I gave him told me that Nelson Lee's fears were not idle ones. Mr. Trenton had been active!

Dr. Stafford rose to his feet, and glared at us savagely.

"Get out of this study!" he snarled. "Who in the name of impudence told you to come here? Get out before I throw you out!"

This was enough to tell us the truth—even if the Head's expression had failed. Trenton had administered a dose of his poisonous drug—the drug which converted an ordinarily kindly man into a savage monster.

It had apparently been a stiff dose, too. For Trenton was intent upon bringing about a serious climax to the whole business. If only the Head could be made violent enough, this would certainly happen.

"Please control yourself, Dr. Stafford!" said Nelson Lee gently. "Keep calm, and do your utmost to get yourself in hand!"

There was something impressive in Nelson Lee's tone—something which made the Headmaster pull himself up and stand perfectly still. At other times—during previous attacks—Nelson Lee's stern will had beaten Mr. Trenton's drug.

But now it seemed that Lee would fail. After that one brief pause, Dr. Stafford swung round, and swept half a dozen things off the desk with a crash—the telephone, the ink-stand, and an electric standard.

"Confound you!" he roared. "You come here and order me what I am to do! I'll show you whether I'll stand such treatment!"

It was rather horrible.

The Head, usually such a gentle man, was like a wild beast. He crouched there, his shoulders seeming to hunch up. And his face had taken on a distorted, animal-like snarl.

And then, before Nelson Lee could touch him, he leapt aside. He swung up a heavy paper-weight, and hurled it with all his force. Only in the nick of time did Nelson Lee dodge, and the paper-weight thudded harmlessly against the wall.

Lee rushed to the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. His face was pale and set. He had never dreamed that the Head would be in such a state as this. It was quite appalling.

And I felt sick at heart with horror.

Supposing the Head had gone out into the school in this condition? He would have probably committed murder—and certainly he would have caused injury to somebody. The hideous scandal resulting would have echoed and re-echoed throughout the whole country.

And we had only just come in time to avert it!

A cold rage filled me. This was Trenton's doing! The awful scoundrel had purposely given the Headmaster an extra stiff dose to bring about this effect. He had wasted no time after the gov'nor had been got out of the way.

Dr. Stafford came charging at Lee like some monster out of a nightmare. The detective held himself ready, and flashed a glance at me.

"You'll be needed, Nipper!" he rapped out.

"I'm ready, sir!" I panted.

And next second the Headmaster and Nelson Lee were locked together. They

struggled violently, and I rushed in. The Head seemed to possess added strength in his frenzy. But Nelson Lee's muscles were like whipcord.

And, inch by inch, we forced the Head down. It was an awful thing to do. To lay violent hands upon the Headmaster of St. Frank's! But we were doing it all for his own sake—and, afterwards, he would thank us.

"Towards the chair, Nipper—the big one!" panted Lee.

We gradually got the Head into the chair. He fought like a tiger, scratching and trying to bite. But, at last, we had him down, and then Nelson Lee held him there while I grabbed some stout cord from a bookshelf. With this cord we tied Dr. Stafford up in the chair like a trussed chicken.

And then, breathing hard, we stood back.

"It couldn't be helped, Nipper—we had to do it!" said Nelson Lee hoarsely. "It's terrible, but the consequences would have been ghastly if the Head had got out of this study. I'll bring an end to this business as soon as I can now! It's getting too awful!"

Dr. Stafford was tearing at his bonds like a man demented. But yet, in a way, it was different. He was not mad—he was not in a frenzy. He knew exactly who we were, and what we had done. And he glared at us with pure, diabolical hatred in his eyes. I couldn't look at him.

That drug had taken all the goodness out of his nature, and had apparently added to the bad. Realising at last that he could not free himself, he nearly choked with impotent rage.

"You infernal hounds!" he snarled. "You shall pay for this! I'll kill you both—yes, I'll kill you! If my hands were free I'd throttle you as you stand! I hate you—I hate you!"

He finished up with a gurgling noise in his throat, and then seemed to go into a limp heap in the chair. But only for a moment or two. He raved and became horribly violent, trying to bite the cord which bound him.

I was forcibly reminded of the spectacle which Nelson Lee had presented when he had accidentally taken a dose of Trenton's drug. Nelson Lee had looked just the same—and he had tried to kill me!

Taken in small quantities, this stuff

produced harshness and savagery. In large quantities it converted a man into a murderer. Left to himself, the Head would certainly have done appalling damage. We had saved more than one life by the application of force.

Quite suddenly, and unexpectedly, the end came.

Dr. Stafford, in the middle of a frenzied speech, seemed to crumple up into a heap. He lay in the chair, still, and with all the colour dying out of his face. For a horrible moment I thought that he was dead.

"Guv'nor!" I muttered. "Look! he's—he's——"

Nelson Lee took no notice of me, but quickly pulled out his brandy flask. Then he forced some of the spirit between the Head's teeth, which were tightly clenched. He felt his pulse, and then nodded to me.

"It is the usual collapse," he murmured. "He will sleep now."

Two spots of colour returned to Dr. Stafford's cheeks. And shortly afterwards he was unbound, and placed in the comfortable easy chair in front of the fire. And now he was sleeping

heavily. It seemed to me that he would go on sleeping for hours.

Nelson Lee looked at me, and took hold of my shoulder.

"We've done well, Nipper," he said quietly. "Thank Heaven we arrived in time! The Head will be all right now. To-morrow he will be weak, but not seriously affected. You had better go now."

I looked round.

"Don't you think it would be as well to tidy up, sir?" I asked.

"Well, yes, perhaps we had better do that," said the guv'nor.

And, without any further delay, we busied ourselves, and soon had the study looking more shipshape. Only one or two things had been broken, and a considerable quantity of ink spilt. But by the time we had finished, there was very little indication that any violence had taken place.

I was about to take my departure when the Head stirred. He opened his eyes, and I glanced at the guv'nor. As a matter of fact, I was half afraid that

(Continued on page 36.)

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(Continued from page 35.)

Dr. Stafford might be going off again. But he held himself forward, and passed a hand weakly over his brow.

"Mr. Lee—Nipper!" he murmured. "Oh, I—I remember! Heaven help me! How ghastly—how appallingly horrible! I—I acted like a murderer!"

"Please do not exert yourself, Dr. Stafford," said Lee softly. "I understand perfectly. Nipper and I are only too glad that we were here to help you in your sore hour of need."

"Thank you, Mr. Lee—I thank you with all my heart!" whispered the Head fervently. "You were wise—you were very clever. It was the only way—to force me to keep calm. I tried to kill you—I tried——"

"Please don't!" interrupted Lee. "We will discuss the matter when you are stronger, Dr. Stafford. The end will soon come now. I have all my plans in readiness for the final coup. Your enemies will be frustrated, and the days of trouble are nearly at an end."

"I hope so—indeed, I hope so!" said the Head feebly. "I don't know how this drug was given to me—possibly in my tea. I was foolish enough to leave it standing in the study while I went to Mr. Stockdale's room——"

"That was it, no doubt," said Nelson Lee. "Please try to sleep now."

The Head obeyed, and was soon sleeping peacefully. Nelson Lee turned to me, and his eyes were gleaming.

"We have gained all the honours of the day, Nipper," he exclaimed. "Trenton's finish is near at hand, and I am very thankful, too. This terrible business is getting on my nerves."

But it was only a figure of speech. The famous detective's nerves were as hard and keen as ever.

Some little time later in the evening Nelson Lee happened to march past Mr. Trenton in one of the corridors. The science master said nothing, but he turned slightly pale, and did not dare to look into Lee's eyes.

For Trenton must have known that Nelson Lee was aware of the real facts. And the next development in this singular affair promised to be dramatic.

Both Nelson Lee and I believed that the end was quite close. But unexpected events intervened—and, although the climax was approaching, there were dark clouds gathering—clouds that would descend and almost envelop us!

THE END.

TO MY READERS

The Rebels have so far enjoyed a temporary triumph, for all attempts to oust them from their position have failed. In next week's story, "THE COMMUNIST SCHOOL!" their victory would appear to be complete. Armstrong and his followers will have reversed the old order of school discipline. The Head and Nelson Lee being deposed for the time being, the other masters are absolutely in the power of the Rebels. In order to avoid a public scandal, involving the Head and his strange outbursts of violence, the assistant masters are advised by Lee to carry on with their classes as best they can. It is made very difficult for them, since all punishments are meted out and carried into effect by a tribunal composed of the Rebel leaders. The Loyalists, while not accepting the new regime, after many exciting tussles with the Rebels, eventually decide to lay low but not inactive. I have said enough, I think, to show that next week's story will be packed full of lively incidents and humour.

Other attractions for next week will be the Special New Year Number of "NIPPER'S MAGAZINE," and another FINE PHOTO-PLATE of a FAMOUS FOOTBALLER.

THE EDITOR.



TOM TARTAR AT SCHOOL

by **HARCOURT BURRAGE**

(The World's Most Famous
School Story).

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Tom Tartar arrives at Mr. Wrasper's school, where discipline is maintained by moral force only. Tom makes several friends and a few enemies. He is initiated into the "Eagles," a party opposed to the "Cuckoos," or the rollers of the school.

(Now read on.)

CHAPTER IX.

Tom Meets Miss Smatterly

"YOU'LL get into a frightful row for that!" remarked Turrell. "Old Durdles is sure to report the matter to Wrasper."

Tom shrugged his shoulders indifferently, and presently, having traversed the field, the three boys found themselves in a grove, which Sam Smith explained was part of the grounds of the Misses Smatterly's School for Young Ladies.

Tom had heard this establishment mentioned more than once during his sojourn at Wrasper's, and he was interested to hear more.

Sam Smith explained that the Cecilia Academy was kept by two sisters, who were very strict indeed with their young charges. Both the ladies were of middle-age, and both stood nearly six feet in height.

Even as Sam was imparting these facts, three pretty girls, of about the boys' own age, came tripping along the grove.

Smiling pertly, they approached to within a few yards; then halted and giggled.

"Hallo!" greeted Sam Smith, who was evidently an old acquaintance. "Didn't expect to run against you to-day—did we, Turrell?"

"By Jove, no!" answered Larry, somewhat untruthfully; for, as a matter of fact, both he and Sam had led the way to the

grove in the hope of encountering some of their girl friends of Cecilia Academy.

"Let me introduce a new chum of ours," said Sam. "His name's Tom Tartar, and he's a jolly good sort! You'll like Tom!"

Evidently the three girls—whose names were Lottie Fenn, Dolly Sifkins, and Winnie Brown—did like Tom, for, after the formal introduction they chatted to him in lively fashion, almost ignoring Sam Smith and Larry Turrell.

But suddenly the conversation was cut short by a feminine, but very deep, voice from among the trees.

"Girls, girls—where are you?"

"Miss Smatterly!" gasped Lottie Fenn.

All the girls turned white, and Sam Smith and Turrell looked alarmed.

Tom, however, kept cool.

"There is more than one way out here," he said.

"No, there is not," replied Lottie Fenn. "This end of the wood has a high wooden fence round it. If she comes on she is sure to find us."

"In that case," said Tom, "somebody ought to go and meet her. I had better do so. Keep here quiet all of you. I'll put the old lady off the scent."

And Tom started off.

Miss Smatterly was still calling for the girls, and as she had a voice as powerful as a drill-sergeant's, Tom did not hesitate about which way he ought to go.

It may be admitted that he did not like the voice, and when a short stroll brought him within sight of the owner of it he felt that he had no ordinary foe to deal with.

Miss Smatterly was not only very tall, but nature had made her very strong and wiry.

Her shoulders were square, her arms long, and as she strode towards Tom with a gleam of ferocity in her eyes, he thought of a certain champion walker he had once seen doing ten miles against time.

"Boy," she cried, "what are you doing here? How dare you intrude on my private domain?"

Tom stared up vacantly at her, and then, with his right-arm extended, pointed ahead.

"What do you mean?" asked Miss Smatterly. "Speak, boy!"

Tom groaned softly and pointed again.

Wrath began to subside on Miss Smatterly's face, and fear arose in its stead.

"Are you dumb?" she hissed.

"No," replied Tom, in a voice that apparently came from his boots. "Oh, no—but—there—there——"

"But why should I go there?" asked Miss Smatterly, turning white.

"Dead—murdered!" groaned Tom, and then he covered his face with his hands, and shook with some sort of emotion.

"Who is it, boy—speak?" cried Miss Smatterly in alarm.

"Oh, go back for help!" said Tom, raising his head and clasping his hands. "Get a man to help me to carry the body! Oh! Oh! It's such a ghastly sight. Come and look at it!"

"I can't," said Miss Smatterly hurriedly, "but I'll send my gardener; he's a highly respectable man with a family, and—and used to these things."

"Send for the police," said Tom, in deep tragic tones. "Let him get all sorts of help, and if you will——"

"No, I won't!" said Miss Smatterly, without waiting to hear what was required of her. "I shall go into the house. Have you seen any young ladies about?"

"Young what?" asked Tom, with a face like that of a wooden doll.

"I see you haven't," said Miss Smatterly. "I dare say they are indoors. I'll go and see."

And she fairly fled away.

Tom gave her time to get out of hearing, and then started towards the grove.

But he had no need to go there. Lottie Fenn and the others had cautiously followed Tom and hidden from view, had heard all that had passed between him and the schoolmistress.

"Oh, wasn't it cleverly done?" Lottie exclaimed. "I never knew anything like it."

"You fellows clear out with me," said Tom; "and you girls had better get back to the school by the shortest route. Good-bye!"

The boys lost no time in clearing out of the wood and getting clear away—out of eye-sight and ear-shot as far as Miss Smatterly was concerned.

They got back to the playground of their own school without meeting with a living person.

"Oh, shouldn't I like to see Diggles looking for the body!" Sam chortled.

"Who is Diggles?" asked Tom.

"Miss Smatterly's gardener," replied Sam.

"A most cantankerous old cuss who—Hullo, here's that nosey beast, Pubsey Wrasper! Looks as if he's going to ask us something!"

The headmaster's son halted in front of them.

"Where have you fellows been?" he demanded.

"Why do you ask?" returned Tom.

"Because I want to know."

"Then go on wanting!"

"I'll make you pay for your low impudence before long," said Pubsey, flushing. Tom walked quietly up to him.

"My what?" he said.

"N-nothing!" faltered Pubsey, turning pale, and edging away hurriedly.

"I'm glad you stood up to him, Tartar," said the cautious McLara; "but, all the same, I shouldn't go out of my way to rile him if I were you. It's as well not to place yourself in the power of Pubsey."

"Look here, you fellows," said Tom, "I am going to enjoy myself here as I've done in other places. I'm beginning to see what sort of people I shall have to deal with, and I think I see fun looming in the distance. I'm certainly not going to be trodden on by fellows like Jonah Worrey and Pubsey. By the way, Pubsey plays in the match on Saturday, of course."

"Yes," said Turrell—"he's captain."

"Oh, captain, is he? Well, look here, you chaps, I vote we play without Pubsey!"

The others stared at him aghast.

"Play without Pubsey!" exclaimed Sam.

"Why, you might as well, according to his father, talk of playing without a ball!"

"Is he considered so essential?"

"Yes, Tom, he is!"

"But for all that I intend the match shall be played without him."

"How?"

"Listen to me," said Tom, and then, in an undertone, he laid before them a plan that fairly took their breath away.

"The thing can be worked all right," Tom concluded. "Now, then, are you in with me or not? I would do it alone if I could, but that's impossible."

"I'm on for one," said Sam.

"So am I," said Turrell.

"And if nothing happens to keep me out of the way maybe I'll join in," said McLara the cautious.

"I don't like maybes," replied Tom.

"You may take that answer as being all right from Cautious Johnny," said Sam. "It is as a fervent promise from anybody else."

"Shake hands all round on it," said Tom, "it shall be done."

"On the faith of the Eagles," said Sam, "we will do it."

(To be continued.)

1922

will be a big year for detective stories! See this week's issue of the Union Jack Library — Sexton Blake's own paper — 2d.

NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

The Editor's Den.

No. 6.

Dec. 31, 1921.

Editorial Office,
Study C, Ancient House,
St. Frank's College.

My Dear Readers,—I am very sorry to disappoint you with such little fare this week. Unfortunately—some might say fortunately—the long complete story in "The Nelson Lee Library" has run out longer than was anticipated. This means that I must hold over our very special New Year number until next week.

Hoping that you have all spent a jolly Christmas,

Ever your affectionate chum,
NIPPER (Editor).

Topical Budget.

Quite a number of fellows are looking forward to seeing the pantomimes this Christmas. We would like to point out that we have a continuous performance of our own pantomime daily—in Study D.

Failing to obtain more exciting recreation, Fullwood has recently been reading all sorts of novels, and he recently remarked that he had become quite a book-worm. We are glad he admits it—although everybody else, of course, knows that he's been a worm ever since he arrived at St. Frank's.

"Admitted, my good sir!"—as Timothy Tucker might have said when Handforth dashed into his study for the purpose of pummeling him.



We beg to offer our congratulations to the worthy vicar of Bellton, the Rev. Ethelbert Goodchild. We learn that he has just become a grandfather, and it goes without saying that the baby is a good child.

The reason for the peculiar odour pervading the Remove passage a few evenings ago, is now explained. Fatty Little was busily frying some pancakes in Study L. Now we know what became of our tin of bicycle oil!

A very stout visitor—an old boy—was presented to the school this week. Mr. Bulkiman had done something very creditable at some time or other both to himself and the school, and Morrow called out: "Three cheers for Mr. Bulkiman!" Timothy Tucker did not quite catch the request, and began to place, one after another—three chairs.

A correspondent asks: "Have I ever seen a pillow fight in the dormitory?" More than that, my good friend! I have seen a pillar box in the high street!

Nicodemus Trotwood tore out of the school the other eve in a frantic endeavour to catch the last post. He succeeded quite



beyond his expectations. He caught the first post he came to—a lamp post—with the side of his head!

Who's Who at St. Frank's

STUDY E.

JACK (NORMAN) GREY—who is the same age as his study chum, Pitt. In appearance, he is the opposite of Pitt, having a sturdy physique, fair hair and blue eyes of the Saxon type. He was brought up in Bermondsey under the name of Jack Mason, having been separated from his father, Sir Crawford Grey, Bart., and restored to the baronet some years later by means of a golden locket. His home now is at "Grey Towers," in Berkshire. Although he was christened Norman Grey, he is still known by the former Christian name of "Jack." He is a typical English lad, with a strong sense of humour and sport. As a footballer, he plays a good forward game for the Junior Eleven. Jack Grey made his first appearance in No. 178 of "The Nelson Lee Library" in a story called, "The Boy from Bermondsey."



THE GREAT FOOTER MATCH.

The Remove v. Bannington Grammar School.

By E. O. HANDFORTH.

[For the sake of peace in the Editorial Sanctum, we have engaged Handforth to report week by week on topics of general interest at the school. This is his first effort.]

NIPPER has been trying hard to persuade me to write a description of last week's match against Ban-

nington Grammar School. As I know he has a difficulty in getting first-rate contributors, I agreed to help as Special Football Correspondent.

Well, I don't want to begin with a grumble. But I certainly think the Remove should find a new skipper. Of course, I know that Nipper is very busy with this paper and other things, but that doesn't excuse him for losing the toss.

I was standing by him when the coin was spun. I distinctly whispered "Heads," and then Nipper in his pigheaded way called "Tails." Of course, he lost! Now, a captain's first duty is to win the toss. I don't want to labour the point, but if he had taken my advice that toss would not have been lost.

We started with the wind in our faces. Now you see what I mean. Everybody knows how much harder that makes things. If Nipper had taken my advice we should have had the wind behind us and probably scored several goals in the first few minutes. As it was, our fellows were naturally handicapped. [We thought at first this was a pun. But Handy says he never jokes on serious subjects.—ED.]

Our forwards lost the ball. And the halves were not playing very steadily. If I could have left my goal I might have been able to show them what to do. But I had to wait. And it was as well that I did so, for the opposing centre-forward got the ball and bore down on our goal. The backs were far too slow, particularly McClure, to whom I shall have to speak.

A score to our opponents in the first

minute seemed certain. There was only the goalkeeper to beat. Now, everyone knows how modest I am, but it is mere justice to say that I alone stood in the breach. I was the one St. Frank's man to keep cool. I was the last hope of my side.

Their centre-forward shot hard to my right. It was a terrific, almost unstoppable drive. I sprang at the ball, and my fingers only missed it by inches. It struck the upright like a cannon ball, and rebounded into play. It was quite simple, then, of course, for Clapson to boot it up the field.

Without wishing to brag about it, I considered it a brilliant save, for a goal must have been scored in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases. I expected a little cheering, but I suppose it all happened too quickly for the others to see.

That is what I say. It is the goalkeeper who sees most of the game. The goalkeeper makes the ideal captain of a side. For some time play was very dull, the ball never coming within twenty yards of me. Then our forwards got possession. They raced up the field, the opposition being, I thought, very weak. Pitt centred, and the ball, coming across, hit Nipper's head. Very luckily it cannoned into the goal. There was a lot of cheering at this piece of good luck.

There was no more scoring in the first half, and I suggested that I might take Nipper's place for ten minutes. I thought that if I added three or four goals, our position would be quite secure, and the others would be able to take things more easily. I am unselfish in that way. I don't mind how much I put myself out if I can help my side. But Nipper said they could rest just as well with me in goal, and that

(Continued on page iii of Cover.)

(Continued from page 40.)

If I was tired I could sit down with my back against the net.

In the second half our backs played very poorly. In fact, Clapson really scored a goal against his side. It was like this: McClure tackled their inside-right, but not before he had passed to his centre. There was only Clapson and myself left to beat. I knew that Clapson was weak, and decided to run out and tackle the centre-forward myself. As I ran I called to Clapson to take my place in goal, I rushed to make the tackle, but in some peculiar way their centre-forward was able to dodge round me. I fell over, and the forward shot. The ball went straight at Clapson in goal, and the silly chump let it go into the net off his foot.

Of course, I was very angry with him.

"You—you owl!" I said. "Why didn't you kick the ball down the field?"

Clapson glared at me.

"Which side do you think you're playing for?" he said. "You've nearly lost us the giddy match."

For a moment I couldn't reply. I was amazed at his appalling ingratitude after all I had done. Then I found my voice.

But before I had finished speaking to him the referee blew his whistle and our forwards kicked off once more. There was only a minute to go now, and I wished I could leave my goal and show the forwards how to score. Nipper got the ball, and all I could do was to shout "Shoot, you chump!" Luckily, he took my advice this time, so we got another goal, just in time. Without any swank I think I may claim to have won the match.

Douglas Fairbanks' Competition for Boys and Girls.

As you have all heard, Douglas Fairbanks is appearing in his wonderful screen version of *The Three Musketeers*—that greatest of all stories by Alexandre Dumas—showing twice daily at Covent Garden. Because he believes that every boy and girl—as well as every grown-up—should see and learn much from this splendid film, Douglas Fairbanks is offering a large number of valuable prizes for Essays on just **one** of the many admirable qualities the story illustrates, such as **LOYALTY, VALOUR, CHIVALRY, KINDNESS, DEVOTION**, etc. (Age limit up to 16.)

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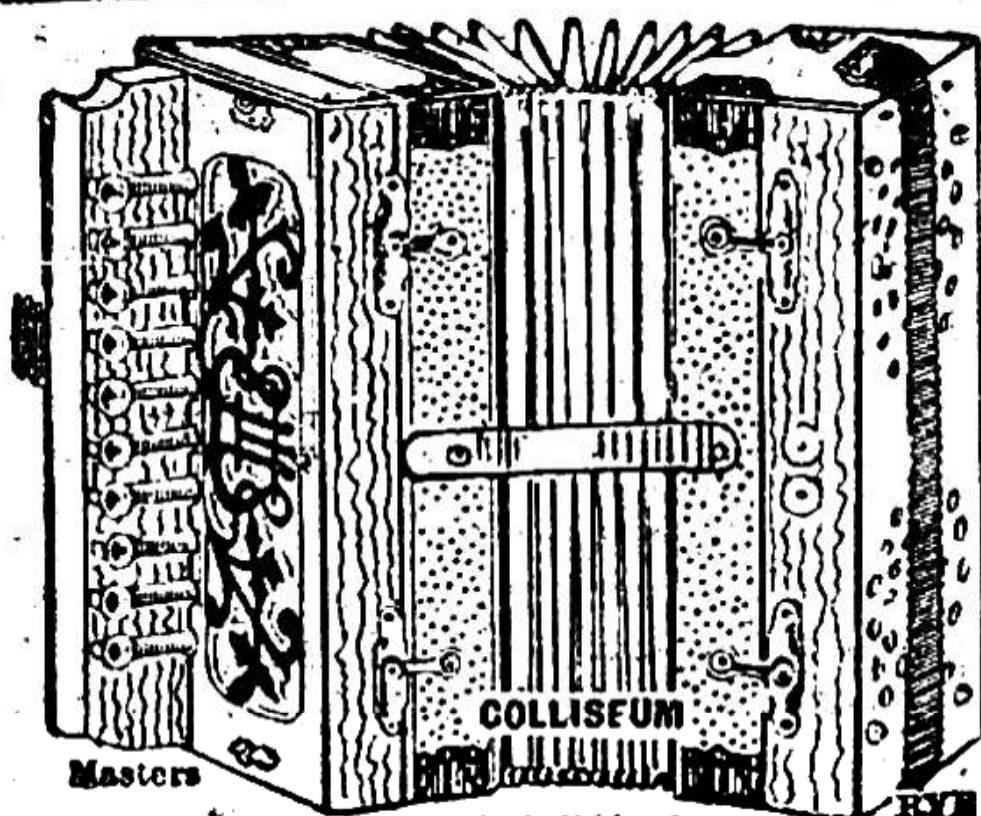
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5. You must send your Essay not later than January 15th, 1922.

The judges will be Douglas Fairbanks & Edward Knoblock, whose decision will be final. The photographs of the winners of the first three prizes will be published in the daily papers.—[ADVT.]



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