

FINE PLATE OF FAMOUS FOOTBALLER GIVEN AWAY!

THE

NELSON LEE

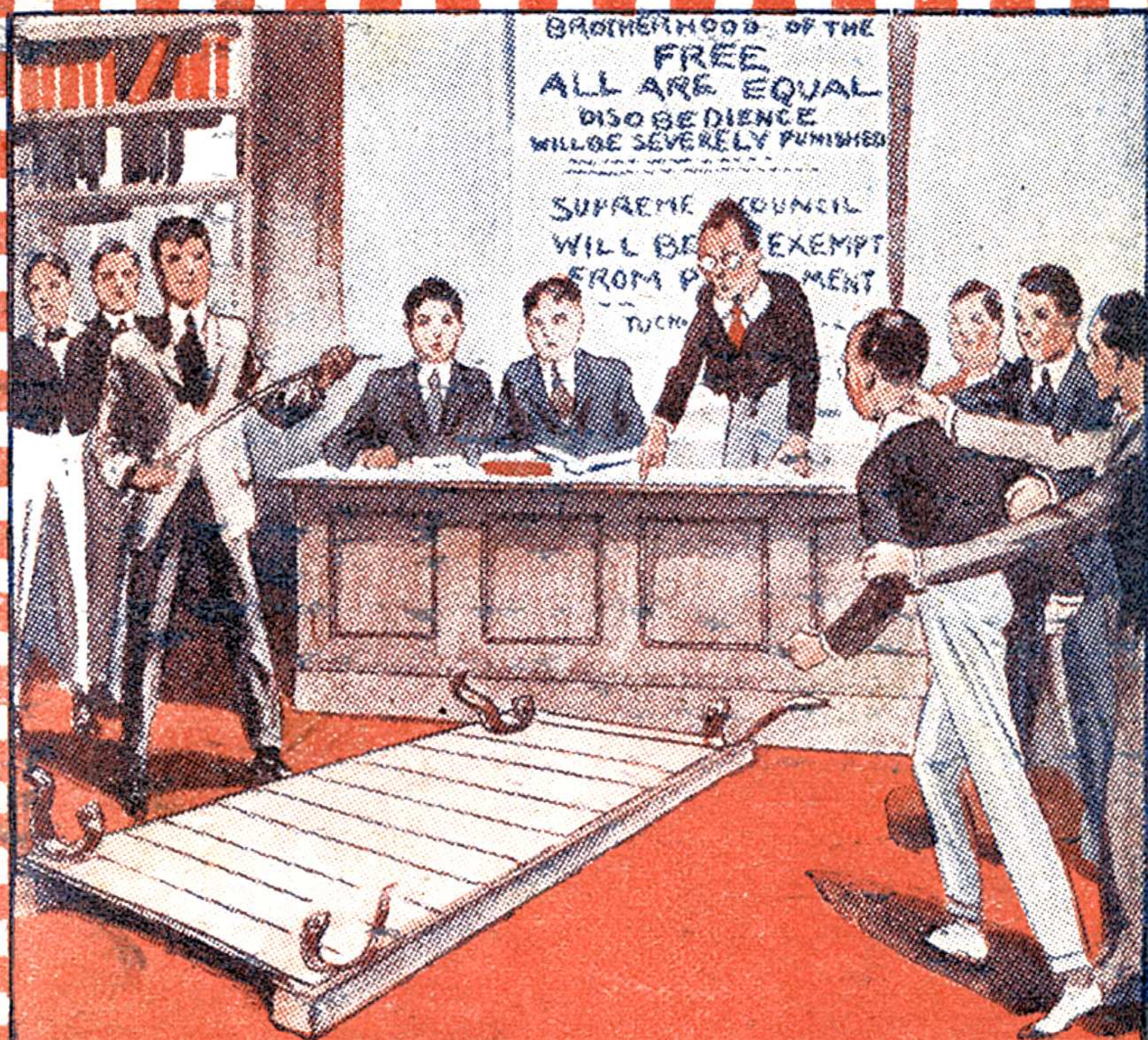
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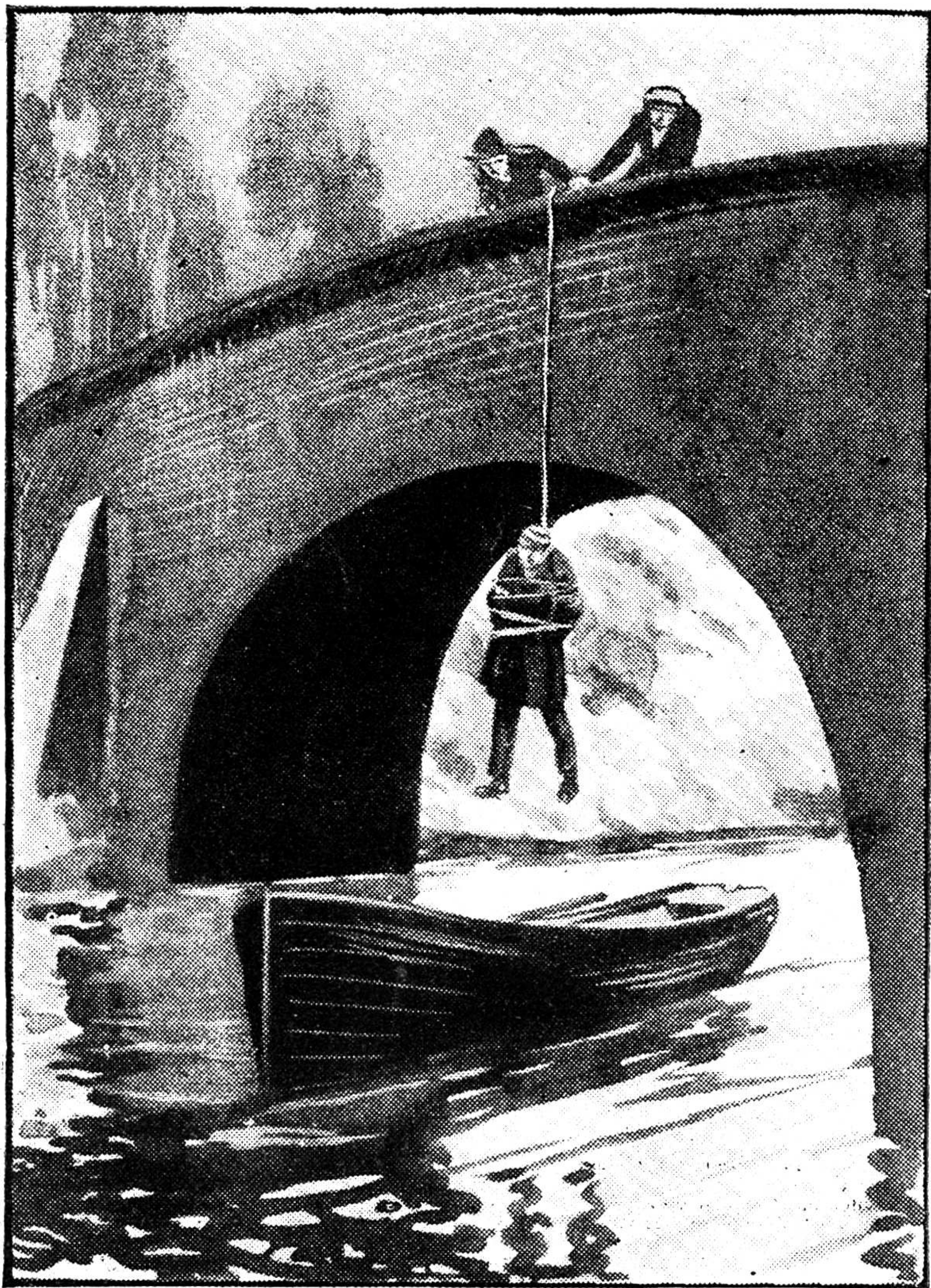
January 14, 1922.



Staunch to the School

Another Long and Laughable Story of Timothy Tucker and the Rebellion at St. Frank's.

"PECK'S BAD BOY!" New Feature. See page 18 NIPPER'S MAGAZINE.



I was swung over the edge of the parapet, and then dangled in space, held by that strong rope. Swiftly I was lowered down.

STAUNCH TO THE SCHOOL.

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 "The Christmas Plotters," "The Schoolboy Soviet," "The Communist School," and many other stirring Tales.

(THE NARRATIVE
RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER 1.

LOYALISTS AND REBELS.

"DOWN with the Head!"
"Hurrah!"
"Down with Nelson Lee!"
"Hurrah!"

"Down with tyranny!"
"Three cheers for Mr. Trenton!"
"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Considerable noise and excitement proceeded from the Ancient House and St. Frank's. The boys took little or no care of their voices, and the noise they created was appalling, and opposed to all rules and regulations of the college.

In the Triangle stood numbers of juniors, looking at the Ancient House rather grimly and doubtfully. Many of them were wondering if it wouldn't be their best policy to join the Rebels—who were in greater numbers than ever before. The Rebels, in fact, were fully two-to-one against the Loyalists.

For only a comparatively few fellows remained staunch to the school—and Dr. Stafford. These fellows did so more out

SUPREME
COUNCIL
PRESIDENT
T. TALKER



of a sense of duty than the dictates of their heart. For they could not possibly approve of the Head's recent conduct. The whole rebellion was caused by Dr. Stafford's brutality and cruelty.

"Just when things were going so well, too!" said Tommy Watson, with a growl. "I'm blessed if I can make it out, Nipper. And, after all, you can't blame the chaps for going off like this. The Head was a beast yesterday—absolutely a beast! I've a good mind to join the Rebels myself!"

"Don't do that, Tommy!" I said. "We've lost enough of our supporters already. Over half the Loyalists went over to the Rebels in a body yesterday, and now the whole crowd has taken possession of the Ancient House, and we've been driven out. We may be overwhelmed by numbers, but we're not beaten. And we'll stick up for the Head and Nelson Lee to the end."

"Begad! Of course, dear old boys!" said Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "I don't altogether approve of stickin' up for the Head. After what happened yesterday, I cannot help regardin' him as a most frightful tyrant, an' I think the fellows are justified in demandin' his dismissal——"

"Haven't I told you a dozen times that Dr. Stafford is incapable of controlling himself?" I broke in. "He goes off into a fit like that, and he can't keep himself in check."

"In that case he ought to be shoved in an asylum!" declared Tommy Watson. "He can't control himself, and he can't——"

"Oh, my hat!" I groaned. "Do you need telling fifty times? The Head's as good as gold at heart, and at this very moment I expect he's half wild with worry because he acted as he did. You don't seem to realise that somebody's plotting against him, and causing him to act in a way utterly foreign to his own nature."

Sir Montie shrugged his shoulders.

"Dear old boy, it's beyond me!" he observed. "I give it up, begad! But I'm not the kind of fellow to start questioning and worrying. Mr. Lee is standin' up for the Head, an' that's good enough. My faith in Mr. Lee is as sound as a bell—it is, really!"

"Same here!" said Watson.

"Good!" I said. "Let it stand at that, then. Keep your faith in the guy nor for a little while longer, and everything will turn out O.K."

And while we were talking in this fashion, three other juniors were standing together in a group by the wall of the gymnasium. Their faces were somewhat flushed, and they were obviously engaged in a heated argument. It is hardly necessary to add, perhaps, that the names of these three juniors were Edward Oswald Handforth, Walter Church, and Arnold McClure. For them to argue was natural. If they were seen in peaceful, calm conversation, other fellows would stand and stare. Arguing in this way, they were ignored.

"I've often called you chaps a pair of

duffers!" said Handforth deliberately. "I can see quite plainly that I was wrong! The fact is, you're nothing better than apes! You haven't got enough brains to fill a walnut shell!"

Church and McClure glared ferociously. They weren't so much offended at Handforth's words—they were quite accustomed to that sort of thing. Insults from him were of hourly occurrence. But this time he managed to put a note into his voice which made them wince.

"You—you rotter!" snorted Church. "Just because we don't agree with you, this is all you can do——"

"Why don't you agree with me?" demanded Handforth fiercely. "Why? I know! Simply because you're jealous!"

"Oh, rats!"

"You're jealous!" roared Handforth violently. "I suggest a ripping wheeze, and you think that you can beat me at it. All right, I'll show you! I'll prove to you whether I can do the job!"

"For goodness' sake, Handy have some sense!" implored McClure. "We've all agreed that we'll stick up for the Head. I don't know why, because he's turning out to be a frightful rotter——"

"Piffle!" said Handforth, in that way of his which ended all further argument. "Rank piffle! The Head's under some influence—hypnotism, I believe. When he goes off into these violent fits he ain't himself, you know. Some rotten scoundrel is working his giddy brain on him. That's what these hypnotists do with their victims. I was reading a book all about it——"

"Oh, it was some sensational romance!" said Church. "Hypnotism doesn't happen in real life, you ass."

"Oh, yes, it does!" said Handforth sharply. "Why, if I liked to concentrate my brain enough I could hypnotise you chaps in two minutes; I could make you crawl all round the Triangle on all fours, and make you duck your heads in the fountain!"

McClure grinned sarcastically.

"Oh, easy!" he said. "I'd like to see you make us duck our heads in the fountain, with about four inches of solid ice on it! And, besides, how could you concentrate your brain? You can't concentrate a void!"

Handforth gulped hard.

"You—you insulting rotter!" he bellowed. "Are you trying to say that I'm brainless? All right; we won't argue about it now! I'll store it up; I'll punch your nose for that later on! At present I'm too busy!"

"You and your giddy hypnotism!" growled Church.

"Well, there's something behind all this business, anyhow," said Handforth. "I believe there's some Indian chap knocking about—a Hindoo, or some secret enemy of the Head's youth. He's come for revenge, and he's taking it by changing the Head into a tyrant. There's nothing startling about that."

"Oh, not at all!" said McClure. "It's perfectly natural for Hindoos to be wandering about this district during frost and snow. I suppose he's painted his face white, so that he won't be recognised?"

"It's quite likely," agreed Handforth innocently. "These chaps are up to all sorts of tricks. The fact that Mr. Lee is sticking up for the Head is good enough. Mr. Lee is one of the best chaps breathing, and I'd follow his lead anywhere."

"Good thing there's somebody you'd follow!" growled Church.

"Mr. Lee is the most famous detective in the world!" said Handforth. "When it comes to tracking criminals and finding clues, and all that kind of thing, Mr. Lee is nearly as good at the job as I am. I don't want to boast, of course, but I think I can manage detective work just a bit better than anybody else."

"That goes without saying!" remarked McClure. "By the way, when are you going to get on the track of the Hindoo?"

Handforth sniffed.

"I've got something more important to spend my time on!" he replied. "The Hindoo can wait—"

"Until he changes into a Chinaman, I suppose?" asked Church. "If you can't find a Hindoo, Handy, you'll turn him into somebody else—not that it matters. He only exists in your mind—"

"We don't want to start the argument all over again," interrupted Handforth brusquely. "That's enough! Mr. Lee, as I was saying, stands up for the head—and I stand up for the Head. It seems silly, but it's not. And to prove my loyalty, I'm going to join the Rebels!"

Church and McClure stared.

"You're—you're going to join the Rebels?" yelled Church.

"Yes!"

"To prove your loyalty?"

"Exactly!"

"You—you dummy!" gasped Church, clutching at McClure. "This blessed business has turned your brain—not that it needed much turning! You go on jawing and jawing about loyalty to the Head, and then say that you're going to join the Rebels! How's that going to prove anything—"

"Oh, you're dense!" said Handforth impatiently. "It's as clear as a bell! I'm going to join the Rebel forces as a spy—"

"What!" yelled McClure.

"As a spy!" repeated Handforth firmly. "Of course, I sha'n't tell 'em I'm a spy; they'll have to find that out themselves!"

"It'll take them about two minutes!" remarked Church.

"You ass! They won't suspect me at all!" said Handforth. "I shall go in their lines, search out their secrets, and come back with all the information I can lay my hands on. The Rebels won't realise until too late that I was a spy in their midst!"

"So that's what you meant by saying you'd prove your loyalty to the Head?" asked Church, recovering. "You're going to remain on our side, but you'll pretend to be a Rebel so that you can nose out their secrets?"

"Yes," said Handforth. "You seem to have some sense at last!"

Church and McClure looked at one another, and their faces broke into smiles.

"Anything to grin at?" snapped Handforth curtly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

His chums roared.

"You—you cackling hyænas!" shouted Handforth. "What's the matter with you?"

"There's—there's one thing I'd like to ask!" said Church faintly. "What's the information you're going to spy out? The Rebels haven't got any secret plans, and they're doing everything openly, and there's nothing to find out! You'll simply waste your time, Handy!"

"We'll see about that!" said Handforth. "I don't believe in spying, as a rule, but it's a different thing when there's a war on. Spying is simply another name for scouting. I shall scout in the Ancient House, and come back with all my plans cut and dried. You fellows had better remain on the watch in case I want to send out a secret communication."

"Can't you come out yourself?" asked Church practically.

"No; we'll have a code!" replied Handforth. "You've got to watch the window of Study D. Understand? If there's danger, I'll pull the blind up and down twice. And if everything's all right, I'll put it up and down three times. You can stand there and watch."

"All day?" inquired McClure casually.

"Yes, all day!"

"What about meals—"

"Meals!" roared Handforth. "Do you think meals matter when such great issues are at stake?"

"Steak?" said McClure, smacking his lips. "That reminds me of what we had for dinner yesterday—"

"You—you dotty glutton! I'm not talking about steaks!" snapped Handforth. "All you can do is to think about meals—about feeding your faces! And here there's important work to be done!"

"Well, you can do it; we're not stopping you," growled Church. "But I'm blessed if I can see any reason why we should stand here all day and watch a silly window. In any case, it couldn't be done."

"What about lessons?" put in McClure.

"Lessons!" snorted Handforth. "I don't suppose there'll be any. You know jolly well that these Rebels are preparing to run the school on Communist lines, and there'll be no work done. Besides, even if there are lessons, you can stay away, and nobody'll notice it."

Church and McClure breathed hard.

"Oh, don't be such a hopeless duffer!" said Church. "Armstrong and his lot may be trying their hands at Communism, but it doesn't make much difference. There'll be lessons just the same, and if we're missed Mr. Crowell will get ratty——"

"Supposing he does?" demanded Handforth. "Masters haven't got any power now; they don't inflict punishments, even if they want to. I'm not sure that this Communism isn't a good thing in some ways!"

"You—you ass!"

"Of course, I wouldn't have anything to do with it," went on Handforth. "It's rank piffle, and all these Rebels ought to be booted round the Triangle for having anything to do with it. But even the worst systems have certain good points."

"But look here, Handy, what's the idea of your joining the Communists?" asked Church. "What do you hope to gain?"

"Everything!" replied Handforth, waving a big fist. "Why, these rotters are plotting all sorts of Communist schemes. Think how great it'll be if I go into the enemy's ranks and spy out all their secrets. When they make a big move we shall know all about it in advance!"

"Oh, it's hopeless!" grunted Church. "We've done our best, Clurey; the only thing is to let him find trouble. He's going to ask for it, and if it arrives in chunks, he'll only have himself to blame."

"That's the idea!" said Handforth approvingly. "But it'll be the Communists who'll find trouble—not me. Of course, you'll support me in every way you can. You'll watch outside, as I've told you——"

But Church and McClure were already strolling away. They did so carelessly at first, but when they found that Handforth was hot on their track, they broke into a wild run, and made a dash for freedom. They succeeded in eluding him by the simple expedient of rushing into the College House and hiding behind the door. Handforth pelted straight through the lobby and proceeded to search the whole building, Church and McClure in the meantime emerging into the Triangle again.

Handforth caused a lot more trouble than the affair warranted. He invaded study after study like a miniature thunderstorm. The fellows grew rather tired of this at last, and Handforth was finally seized and hurled down the passage on his neck. He was not feeling particularly cheerful as he crawled away.

"I'll make those blighters sit up when I find 'em!" he said grimly. "By George! And I'll make 'em apologise, too! I'll show the fatheads whether I can spy-out the Rebels' secrets or not!"

And Handforth, full of determination, strode towards the Ancient House, full-up with his determined ideas.

CHAPTER II.

FREEDOM AND EQUALITY!



COMMUNISM was the most talked of subject at St. Frank's.

Timothy Tucker, the cheerful lunatic of the Remove, was the fellow who had first sown the seed among the other fellows. There had been discontent and trouble, followed by a half-hearted rebellion. And Tucker, who was one of the leaders of this rebellion, had instilled into his comrades the ideals and principles of Communism.

At first they had ignored him. But Tucker was persistent, and, little by little, his suggestions had taken root, and in the end the Rebels were enthusiastically acclaiming Communism as the road to complete freedom.

It was something like a disease; it infected junior after junior, spreading in all directions. The seniors, at first, regarded the whole business with lofty disdain, and scorned to take notice. Then Armstrong and his fellow Rebels had received permission from the Headmaster to run the school on their own lines.

It had seemed a preposterous suggestion at first. Tucker had brought forth a manifesto, declaring that the Rebels would only give in if the school authorities allowed them to take complete command of the school, and run it on the lines of Communism. Tucker's ideal was to do away with the present authority, and to establish a kind of Soviet system, with Form Councils instead of masters, and similar institutions.

And then had come the word that Dr. Stafford agreed.

As a matter of fact, this was merely a practical joke on the part of Reginald Pitt; but nobody knew it at the time. The Head was confined to his own rooms, and Nelson Lee was away. Even the masters and seniors believed that the thing was genuine, and Pitt fairly gasped when he found that his joke was successful.

But the best of the whole thing was that Nelson Lee, upon his return, discovered the forgery at once, and allowed it to stand! In short, he had advised Dr. Stafford to let the boys continue on their present course. Nelson Lee was convinced that they would soon come an awful cropper, and throw up the sponge.

And thus it came about that the Communists had gained their way. An outburst on the Head's part—an exhibition of violent temper—brought the Rebels scores of new supporters. And they had seized the Ancient House as their own, considering it better that they should all be under the same roof.

And, finding that this thing was an actual fact, the senior Forms had come into line, and even the stately members of the Sixth were entering into the spirit of the whole affair with vim and gusto.

They could hardly do anything else. Find-

ing that the school was actually to be run by the boys, they couldn't permit the juniors to hold full sway. Consequently, they saw that they had a full share in all the undertakings.

Armstrong and Co. had already appointed a Form Council for the Remove, and a Supreme Council of the Revolution—to act as a kind of Headmaster. But it was impossible that this Supreme Council should be composed entirely of juniors.

Many alterations had now been made, and the first tastes of Communism had been felt. And now, on this particular morning, the Supreme Council met to discuss many points which needed immediate attention.

It was quite early—breakfast time, to tell the truth. Quite a number of fellows were still up in the dormitories, for they considered that they could do as they liked now; there was no need to roll out at the first sound of the rising-bell.

The leaders of the revolution, however, were in grim earnest, and they took the whole thing seriously. A meeting had been arranged overnight, and the meeting duly took place in the Chamber of the Supreme Council.

This sounded a very important apartment. It was, as a matter of fact, Mr. Crowell's old study in the Ancient House. It had been considerably altered, many chairs being placed before the square desk, and a special chair prepared for the President of the Council.

There had been much controversy about the Presidency. Several Sixth Formers had claimed a right to be President. But Timothy Tucker replied that he was the father of the Revolution, therefore entitled to be President. And so, after considerable argument, his claim was allowed.

And now the Supreme Council was sitting.

It consisted of six fellows. Kenmore and Carlile of the Sixth, Chambers and Crayson of the Fifth, and Armstrong and Tucker of the Remove. In the hands of these six fellows lay the whole destinies of St. Frank's.

They were the absolute leaders of the Schoolboy Communists. They were the Chiefs of the Brotherhood of the Free. They were the rulers of the Schoolboys' Union. It all amounted to the same thing. Sometimes they called themselves by one title, and sometimes by another.

Timothy Tucker was absolutely in his element.

He blinked round the meeting through his spectacles, and gently rapped on the table.

"Comrades and fellow Communists!" he exclaimed. "This meeting is of great importance. Quite so!" The position is this—

"Dry up, Tucker, and let somebody else speak," said Kenmore of the Sixth. "Now I want to know how things are going with regard to—"

"Dear, dear, dear!" interrupted Tucker.

"This is quite out of order, my dear sir! Pray allow me to point out that I am the President of this Council, and it is my right to address you all without being bothered by unseemly interruptions. I pray that you will fully realise the dignity of my position."

"Oh, Cut out that piffle!" said Grayson of the Fifth.

The seniors, in fact, were inclined to regard the junior members of the Supreme Council with contempt. They looked upon their President with supreme disdain; a fact which did not even escape the wandering wits of Tucker himself. Both Kenmore and Grayson were bullies, and they welcomed this new order of things right heartily, for they could see countless opportunities for exercise of their own peculiar qualities.

"You must allow me to point out, my dear sir, that I am not speaking piffle!" said Tucker gently. "We are the Supreme Council of the Revolution. It is in our hands to mar or make this great opportunity. No, no, please refrain from interrupting! I may be younger in years than some of you sitting with me, but I trust that you will acknowledge that in a question of intellect, I am the equal of any!"

"Get ahead to the point!" growled Armstrong.

"That is what I am doing, my dear sir!" exclaimed Tucker. "I merely wish to remind you all that it was I who first mooted this whole scheme. It was I who planned out all the details, and who made the Revolution possible. It was I who persuaded the Headmaster to give way to our demands. It was I who—"

"Dash it all, he's quite right!" put in Chambers, of the Fifth. "I suggested a few wheezes myself, but you can't get away from the fact that Tucker was the first in the field. We've got to give him his due. He's a hopeless ass in most things, but with regard to this Communist business, he's all there. He's got the whole facts at his giddy finger-tips—he's studied the question for months!"

Chambers was a highly conceited fellow, but not a bad sort at heart. And he certainly liked to see justice done. And it rather nettled him to hear Kenmore and Grayson belittling the President.

"Thank you, my dear sir, thank you!" said Tucker mildly. "Now that we have settled these little differences, perhaps it would be as well to go ahead with the business on the agenda."

"Well, what's the first thing?" asked Grayson.

"To begin with, we must discuss the progress we have already made," exclaimed Tucker. "Upon the whole, this is very satisfactory, although it falls short of what I anticipated. Quite so. There is much to be done yet, my comrades, we have only just commenced our great work."

"Oh, you're an idealist!" said Kenmore. "I consider we've done pretty well. All the Form-room stewards have been appointed. There are three for every Form, and they will be on duty constantly during lessons. Their work is to keep the fellows in order, and prevent unruliness."

"Exactly!" said Tucker.

"Well, that's all done with," went on Kenmore. "The Form Councils are in operation, too. These Form Councils are supposed to act in the same way as a Form-master; they've got to punish any fellows who break the school rules. The question is, will they be effective?"

"They are bound to be," replied Tucker. "They cannot be anything else but effective, my dear sir. If there is any query or disagreement, all such matters must be reported to us—the Supreme Council. Our word will be final. So, you see, the arrangements are quite satisfactory, and I regret to announce that everything is not running as smoothly as I should like."

"How do you mean?" asked Armstrong.

"Dear, dear!" said Tucker, blinking. "Surely you cannot imagine that the present state of affairs is ideal?"

"Well, it doesn't seem so bad."

"You amaze me, my dear Armstrong, you positively amaze me!" exclaimed T. T. "If this is what you call ideal, I must disagree with you. It is not real Communism. Not at all! The whole school—at all events, the Communists portion of it—is doing precisely as it likes, without let or hindrance."

"Well, isn't that what Communism is supposed to be?" asked Grayson. "Every chap's equal, and he can do just as he likes—"

"Good gracious me!" said Tucker. "How absurd, how extremely absurd! Such ignorance staggers me!"

"You'd better be careful——" began Grayson.

"I am compelled to speak plainly," went on Tucker. "You declare that every fellow can do just as he likes? Impossible!"

"How is it impossible?"

"Why, under such conditions, the whole structure would fall to pieces over our ears!" said the President. "Equality and freedom, they are our aims. It cannot be considered satisfactory to allow all our comrades to behave just as their will dictates. Such a system would merely lead to complete confusion. Even under Communism there must be order and strict adherence to rules. The school is under our control, and we must control it—not allow every boy to do exactly as he pleases. What will be the result if such licence is permitted? You have already seen the beginning of the trouble which will ultimately develop."

"The kid's right!" said Carlile, nodding. "I've noticed it myself. The juniors in particular, are doing just as they like. They're taking no notice of rules or regulations. They come in for meals when it pleases them, and don't trouble whether they

attend lessons or not. Only half-an-hour ago I spotted Fullwood and Bell smoking in the upper corridor. We can't let things like that go on unchecked."

"Rather not!" said Chambers.

"The question is, how can we alter things?" asked Kenmore. "It's all very well to give the fellows their freedom, but they're liable to take advantage. This Communism is all very well, but it doesn't seem to be panning out properly. We give the chaps an inch, and they take a yard."

"That, my dear sir, is merely the outcome of savage human nature!" said Timothy Tucker gently. "You must realise that the majority of the fellows under this roof are savages at heart. The modern school-boy, after all, is untamed and uncontrollable. We must alter this. It would be a fatal mistake to allow these boys complete freedom——"

"But freedom is the very idea of Communism?" objected Armstrong.

"Precisely, my dear sir—precisely!" replied Tucker. "At the same time, in order to allow freedom, we must be harsh. That may sound contradictory, but I will explain. The boys have full freedom in the sense that the school is completely freed from the control of masters. We are our own masters, and it is up to us to prove that we are capable of running the school better than it has ever been run before. And the first duty of the Supreme Council must be to put down every kind of insubordination with a strong and relentless pressure!"

"How?" demanded Kenmore. "I'm willing to lend a hand in that direction if you like. Some of these young bounders need curbing!"

"They do!" agreed Grayson. "What's your suggestion, Tucker? If you need anybody to go round delivering thick ears, I'm your man!"

The two bullies were becoming rather impressed by T. T.'s talk; they were realising that he was in grim earnest. He had been thinking deeply and continuously, whereas they had allowed matters to slide. After all, it was Timothy Tucker who had complete control of the Remove.

"I fear that you misunderstand me, my comrades," said T. T. mildly. "I have no intention of suggesting that thick ears should be distributed. Bullying is not an ideal form of rule. As soon as our comrades realise that certain regulations must be respected, everything will be all right. We are all equal, but we are not eligible for the wonderful privileges of Communism unless we conform to recognised standards. One fellow is as good as another. Equality is the very essence of our system. We have been elected to this Supreme Council, and it is our duty to put things in order as quickly as possible. Now, I have here a few suggestions which I intend putting forward."

"With what object?" asked Kenmore.

"These suggestions are not necessarily

sound, but I have formulated them in all earnestness," said Tucker. "And I shall request the Supreme Council to pass these suggestions into rigid law at once—without a moment's unnecessary delay. It is within your power, my dear sirs, to support me."

"Let's hear what these wonderful suggestions are?" said Grayson.

"Well, to begin with, I have been seriously considering the question of punishment," exclaimed Tucker. "Offenders must be dealt with drastically, or there will soon be no control left. We shall find ourselves stranded, with all our subjects out of our reach. We are the Supreme Council, and it is our duty to enforce the regulations."

"What do you suggest as a means of punishment?"

"Of course, punishment is regrettable; but a necessary evil," replied Tucker. "It would please me greatly if we could get along without punishing any of our comrades. But, if they will ignore our orders, we must remind them that we are not sitting here merely as an ornamentation. It is our duty, in fact, to give an exhibition of our power. To punish offenders by administering lines or impositions would be quite unsatisfactory. Corporal punishment is the only effective way."

"You suggest, then, that all offenders should be caned?" asked Kenmore.

"Precisely, but not in the usual way," replied Tucker. "I have invented a certain instrument which, I am sure, will be quite effective. Yes, quite effective! And it will also have the advantage of instilling fear into the hearts of those who disregard our decrees. In other words, it would be far better, I think, to have the prisoners strapped down and severely caned. This scheme will save all unpleasantness, and the offenders to be punished will have no chance of struggling."

"Kind of Spanish Inquisition affair?" asked Kenmore, with relish.

"Dear, dear, dear!" protested Tucker. "The Spanish Inquisition instituted every kind of horrible torture. There will be no torture in our punishments, they will be just and well-deserved, and all for the good of those who suffer. Furthermore, I suggest that all offenders during the day shall be imprisoned until evening."

"Imprisoned?" repeated Armstrong curiously.

"Exactly. Such a step will impress them as nothing else could possibly do," said Tucker. "We will say for example, that six of our comrades are guilty of minor offences at various times during the day. Instead of being punished on the spot, they will be immediately cast into prison, and compelled to await the evening. The Supreme Council will then hold a special session, and we will take these cases one after the other. Our evening meeting will be, in reality, a Tribunal. And it will be the duty of this Tribunal to hear every case, and to then inflict punish-

ment according to each individual prisoner's deserts. And these punishments, as I have said, shall be drastic."

"I second the proposition!" said Kenmore.

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Grayson. "It's a great idea. Some of these youngsters need putting in their places! And it's a cute dodge to chuck them in prison, and keep them locked up until the evening. And I like the idea of holding a Special Tribunal at night. It will be impressive, and it ought to make the fellows realise our importance. But what are you going to do about a prison?"

"There need be no difficulty on that score," said Tucker. "You surely remember that there are some extensive cellars beneath the Ancient House? They are practically empty, well-ventilated, and large enough to accommodate twenty times the number of prisoners that will need actual space. I take it, then, that you all approve?"

"Yes!" said Armstrong.

"I'm not so sure about that," objected Chambers. "Dash it all, it's a bit thick to lock the chaps up all day. Supposing somebody offends before breakfast? How about grub?"

"There will be no food for prisoners until after their punishment has been administered in the evening," said Tucker firmly. "Being deprived of food for a few hours will have no ill-effects. It must be remembered that all decisions of the Supreme Council are arrived at by the vote of the majority. I think the majority has decided to adopt my scheme of punishment."

"Yes!" said Kenmore. "Go ahead with the next idea."

"Well, my dear sir, my next suggestion is of a more cheerful nature," said Tucker, beaming. "I put forward the plan that all meals, except in the Second and Third, shall be served in the various studies. The Sixth, Fifth, and Remove shall no longer be herded together in bare apartments, and served with their meals as criminals are served in a prison. It is my idea that we shall feed always in our studies. It will be far more satisfactory in every way."

"It's a great idea; but how can it be done?" asked Chambers. "Nothing could be better than having dinner and other meals in our own studies. But there'll be all sorts of difficulties about serving—"

"Not at all," said Tucker. "It is my scheme to commandeer the necessary labour—that is fetching and carrying of dishes, waiting at table, and so forth—it is my scheme to commandeer a certain number of juniors from the Third Form for every meal. They will perform all the work that is needed."

"Passed!" said Grayson promptly. "Tucker, my son, you've got some brains, after all! Why shouldn't we make these fags work for a living now that we've got the power? We can make 'em fetch our grub from the kitchens, and clear away the

dirty things, and everything else. It'll give the little beggars something to keep them out of mischief."

"Hear, hear!" said Kenmore approvingly.

"It is, perhaps, advisable to make a certain alteration to that scheme," said Tucker, frowning slightly. "I'm afraid that many fellows, particularly in the junior Forms, will be late for lessons. I suggest, therefore, that all these comrades who are late shall be noted down by the Form-room stewards. And these boys shall be appointed meal servants for the day, whether they belong to the Second, Third, or Remove. This will be their form of punishment. It is right that such boys shall work, thus releasing a number of fags who are quite innocent of any wrong-doing. If there are no offenders, then, of course, the meal servants must be selected entirely from the fags. It is as well to make these points quite clear. I trust you approve?"

"We do!" said Kenmore.

"It has occurred to me that many of these offenders will be rebellious when they learn that punishment is to fall upon them," went on Tucker. "Under no circumstances can we tolerate insubordination or rebellion among our own comrades. Such offenders, therefore, shall be deprived of all meals, and forbidden all food, for various periods according to their crimes."

"Yes, that seems pretty reasonable," said Kenmore.

"The Supreme Council passes the idea into law!" said Armstrong. "What next?"

"It is only right, I consider, that all Form-room stewards and members of the various councils shall be exempt from the new regulations I have outlined," said Tucker. "I think that will be approved?"

"Unanimously!" said Chambers.

"This morning the laziness of many fellows was lamentable," exclaimed Tucker. "They not only objected to rise from their beds, but declared that they would get up when they pleased. This, of course, cannot be allowed. And since reluctance in rising is hardly an offence, I suggest that all such boys shall be dealt with on the spot by special dormitory stewards."

"I don't mind taking on that job," said Grayson. "I nearly chucked a jugful of water over two or three chaps this morning. I reckon it ought to be left to the discretion of the dormitory stewards to use what methods they like to get the fellows out of bed. But there's something I'd like to know. What's going to happen if the Form-room stewards or dormitory stewards are attacked?"

The culprits shall be immediately cast into

prison, and punished with the utmost severity," replied Tucker. "Dear me! Under no circumstances can we tolerate a rebellion. The officers of the Soviet—the Supreme Council—must be obeyed in everything. If there is the slightest insubordination, it must be put down with an iron hand."

"Good!" said Grayson. "Any other suggestions?"

"I really think that we have sufficient to be going on with," said the president. "Therefore, my dear sirs, I propose that a large notice be drawn up without delay, and the notice shall be posted on the board in the lobby, so that all may see. There will probably be some slight commotion, but that is only to be expected. It will take some little time for our comrades to realise the necessity for strict discipline. Communism does not necessarily mean that discipline is to be abandoned."

And the Supreme Council, having come to these decisions, proceeded to set them down in writing. The council had absolute power, and all their decisions were stern law.

CHAPTER III.

THE MASTER SPY!



"GREAT Scott!"

"Of all the giddy nerve!"

"It's rank piffle—absolute rot!" shouted Hubbard excitedly. "Are we going to stand this kind of thing, you chaps?"

"No!"

"Not likely!"

"Is that what Tucker calls freedom and equality?" demanded Stevens of the Fifth. "I've never seen such madness! All offenders to be imprisoned in the cellar, and brought up before the Supreme Tribunal at night!"

"We won't stand it!"

"Never!"

"Why, it'll be worse than ever!" declared Singleton indignantly. "Under this new order of things we're supposed to be our own masters—equals—and we're running the school ourselves. It's not likely we're going to stand this kind of thing! Why, it's ten times more tyrannous than the ordinary rule!"

"Of course it is!"

Just over half-an-hour had elapsed, and a big notice had been placed upon the board in the Ancient House lobby. Crowds of fellows were standing round, reading it, and passing all sorts of indignant comments.

"Begad! There seems to be some trouble in the ranks of the enemy!" observed Tregellis-West, as he paused outside the Ancient House. "What a truly frightful din, dear old boys!"

"Oh, they're bound to have squabbles," I said. "You surely didn't expect this Communist stunt to work smoothly, did you? Just you wait, my sons. Before a week has elapsed

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the whole giddy structure will collapse. You mark my words, and you'll find that your uncle is right!"

"There'll be some trouble, anyhow," said Tommy Watson. "The whole thing is mad, in my opinion, and it never ought to have been allowed. I'm surprised at Mr. Lee for giving way to these rotters!"

I grinned.

"The guv'nor's as cute as they make 'em!" I said cheerfully. "He couldn't have done better than to give the Rebels their own way. If the whole thing had been squashed on the nail, scores of chaps would still have hankered after Communism. Now they're finding out what it is, and before the show's over they'll be so fed up with it that the very mention of the word Communism will make them see red!"

"They're seeing red now, dear old boys," said Sir Montie mildly.

"Ha, ha! Joke!" I cackled. "Red is certainly the symbol of Communism. You'll have to be careful, Montie, or you'll make us really laugh one of these days."

"Pray don't be so absurd, dear old fellow," said Tregellis-West. "Why is red the symbol of Communism? Red is a rippin' colour; it is, really. Socialists and trade unionists all over the country wear red, you know—"

"Socialism and Communism are two different things," I interrupted. "Goodness knows, I'm not going to preach politics. I don't know much about 'em, anyhow. But most of the chaps who call themselves Socialists aren't Socialists at all. They only think they are. Communism is the same dope that they've been handing out in Russia, and which has resulted in such magnificent progress—I don't think!"

"We needn't worry our heads about things like that," said Watson. "We've got enough to think about here, on the spot."

Meanwhile the uproar in the lobby was increasing.

Nearly all the fellows who were giving vent to indignant shouts were Rebels, and they certainly could not see the common sense of the new regulations which had automatically come into force with the posting of the notice.

"We won't stand it!" declared Merrell. "Is this what Tucker calls freedom? And why are members of the council exempt?"

"Tear the notice down!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll soon show these fatheads that we're not going to be messed about!" roared Marriott. "Hallo! Here's Tucker! Grab him, you chaps! We'll make him swallow that notice bit by bit!"

"Oh! Good!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Timothy Tucker had just appeared, and with him were all the other members of the Supreme Council. They approached with dignity, as befitting their high rank. T. T. apparently expected his comrades to bow low before him as he passed. Was he not the president of the Supreme Council?

He was rather startled to find himself surrounded and seized.

"Dear me!" he gasped. "What—what does this mean? Really, my comrades, I am astounded that you should behave so disrespectfully—"

"Make him tear the notice down—"

"Make him eat it!"

"Here, steady on, you young asses!" shouted Kenmore sharply. "Leave Tucker alone, or I'll show you something! If you don't like these new regulations, you can lump them! They've got to be obeyed!"

"Yah! Rats!"

"You're no better than we are now, you Sixth Form bully!"

Kenmore glared round ferociously.

"Who said that?" he roared.

Nobody replied, and Tucker managed to wrench himself away, and he hurried up the stairs. Some of the juniors thought he was attempting to escape, but he paused a third of the way up and turned.

"Comrades, I claim your attention!" he shouted in his shrill voice.

It was now clear that Tucker was only seeking an elevated position so that he could address the crowd in a more advantageous manner. All eyes were turned upon him.

"I beg of you to listen for a few moments while I explain matters," he shouted. "As president of the Supreme Council, it is my right to expect attention from you all. You have taken objection to the new regulations which have come into force. H'm! H'm! Pray let me explain why these regulations are necessary."

"They'll need a lot of explaining!"

"They're never coming into force, either!"

"No fear!"

"We're our own masters, and we're not having any rot of that sort!"

Tucker held up his hand.

"Pray let me point out that these regulations shall be enforced with the utmost rigour!" he shouted. "It is my intention to give you a few necessary details, for I fear you are thoughtless and inconsistent. Quite so—inconsistent. It is highly necessary that certain things should be made clear—"

"Get to the point, you ass!"

"How dare you?" demanded Tucker.

"Good gracious me! How dare you? Do you realise who I am? Do you realise that I am the president of the Supreme Council? Such opprobrious terms are greatly to be regretted."

"If you don't get ahead we'll wipe up the lobby with you!"

"Dear me! I am sad!" said Tucker, shaking his head. "After all I have done to bring freedom to this school, and to my comrades, I receive nothing but insults and jibes. This, of course, must be altered. At the moment I will give you a few facts which may open your eyes. The system of Communism, as you are fully aware, means equality for all—"

"Of course it does!"

"Then what's the idea of all these punishments?"

"Such a schedule is absolutely necessary," said Tucker. "Communism means equality—yes—but for such a system to be run successfully all must act exactly alike. That is obvious. We are all equals, therefore we must behave equally, and adhere to fixed rules."

"Why?"

"Why?" repeated Tucker mildly. "My dear sirs, surely you must know that it is utterly impossible for every fellow to do exactly as he chooses? If we allowed that state of things to continue it would swiftly lead to chaos, disorganisation, and disintegration."

"We don't want the dictionary chucked at us, you ass!"

"Speak plain English!"

"The lack of elementary knowledge amongst modern schoolboys is deplorable!" exclaimed Tucker, shaking his head. "Indeed, it is lamentable. Quite so! As I have said, disorganisation will follow if you are allowed to do just as you please. Under Communism there are certain doctrines which must be respected and adhered to. The school is in our charge, and it is our duty to prove that we can run it with even greater success than it has been run hitherto."

"That's quite right," shouted Griffith.

"It is undoubtedly right," agreed Tucker. "If things continue as they are going on at present, we shall end in dismal failure. That would not be nice, would it? If we fail now we shall never have another chance. It is our great opportunity, and we must take full advantage of it!"

"Yes, but your new rules are more like slavery than freedom," explained Bell.

"Surely not?" replied Tucker mildly. "Slavery? How absurd! How extremely preposterous! It may seem harsh, when you regard the matter at first, but please let me point out, it is the only way in which the full benefits of Communism can be secured. When all conform to the simple rules, there will be no punishments. Indeed, there need be none now if you will act in the right way."

"How do you mean?"

"These new regulations have only been drawn up as a safeguard against disorder," replied Tucker. "Those who fail to keep the rules of the Supreme Council are deserving of punishment—and punishment must be inflicted. If you thought that Communism meant that you could do precisely as you liked, you made a big mistake. If you do not care for the rule of the present Supreme Council, it is within your power to elect another. But it is only fair to give us a chance first."

"Dash it all, the fathead's right!" shouted Hubbard. "Things have been in a bit of a muddle, you know. If we're going to run the school, we've got to do it properly, or make ourselves the laughing-stock of the whole giddy country."

"Exactly!" said Tucker. "We've got to set an example which will serve as a pattern for all. And I trust that you will realise the necessity for these apparently harsh regulations. They are not harsh in reality, since there is no necessity for any punishments to be inflicted. It is entirely within your own power to obviate them if you choose. And it must not be imagined that these ideas are put in force by me. They have been carefully considered and weighed by the Supreme Council. A special session was held for their consideration, and they were adopted after due thought and deliberation."

There was certainly a great deal in what Timothy Tucker said, and the big crowd was impressed. All the fellows realised that T. T. was right. Without thinking the question over, and without having the facts put before them clearly, they were inclined to jib.

But, as Tucker had explained, it was up to them to do the right thing. Under Communism they had many advantages which they had never had before—rising an hour later, meals in their own studies, shorter lessons, no impositions, no prep. In order to enjoy these advantages, it was only right that they should conform to a certain routine. They had to be up at the right time, they had to attend lessons, and they had to abide by the decision of the Form Councils in case of minor offences.

The Fifth and Sixth were inclined to treat the whole affair rather off-hand, but they were quite prepared to keep to the regulations of the Supreme Council. After all, the rebels had received official permission to go ahead with this scheme, and it was a change and a bit of sport. The seniors had no quarrel against it.

The Remove, of course, was thoroughly excited, and entered into the business with tremendous enthusiasm.

It was now nearly time for morning lessons. The school clock announced the fact that ten o'clock would arrive within a quarter of an hour. Nine-thirty, of course, was the usual time for morning lessons to begin, but the Communists had altered this. They would not start until ten, and lessons would be over by twelve. This meant two hours work in the morning instead of three.

At ten minutes to ten Edward Oswald Handforth marched boldly into the lobby of the Ancient House. Two or three juniors were there, including Tucker. They all turned and regarded the intruder somewhat aggressively.

"Clear out, you blessed Loyalist!" exclaimed Armstrong warmly. "We don't want you here! We shall have to stand you and your pals during lessons, but——"

"If you want a thick ear, you'd better say so!" exclaimed Handforth. "I've come here in a peaceful spirit——"

"Talking about thick ears?" inquired Griffith.

"Well, I'm not going to be sauced by anyone!" retorted Handforth curtly. "So you'd

Better look out if you're thinking of being cheeky. As a matter of fact, I'm rather fed up with things over on the other side. I've made up my mind to join your rotten crowd—I mean to become a Rebel!"

The juniors gathered round Handforth curiously, and a few others came up.

"Dear me!" said Tucker, beaming. "Do I understand, my dear Handforth, that you have entered this building with the intention of joining our ranks? Are you seriously prepared to embrace the doctrines of Communism?"

"You—you hopeless ass!" said Handforth, pityingly. "You and your rotten Communism! I'd rather freeze to death than have anything to do with— That is to say, of course, I'm going to join you!" he added hastily. "That—that's what I've come for! I'm a Communist now! I'm a Rebel!"

"Splendid! Excellent!" exclaimed Tucker warmly. "We are always ready to admit new comrades into the fold. Allow me to offer you an official welcome, my dear sir. If you will follow me to the chamber of the Supreme Council—"

"Rats!" snapped Handforth. "I don't want to go to any blessed chamber! I've come here because I want to find out a few things— Great pig! I—I mean I'm here because I think Communism is ripping!"

"Will you take the oath of allegiance?" asked Armstrong.

"Not likely!" snorted Handforth. "I'm not taking any silly oath! Communism is rank piffle—"

"But you just said you would join us!" suggested Tucker softly.

"Yes—er—of course!" exclaimed Handforth hurriedly. "You—you asses!" he roared. "What's the idea of all this questioning? Ain't you satisfied that I've come? As a matter of fact, I'm prepared to be made president as soon as you like!"

"Oh, good!" said Armstrong sarcastically. "Handforth is good enough to offer himself as president, you chaps. Shall we accept him?"

"There's no question about it!" said Handforth. "Everybody knows I'm the most important chap in the Remove—and it stands to reason, I shall be given the full leadership. Tucker, you can clear out! I'm chief now!"

Tucker blinked in wonder.

"Really, my dear sir, I must protest—"

"You can protest all you like! It won't make any difference," said Handforth. "I'm President of the Extreme Council, or whatever you call it, and I'm going to spy out all your giddy secrets—"

"You're going to do what?" snapped Griffith.

"I—I mean, I'm going to lead you to victory!" said Handforth hastily.

"Grab him!" put in Armstrong. "The silly ass has come here to make himself funny. We'll soon show him that he can't mess about with Communism. Hold him,



"I've made up my mind to join your rotten crowd," said Handforth. "I mean to become a Rebel!"

and I'll rush round and call the Supreme Council together. We shall just have time to hold a meeting before lessons."

"Hi, what the dickens—"

Handforth burst into indignant protest as he was seized from all sides. And, in spite of his struggles and shouts, he was forced along to the Tribunal Chamber. By the time he arrived, the Supreme Council was sitting, and looking dignified and stern. Kenmore was Chief of the Tribunal.

"Let the prisoner stand before me!" he said grimly.

"You—you silly fathead!" shouted Handforth. "I've come here to join you—"

"With the idea of obtaining our secrets?" asked Kenmore.

"Yes, rather!" roared Handforth hotly. "I'm going to find out all your rotten plans, and then the Loyalists will simply wipe you up! My only hat! That—that is to say, I'm going to take up Communism—"

"Further evidence is unnecessary!" said the Chief of the Tribunal. "Questioning this prisoner would be a mere waste of time. He stands self-accused, and no further evidence is necessary. His sentence will be decided upon at once."

The Tribunal put their heads together, and

muttered for a few moments. Then Kenmore stood up, and pointed to the door.

"The sentence of the tribunal is that the prisoner shall be cast into the cells for the whole day!" he said impressively. "He will be brought before the Tribunal again at the evening session, and then he will receive his punishment. Stewards, do your duty! Take the prisoner to the cells!"

Handforth stared blankly.

"Why, you—you rotters!" he gasped. "This sort of joke——"

"There is no joke here!" rapped out Kenmore. "Away with him!"

This kind of thing was the breath of life to the bully of the Sixth. He was in his full glory. Never before had he been able to exercise his natural desire for brow-beating and bullying. He could now do it to his heart's content, and he hoped that the day would bring forth a large number of prisoners. His evening would then be one of the greatest enjoyment.

Handforth struggled and roared, but all in vain. He was in the grasp of six stewards, three of them being Fifth Form fellows. He hadn't the slightest chance of getting away.

Out in the Triangle, his roaring voice could be distinctly heard, and Church and McClure glanced at one another, grinned, and showed a lamentable lack of sympathy. Under the circumstances, they could hardly be blamed. Handy was only getting what he had asked for.

The leader of Study D had no idea what his fate was to be, but in his wildest moments he never anticipated that the sentence of the Tribunal was to be actually carried out, that he was to be imprisoned for the day.

Grayson of the Fifth came to a halt when the prisoner had been brought to the door of the cellar. It was a heavy oaken door, powerful enough to resist the efforts of a battering ram, and it was provided with a heavy lock, to say nothing of two outside bolts. These bolts were shot back, and the door was flung wide open. A flight of stone steps led downwards into the spacious cellar.

"Down with him!" said Grayson, with relish.

As he spoke he touched a switch just near the door. The cellar became flooded with light. Handforth was held ready, and he ceased struggling in his great surprise.

"You—you babbling lunatics!" he gasped. "If you shove me in here I'll—I'll punch every nose until——"

"One, two, three—go!" ordered Grayson.

And Handforth went. He was hurled forward with terrific force, and he went flying down the cellar steps, arms and legs waving wildly. He landed in a roaring heap at the bottom, and sat up dazedly.

"Oh, my goodness!" he groaned. "You—you——"

The door closed with a slam, the light went out, and the staggered prisoner heard

the bolts shot home into their sockets.

The Communists had secured their first real victim!

CHAPTER IV.

A DAY UNDER COMMUNISM!



MORNING lessons were due to commence.

Ten o'clock had just struck, and in the Remove Form room nearly all the fellows were in their places. True, they were not sitting upon forms in front of desks in the usual way; these things had been swept away as soon as the new regime came into being.

And now easy chairs, lounges, and so forth filled the Form room. The juniors took things very easily, and lolled about in comfort. The Loyalists were present, too, since they had to participate in lessons.

But all these fellows remained true to the old order of things, and they sat at their desks as of yore. Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West and I sat next to one another, and we could not help being interested in the general state of affairs. Although we were absolutely opposed to the Rebels, we obtained much satisfaction in watching their doings.

The Form-room stewards were in force—four of them. They were distinguished from the other fellows by the bands round their arms. The stewards, I noticed, were Merrel, Doyle, Griffith and Skelton. Each one had a notebook, and he was ready to jot down anything that needed jotting down.

Just as the school clock ceased its note, the door of the Form-room opened, and Mr. Crowell appeared. He was looking stern and rather contemptuous as he swept the whole room with his eagle gaze.

"Oh, so you have had the goodness to present yourselves at the correct time," he said acidly. "Everybody will at once rise! No boy will sit down in this room until I give him permission to do so."

"I had risen the very moment Mr. Crowell had entered, of course, and so had all the other Loyalists. But the Rebels remained in their lounging attitudes, and took absolutely no notice of Mr. Crowell's words.

"Do you hear me, boys?" demanded the Form master.

"Pardon me, Mr. Crowell, but it is no longer necessary for the boys to stand when you enter," exclaimed Armstrong. "That sort of stuff is finished with. It's a symbol of slavery. We're all equals now, and we're just as good as you are."

"Upon my soul!" snapped Mr. Crowell. "This—this is intolerable!"

He marched to his desk, sat down, slammed the desk lid, and rustled his papers about vigorously. He did this, as I could see, in order to hide his confusion. The Rebels looked on, grinning.

Mr. Crowell had threatened to wash his hands of the whole business, and he had refused to undertake his duties in the Form-room. But he had listened to the persuasions of Nelson Lee, who had urged Mr. Crowell to carry on. Lee pointed out that it would be far better to do so, as the boys would soon get themselves into a hopeless state, and would learn to respect him more than they had ever done before.

Thus the master of the Remove had finally agreed. But it was a strain upon him, and he knew that he would only be able to keep his temper with great difficulty.

While he was still fumbling with his papers a door opened, and Fullwood and Co. lounged in. As they did so, Doyle whipped out his notebook and pencil.

"Fullwood, Gulliver, Bell!" he said sharply. "I'm putting your names down in the book, and at dinner-time you will be required for special service."

"What's this?" asked Fullwood tartly. "You ass! If you think we're goin' to carry grub about for the other chaps, you've made a bloomer!"

"It is the order of the Supreme Council!" said Doyle, closing his notebook. "If you refuse to perform the duties which are allotted, you will be forbidden food for the remainder of the day!"

"What rubbish!" snapped Fullwood sourly.

But he looked somewhat alarmed as he went to his place. Gulliver and Bell were alarmed, too; they had apparently forgotten that lateness in the Form-room was a punishable offence.

They had hardly got settled down before three other latecomers arrived. Their names were also taken, and they didn't look at all pleased. And then lessons commenced.

"Needless to say, boys, I am utterly and absolutely opposed to this ridiculous absurdity," said Mr. Crowell stiffly. "However, I will proceed as usual—if, indeed, that is possible. We will commence the morning with geography."

"Oh, rotten!" yawned Fullwood. "I hate geography!"

"Fullwood!" shouted Mr. Crowell. "How dare you speak in that way?"

"Rats!" said Fullwood boldly. "I can speak as I like, old Crowsfeet! You haven't got the power to punish me, even if you want to!"

Mr. Crowell went absolutely white with anger.

"I came here fully prepared for a certain amount of irregularity!" he said thickly. "But this—this is beyond human endurance! Under no circumstances can I put up with such disgraceful insolence!"

Fullwood laughed easily.

"If you can't put up with it, the best thing you can do is to clear out," he exclaimed. "We don't want you here. We've been fed up with you for months, as a matter of fact, and—"

"Fullwood!" exclaimed Doyle sharply.

"Hallo! What's the matter with you?" said Fullwood, turning.

Doyle was on his feet, and he had his notebook and pencil in his hand. He was looking rather hot and flustered, for, after all, Doyle was rather a decent chap, and he had always detested the cad of Study A.

Mr. Crowell was positively trembling with anger, and every Loyalist in the room was ready to jump up and annihilate Fullwood on the spot. About four more words from him would have been sufficient.

"What did you call me for?" demanded Fullwood, glaring at Doyle.

"Simply because the masters no longer control the school, it doesn't give you permission to be impertinent," said Doyle. "Under the Communist rule, masters are absolutely necessary in order that we should have our lessons in the right way. One word more from you will be more than enough. If you repeat your offence you will be reported immediately to the Form Council."

"You pitiful fool!" sneered Fullwood. "Report me to the Form Council!" he added contemptuously. "Why, you're on the Council yourself, ain't you? As for old Crowell, I'll say what I like to him! He's a miserable old sinner—"

"You confounded cad!" I shouted, leaping to my feet.

I had been sitting rather quiet, waiting for the Rebels to act. As they seemed likely to dally, I took immediate action. Striding forward, I stood in front of Fullwood, and slapped his face with a force that made him stagger.

"Apologise, you cur!" I snapped. "Beg Mr. Crowell's pardon at once!"

Fullwood's eyes blazed with deep hatred.

"You beastly Loyalist!" he snarled. "I'll never apologise, an' for this you'll get some-thing!"

Crash!

"Yarooop!" howled Fullwood wildly.

My fist came round, and caught him with terrific force upon the point of the jaw. He went clean over backwards, tumbling headlong over a big easy chair, and finishing up in a heap in Owen major's lap. All the fellows were on their feet now, and the Form-room was in a state of uproar.

"Good for you, Nipper!" sang out Pitt.

"I was just going to do that myself!"

"Boys—boys!" shouted Mr. Crowell.

"This—this is appalling!"

"Silence! Everybody sit down!" shouted Doyle.

The other stewards were active, too, and in a few minutes the fellows were somewhat calmer, and Fullwood was sprawling in an easy chair, nursing his face. I had gone back to my own desk.

"Before anything else is done, I want to say a few straight words!" I exclaimed, addressing the whole Remove. "We Loyalists don't associate ourselves with this Communist nonsense in any way. We'd made up our minds not to interfere, but to let you

run on until you came a cropper. But if we hear any of you being openly insolent and insulting to Mr. Crowell, we'll take action—and quickly!”

“Hear, hear!” chorused my supporters.

Timothy Tucker rose to his feet.

“Pray disillusion yourself, my dear sir,” he exclaimed mildly. “It must not be imagined that the leaders of this new regime countenance any such conduct as we have just witnessed. Comrade Fullwood has acted in a manner totally opposed to the principles of our Cause. Comrade Doyle was perfectly correct when he stated that the offender should be reported to the Form Council. Quite so. The Form Council will meet at once, and formulate the punishment which shall fall upon this misguided wretch. That is so. H'm! That is so!”

Without further delay the Form Council obeyed the suggestion of the President of the Supreme Council. There had been several alterations since the Communists had come into full power. And, since Tucker and Armstrong were the Remove representatives on the Supreme Council, they could not sit on the Form Council as well. This latter now consisted of Nicodemus Trotwood, Chief of the Council, the Hon. Douglas Singleton, Griffith and Doyle.

Both Trotwood and Singleton were, of course, thoroughly good sorts, and they had only gone over to the Rebels because of the Head's inexplicable outbursts of frightfulness. I fancied they were still hovering on the border line, and were quite ready to come back to the Loyalist fold. But, after all, the whole thing was a bit of an adventure, and as they were members of the Form Council they could not very well change.

They held a hasty consultation, whispering together for not more than half a minute. Then Trotwood looked round.

“The Council has considered the scandalous behaviour of Fullwood, that is to say, Comrade Fullwood,” he added. “Blessed if I like calling him a comrade, but it seems to be the correct form of address under Communism. Comrade Fullwood has acted in a manner which the Form Council considers with the utmost gravity. Indeed, we do not feel capable of passing sentence, and the charge will therefore be referred to the evening session of the Supreme Council. Until then Comrade Fullwood will be placed under lock and key, and held a prisoner. Stewards, do your duty!”

Doyle and Griffith were members of the Form Council, and they were also stewards. They at once approached Fullwood. Merrell and Skelton looked rather astonished, but they obeyed.

Fullwood scrambled to his feet, scowling.

“Don't you touch me, you snivellin' cads!” he snarled huskily.

But he was touched, and not only touched, but forcibly taken out of the room. And I caught the eye of Nicodemus Trotwood. He grinned at me and nodded.

Justice had been done. Fullwood was suffering for his sins, and would probably have to suffer more. I was pleasantly surprised, for I had not imagined that the Communists would act in such a businesslike way.

It seemed that a certain amount of order would be kept during lessons, after all. And the morning's work proceeded surprisingly well. For a short time, however, the stewards were absent. They were taking their prisoner to the cellar, and they were quite serious about it, too.

Arriving at the cellar, the door was unbolted, flung open, and Fullwood was told to go down. He breathed hard and looked at his captors as though he would like to slay them on the spot.

“You—you silly rotters—you fools!” he snapped. “Do you think I'm goin' to submit to this sort of thing?”

“We don't think anything about it—we know it!” replied Trotwood grimly. “If you don't go down within five seconds, you'll be pushed!”

Fullwood resisted, and he was given a gentle heave which sent him staggering down the first few steps. He managed to keep his balance, but flew down the remainder of the steps at a run, colliding with Handforth at the bottom, who was just coming up to have a word on his own account.

The door slammed, and the bolts were shot. Then, just as the Remove stewards were about to walk off, they observed a little party marching along the passage towards them. The Form-room stewards of the Fifth were just coming along with a prisoner of their own. He was cast down into the cellar with the others.

“Three giddy prisoners already!” said Doyle. “If this sort of thing goes on all day, the Supreme Council will have a pretty lively job in front of it for this evening! If they're not careful they'll bite off more than they can chew!”

They went back to the Form-room, and found that the Remove had settled down to serious work. Fullwood's fate had warned all the others that it would not be possible to take unfair advantage of the fact that Mr. Crowell had no power to punish them.

Before lessons were over, however, four other fellows were carried off to the cellar by order of the Form Council. Their offences were widely different. Bell, for example, was imprisoned because he refused to do the work which had been set for him. Teddy Long earned the displeasure of the Form Council because he sneaked on two of the other fellows. Dallas and Steele squabbled over something, engaged in a fight, and were promptly sentenced to imprisonment for disorderly conduct. The Schoolboy Communists, at least, those in power, were evidently determined to make use of a form of terrorism in order to further their cause.

And by the time lessons had finished, and the Remove was released, the Ancient House cellar contained no less than ten prisoners, without counting the enraged and indignant

Handforth. Two had been brought in from the Third, and two more from the Fifth, and there was even a Sixth Form fellow imprisoned. The seniors were carrying out the new order of things as energetically as the juniors.

"And this—this is what they call freedom!" exclaimed Steele bitterly, as he paced up and down in the cellar. "My hat! It's worse than ever! We were never treated like this where the masters had the power to inflict punishment!"

"It's—it's scandalous!" said Bell, breathing hard. "I've never heard of anything like this in all my life! I'm going to chuck Communism up after this, and go over to the Loyalists!"

"Same here!" said Fullwood.

"Me, too!" put in Teddy Long indignantly.

A jeering laugh came from the other side of the dark cellar.

"You optimists!" said Handforth, who was responsible for the laugh. "If you think the Loyalists'll have you, you've made a bloomer! Why, we would not own you for anything we could see! Come over to the Loyalists if you like, but you'll get a few black eyes and thick ears before you're allowed to go! You joined the Rebels, and you've got to stick to 'em. This is your medicine, and you've got to drink it!"

"You seem to be drinking some of it!" remarked one of the Fifth Formers.

Handforth snorted.

"The rotters took me by surprise, or they'd never have had me!" he said darkly. "But you wait! By George! Just you wait! I'll show you whether they can treat a Loyalist just as they like."

Handforth didn't actually say what he was going to do, but his tone was significant. And it was quite certain that when he did gain his liberty he would bring trouble on somebody's head.

The imprisoned Rebels were not feeling particularly happy. They were, in fact, alarmed. They knew quite well that the Loyalists would never take them back, and this meant, therefore, that they must remain with the Communists. And, somehow or other, Communism didn't quite appeal to them now.

In the meantime the Supreme Council was holding a meeting. The various members of the governing body had collected together immediately after lessons, and, after a brief discussion regarding the prisoners, two of the stewards were sent to the domestic quarters to fetch Mrs. Poulter, the House matron. She came after a while, flustered, indignant, and voluble.

"Never did I hear the likes of it!" she exclaimed, as she hustled into the council-chamber. "Such goings on! Everything upside down, and the poor masters took no more notice of than if they was gate-posts! Mark my words, young gentlemen, there'll be a rare to do over this when the governors find out the truth. And then you'll be punished as you deserve——"

"That's all right, Mrs. Poulter; don't you worry about us," interrupted Kenmore. "We've sent for you because we want to give you some orders."

"Orders, indeed!" snapped Mrs. Poulter. "It's not likely I'll take orders from the likes of you, Master Kenmore——"

"Pardon me, Mrs. Poulter, but pray let me explain," interrupted T. T. gently. "It is not Comrade Kenmore who will give you orders, but the Supreme Council——"

"Stuff and nonsense!" interjected the matron, with a sniff.

"You will please understand, my dear lady, that the Supreme Council now has full control of St. Frank's," said Tucker. "And the Supreme Council has decided that all meals in the Remove, Fifth, and Sixth, are in future to be served in the private studies. That is so. Please make arrangements accordingly——"

"Lawks a-mighty!" said Mrs. Poulter, holding up her hands. "Whatever next will you be up to? Meals served in the studies! You must be daft, Master Tucker, to suggest such a thing! It couldn't be done, what with fetching and carrying, and a host of other things! The maids would never stand it——"

"My dear Mrs. Poulter, pray allow me to explain," said Tucker. "I fear you are inclined to be somewhat too hasty in your conclusions. That is regrettable—indeed, lamentable. The Supreme Council has arranged for a complete staff of meal-stewards. These stewards will be separated into three divisions—one division for the Sixth, one division for the Fifth, and another division for the Remove. The stewards will present themselves in the kitchen passage five minutes before the dinner hour. You will now make a list of the various studies which will be served. You will find that some studies contain three comrades, others four. You will please arrange for the food to be placed ready on separate trays, so that there can be no confusion. The various courses, dirty dishes, and so forth, will be carried backwards and forwards by the stewards."

Mrs. Poulter shook her head vigorously.

"I won't do it, Master Tucker," she declared. "Not in my born days did I ever hear of such hare-brained ideas! There's dining-rooms all proper for meals, and that's where the meals will be served——"

"Oh, will they?" snapped Kenmore. "Look here, my good woman, you'd better understand at once that you can't come here and dictate to us. We give our orders, and you've got to obey them! If you don't obey, you'll be sacked!"

"Well, I never did!" gasped Mrs. Poulter, starting back.

The wind was somewhat taken out of her sails, and after a few more words of protest she stormed out of the Council Chamber. The Supreme Council gazed at one another in a doubtful kind of way.

"I'm afraid she won't come up to the scratch," remarked Carlile.

"Won't she?" snorted Kenmore. "We'll see!"

"Pray try to be somewhat less aggressive, Comrade Kenmore," said Tucker mildly. "I regret to say that the tone you adopted towards Mrs. Poulter was lamentable. These good people will all fall into line in due course—and far sooner if we treat them easily. I am convinced that the dinner arrangements will be made according to our plan."

And, five minutes before the dinner-bell was due to ring, the special squads of meal-attendants were marshalled into line and marched down towards the kitchen. They consisted mostly of Third Formers, and the lags made no objection to the special work they had to perform. They knew only too well that protest would be useless; and, quite apart from this, they were rather excited by the novelty of the whole thing.

But it was different with the other meal-attendants.

These were the fellows who had come in late for lessons, some of them belonging to the Remove, and some to the Fifth. They point blank refused to carry out menial work of the kind which was demanded. The Supreme Council had foreseen something of this sort, and every available steward was at hand. Without being given a chance to change their minds, the objectors were seized on the instant and hustled off to the Communist prison. Their offences were noted down in writing.

The lags, therefore, were compelled to do all the carrying of dishes and plates by themselves. And, in the meantime, the cellar was fuller than ever, for it now contained no less than sixteen prisoners! The noise they created was rather appalling; but they could not escape. Not only was the heavy cellar-door more than they could manage, but guards were placed outside.

It was now dinner-time, and the prisoners, being healthy schoolboys, were suffering from the pangs of sharp appetites. But there was no dinner for them. It was part of their punishment to go without food until they were released.

The Supreme Council, true to precedent, was far more harsh and autocratic than any bullying headmaster. The measures that were taken to subdue offenders were not only severe, but rather frightful. The Supreme Council had made its laws, and these laws had to be obeyed, or drastic punishment followed.

"It is most regrettable that these comrades should be compelled to suffer in such a way," exclaimed Tucker to a crowd of juniors who made inquiries. "But you've got to realise, my dear sirs, you've got to realise, my comrades, that in order to be successful we must necessarily be harsh."

"But we're all equals!" shouted somebody.

"Precisely!" agreed Tucker. "We are all equals, my dear sir. But, in order to be equals, we must each act in the same way. There must be no backsliders. When we all

conform to the Communist rules there will be no punishments and no unpleasantness. It is necessary, but regrettable, that we should be compelled to act so drastically towards our comrades. But it will only be for a short period. The necessity for strict adherence to regulations will soon be realised, and—my comrades—the cogs will work together smoothly, and the whole machinery will run with great sweetness. Ahem! That is so."

And this was the line of argument that Tucker took up to all inquirers. Some of them were convinced, and some were not. But it really didn't matter either way. There was no arguing with the Soviet.

Meals served in the studies were not exactly successful. Plates were smashed, some studies had double supplies of food, others had none, and so forth. On the whole, most of the fellows enjoyed themselves, for the whole thing was a novelty. And the Supreme Council declared that these little matters would soon adjust themselves. After a few days there would be no hitches.

More juniors were late for afternoon lessons, and these were promptly marked down for service at tea-time. And during the afternoon quite a number of fellows in all the forms committed various offences. Without ceremony they were marched off to the cellar. Even Timothy Tucker was rather startled when he learned that there were between twenty and twenty-four prisoners; he had never expected anything like this. But, having commenced it, it was necessary to go on.

The laws had been made, and the laws had to be enforced, or the whole system would crumble to pieces.

To the watching Loyalists the whole thing was farcical. I couldn't help grinning when I thought of it. But the Communists took it all seriously, and couldn't detect anything humorous in the situation.

From all corners rows and grumbles were being heard, but the system was in full operation now, and the fellows were helpless. They had asked for it, and they were getting it! They had wanted freedom, and here it was! They had wanted it without knowing what it actually was.

The more thoughtful fellows were just beginning to realise that they were little better than slaves. With the school under sole control of the boys oppression was the order of the day. As Tucker explained, it had to be either that or hopeless confusion. The first day was a kind of test, and the only possible way to make the day successful was to enforce every rule with the utmost severity.

Consequently, when evening arrived there were twenty-seven prisoners in the cellar awaiting trial. Their offences were all marked down, and they would be brought up before the Supreme Council one by one, and punished according to their deserts.

In the meantime the prisoners were fuming with rage, and savage with hunger. But they

(Continued on page 25.)

OUR GREAT SCOOP!

COMING
NEXT WEEK!
(SEE INSIDE.)

NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

No. 8.

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

Jan. 14.
1922.



His Grace
The Duke of
Somerton

A Portrait by one of
our Old Masters,
of the School of
ST. FRANKS.

THE EDITOR'S DEN

ENTRANCE

EXIT

EDITOR

EDITORIAL OFFICE,

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

My Dear Chums,—Last week I promised to give you in this number some particulars of a very special humorous series that will set you laughing next week as you have never laughed before. I have secured for the Mag. what journalists would call a "wonderful scoop." You have heard of "Peck's Bad Boy," the mischievous little imp on the films played by Charlie Chaplin's young prodigy, Jacky Coogan? Of course you have. But you may not know that the film version of "Peck's Bad Boy" has been taken from a book that made all America laugh.

BEGINS NEXT WEEK.

It was Farman, our American member of the Remove, who drew my attention to it. He said that everybody out West went crazy over it, and then suggested that it would be just the goods for the Mag. With that he gave me a copy of the book to read. I saw at once that I had tumbled to a good thing. Each chapter was short and complete, yet crammed full of mirth-provoking adventure. I at once decided to get permission to publish a number of the adventures—one every week—in the Mag. You will be glad to hear that I have been successful, and that the first adventure of "Peck's Bad Boy" will appear in next week's issue of the Mag.

A WORD OF WARNING.

I would warn every boy who reads these coming series against imitating "Peck's Bad Boy" in real life. You will get enough fun out of reading about the Bad Boy without taking him seriously—that is to say, following his bad example. For instance, we can laugh at the clown in the pantomime who chases another clown with a red-hot poker, but if anyone behaved like that in real life we should take quite another view. In fact, such a miscreant would soon find himself in gaol or the lunatic asylum.

ANOTHER ATTRACTION.

The other feature to which I referred last week is not definitely fixed, so that I cannot announce it as I had intended. But if I can get everything settled in time for publication in our next issue, you will have an additional attraction to look forward to next week.

Some of you will be wondering what has become of the "Topical Mixture." This bright little feature has been unavoidably held over until next week.

Always yours sincerely,

NIPPER (Editor).

WITHIN THE LION'S JAWS.

Lord Dorrimore, the famous explorer, tells our Special Representative of one of his many stirring Adventures.

"SOMETHIN' startlin', eh?" asked Lord Dorrimore, languidly. "Well, I've had so many startlin' things happen to me that I hardly know which to pick on. What kind of blood-curdlin' adventure do you want?"

I nibbled the end of my pencil thoughtfully.

"Well, for example, a fight with a tiger," I suggested. "Or an elephant, or perhaps a wrestle with a grizzly; or a life-and-death struggle with a gorilla——"

"By gad! What do you take me for—a bally circus performer?" interrupted his lordship. "I've met with a few narrow escapes, but I don't go about havin' arguments with tigers and gorillas. Hold on, though, young man! How about a hair-raisin' adventure with a whackin' great man-eatin' lion?"

"Just the thing!" I said promptly, folding my note-book back.

"Good enough!" said Dorrie, lighting a cigarette. "It happened in East Africa, an' I was with old Umlosi—you know the old rascal—on a bit of an explorin' tour. We'd been havin' some good sport, an' Umlosi an' I got separated from the rest of our crowd. That is to say, the native boys were a lazy lot of blighters, an' they were laggin' behind. Well, it was gettin' near evenin' and a bit of a thunderstorm happened along, so Umlosi an' I decided to take a rest until the boys came up. We couldn't make camp until they arrived, as they had all the cookin' materials an' everythin' else in their packs."

Alone in the Forest.

"Why did you have native boys for this work?" I asked. "Wouldn't men have been better?"

"My dear misguided young jackass!" grinned Dorrie. "Forgive me for bein' so personal, but I can't help it. Native boys ain't really boys. Sometimes they're men of forty an' over. We just call 'em boys, an' I'm surprised at you for airin' your frightful ignorance——"

"I'm sorry, sir," I said, blushing. "Please continue."

"These bally native bearers ran off the rails somewhere," went on his lordship. "I promised the beggars a rough time of

it when they did arrive. But the night came down, an' still we were alone. The blacks had evidently camped, after takin' a wrong course through the forest."

"And what did you do?" I inquired.

"Well, Umlosi went off to find the lost brethren, an' I squatted in front of the fire, thinkin' of grub," said Dorrie. "I was famished, my son, an' I passed the time by inventin' about five hundred different kinds of torture to inflict on the bearers when they blew into the landscape. An' then, just to make everythin' nice and cheerful, the thunderstorm changed its mind, came back, an' vented all its nasty temper on my camp-fire."

"You mean the rain put it out?"

"To the last ember," said Lord Dorrimore.

Attacked by a Lion.

"An' there was I, soaked, cold, hungry an' miserable, wonderin' what was goin' to happen next. I didn't wonder for long. I must have dozed a bit, huddled up there under a bush. Anyhow, I suddenly became aware of a forty-horse-power purrin'—like a battalion of cats, or



"I was expecting the lion to finish me off there and then."

a dozen Fords. I sat up, an' somethin' that felt like a sack of flour hit me on the chest and laid me flat. Then a gust of moist hotness hit me in the face—disgustin' an' awful. I felt frightfully sick, but I knew what the trouble was, an' I began wonderin' which part of me would go first."

"You—you mean that a—a lion——" I paused, horrified.

"Exactly!" said Dorrie calmly. "It was a lion, my son. A huge beggar, too.

Ho was right over the top of me, an' there was I full length an' at his mercy. He must have been watchin' from the darkness, an' when the fire went out he came along an' investigated. I didn't exactly feel like cheerin', I can assure you."

"But what did you do?" I asked breathlessly.

"Nothin'—just nothin'," replied his lordship. "If I had done anythin' just then I shouldn't be doin' anythin' now! The slightest move on my part would have made the brute finish me off in a second. I lay as still as a mouse when it's under a cat's nose. A mouse has got sense, you know, it knows when to keep still, an' sometimes it catches Pussy nappin' an' gets away. I was somethin' like a mouse then. Resistance was out of the question, of course. This infernal lion kept purrin' at full power, gloatin' over me, I suppose. Then I detected a flickering light through the jungle. The bearers an' Umlosi were comin'!"

"You were thankful, I'll bet!" I said, looking up from my note-book.

A Near Thing.

"No, I wasn't," said Dorrie. "I was expectin' the lion to finish me off then an' there. But he was a bit scared, I think, an' he decided to take his supper in the bush. He bent his frightful jaws over me, opened 'em, an' made a grab. His teeth caught my outer clothin'—an' held. Then he lifted me up an' half-dragged, half-carried me off into the jungle."

"How terrible!" I exclaimed.

"How rippin', you mean," said his lordship calmly. "I was only just scratched, an' now I could move. I edged my hand round as we went along, an' managed to get hold of my revolver. I didn't think it worth while to have any argument, or delay things while I thought of what would happen if I missed. I jabbed the barrel of the gun upwards into his throat an' fired."

"You must have had wonderful nerve!" I said admiringly.

"It wasn't nerve, my son, it was sheer necessity," said Dorrie. "It was either that or bein' converted into one large supper. The bullet went clean through the blighter's brain. He toppled over, gurglin' and kickin'. How I rolled clear I don't know. But I did, an' that's the end of the yarn."

"But what about the others——"

"Oh, I joined them almost at once," concluded Lord Dorrimore, yawning.

"But I didn't eat any supper that night. Somehow or other, my appetite seemed lackin', an' I turned into my tent, an' dreamed about lions for hours. But I was right enough in the mornin'."

(Another of Dorrie's Adventures next week.)

THREE BRAVE NUTS.

A Bal'ad of Study A.

By BOB CHRISTINE.

Three bold Nuts

Sat in their study one day,
They were Gulliver, Fullwood and Bell,
And Fully to Gully did say:
"It's awfully dull at St. Frank's
Let's have a bit of a rag.
So pass round the 'cigs.' old fellow,
If it won't be too much 'fag.'"

Three bright Nuts

Lit up their cigarettes,
And talked about "gees" and "odds,"
And told each other their bets.
"Smoking's good for a man;
It's better than tuck," said Bell.
But if it was good for him,
He didn't look very well!

Three brave Nuts

Puffed away at the weeds,
Called each other "old Sport"
And boasted of their brave deeds.
"Jolly good smokes," said Fullwood;
"Pass me another, please,
I'm not afraid——" from the passago
Outside there came a sneeze!

Three pale Nuts

Looked at each other in fear.
Gulliver whispered: "It's Crowell.
We can't have him coming in here."
In a second the three brave Nuts
Flung their fags into the grate.
"Say it's a fire," Bell bellowed;
Gulliver gulped: "Too late."

Three scared Nuts

Hastily crossed the floor,
With Gully and Bell behind.
Fullwood opened the door:
"Please, sir," he said. Then stopped.
"What on earth! Look here! Oh, my
hat!"

For it wasn't a master outside,

But—the Ancient House tabby cat!

EDITOR'S NOTE.—When Handy read this he grunted, and said that cats can't sneeze. Christine told him that this one did. And said that it probably had cat-arrrh. He didn't wait to hear if Handy had any further remarks to make.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

By Timothy Tucker.

SINCE great public interest has been aroused lately in the Press on the all-important question of flogging in schools, I will here set forth my own views based on personal experience and observation on the moral effects of the infliction of physical pain as a corrective for offences of commission and omission in the school-boy. Being thus in a position to obtain first-hand information on the subject, I trust that my words will bear additional weight in influencing the governing bodies and councils in abolishing the last remnant of barbarism still darkening our great public schools.



CRUELTY TO ANIMALS IS NOT CRUELTY TO SCHOOLBOYS.

It is a strange paradox that the same public opinion which has been lately condemning the cruel methods of training the lower order of animals to perform on the stage, should tolerate the methods of cruelty adopted in training our youths to become useful citizens. Is it right that the lower animals should receive more consideration and attention in this matter than our schoolboys? It is monstrous, outrageous! At this rate, we may one day find the inmates of the Zoo returned to Parliament to make laws for us!

WHY IT IS UNJUST.

The whole idea of corporal punishment is to govern by FEAR—to appeal to our lower emotions. It is an injustice to the boy who would be good out of high motives to be classed with the other sort of boy whose goodness extends no deeper than his skin, which he is afraid to risk.

DOES THRASHING DO ANY GOOD?

We are told by the exponents of corporal punishment that a boy is all the better for an occasional thrashing. Such a statement is a mere travesty of the facts, a clumsy confusion of the issues of cause and effect. Good boys are often thrashed, but it is as absurd to say that a boy turns out good because he is sometimes thrashed as to argue that he is thrashed because he is good. Then, Q.E.D., it is not the

thrashing that makes the boy good, but the goodness in the boy which enables him to rise above the brutality of his tormentors.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

I have personally suffered much physical discomfort at the hands of these licensed inquisitors for the courage of my convictions. Yet I am in no way convinced that my opinions are wrong. To bring about reforms one must be prepared for opposition; nay, even martyrdom.

THE ALTERNATIVE.

There is no doubt that flogging a boy saves his master much time and trouble in explanation and argument. But is it always sound?—I mean the policy, not the flogging. For instance, a boy is caned for talking in class. Now, would it not be far more satisfactory to reason with the delinquent and appeal to his sense of fair play in some such manner as this: "You must remember, Jones, that you are on the same equality as the other boys in the class. If you are privileged to speak, they are privileged to speak. If the whole class were privileged to speak, no lessons could be done. Therefore, in the interests of all concerned, you must not speak unless I ask you to." In this way the boy would be silenced by the voice of reason, and would be less likely to mutter afterwards under his breath that his master is a brute.

THE BOY WHO CANNOT HELP BEING BAD.

In the case of the really bad boy, I maintain that no amount of corporal punishment will cure him. His badness is a disease, and should be treated as such. Our worthy humanitarians would hold up their hands in horrified amazement at the sight of a boy being thrashed for catching the measles or for being born deaf and dumb. That would be cruel, because that boy could not be blamed for getting the measles or being born deaf and dumb. Then why should a boy be blamed for being born bad?

CONCLUSION.

In concluding my remarks on this burning topic of the day, I feel that I have irrefutably shown that there is no justification whatever for the use of corporal punishment in our schools in these enlightened days, and I would advise anyone who is interested in the future welfare of our coming citizens to join the Brotherhood of the Free, one of whose objects is to liberate our sons from the wicked tyranny of oppression, and to suppress once and for all the vile Prussianism that finds its expression in the remorseless use of the cane and the birch on these wretched, defenceless young people.

MR. CROWELL'S BIRTHDAY.

By E. O. HANDFORTH.

This week Handy has been sent to report the presentation given in honour of Mr. Crowell's birthday

NIPPER and some other chaps in the Remove thought it would be a good idea to give Mr. Crowell a present, as it was his birthday last week. I suggested a pair of boxing-gloves would be the best thing, as they help to keep a chap fit. But Nipper chose a silver watch. Of course, I know Nipper's quite a clever chap in his way. But as I told him, Mr. Crowell already has a watch, and he couldn't possibly use two, unless he wore two waistcoats. But the Remove fellows are rather pigheaded, and they had actually bought the watch before consulting me.

It was to be presented to Mr. Crowell immediately after lunch. I naturally supposed I was to make the presentation, but Nipper told me he was going to do it himself. That's the worst of Nipper. He tries to take too much on himself. Of course, I saw that the thing would be a bit of a frost. So I offered to take a photograph of Mr. Crowell. I thought that even if he didn't like the watch, he would be glad to have a good likeness of himself.

Nipper arranged to make the presentation immediately after dinner on the steps in front of the Ancient House. We put a few chairs in a row, and Nipper began talking as soon as Mr. Crowell appeared. I didn't hear Nipper's speech, as I was fixing up my camera.

Photography is a very difficult art. And it is not much use having an expensive camera unless you are very good at it. My camera is the most expensive on the market.

It stands on a tall tripod, and the shutter is worked by a bulb. A lot of people find these cameras difficult to use. But that is because they don't take enough care. If you take enough care you can't possibly make a mistake.

Well, now that I have reported all about the presentation, I will let you know how I did my share. I don't want to boast, but I really think Mr. Crowell enjoyed having his photograph taken much more than having a watch given him. And, of course, it is much more difficult to take a good photograph than to give anybody a watch.

I told Mr. Crowell to take a seat on the centre chair. Then I made the other chaps stand and sit round him in a little group. This is the most difficult part of taking a picture.

A child can press the bulb, but it takes brains to group your subjects properly.

When they were all seated, I went to the camera and made sure that I had got the proper focus. No sooner had I got my head beneath the cloth than someone touched me on the arm. I looked up in surprise. It was Nipper.

"You—you silly chump!" I said. "I was just going to press the bulb!"

"Well, it doesn't matter," he replied. "You have forgotten to put the plates in. They're still in that case on the ground. I thought I'd better tell you."

There is no rotten swank about me. So I wasn't annoyed with him. I just told him to go back and sit down. Of course, I should have found out that there were no plates in at once. But Nipper's just a little bit officious. He thinks he knows how to take a photograph as well as I do.

I put in the plates and went under the cloth again. As I covered my head, one of the legs of the tripod knocked against my foot. It was most annoying, for the whole camera toppled over with a crash.

It was one of those things that might happen to anybody, yet I distinctly heard Tommy Watson say something about my being clumsy. I didn't reply; it was so obvious that the tripod

had been badly made, and had somehow slipped against my foot.

When they were all sitting down again, I pressed the bulb. As I did so, I distinctly saw Tregellis-West let his eyeglass fall out of his eye. So to make quite certain that I should get a good photo I pressed the bulb again and took another exposure.

I spent the evening developing. And while doing so, I was amazed to find that I had only used one plate. I almost think one of the chaps must have bagged the other.

At last I have taken a print. I think myself it is very good. But when I showed it to Nipper he burst out laughing. Yet the only thing that is at all wrong with it is that every figure in the group has come out double.

But as I told Nipper, they must have moved as I pressed the bulb!



It was so obvious that the tripod had been badly made, and had somehow slipped against my foot.

THE TOOTHACHE CURE

By JACK GREY

FRENCH irregular verbs immediately after dinner is a splendid remedy for those who suffer from insomnia, especially when the dinner is rounded off with a good helping of treacle pudding. It was on just such an occasion, when the weather was cold outside and the artificial heating of the Remove Form-room was oppressively warm, that everyone was dozing over their French grammars, except one boy. Armstrong sat squirming and wriggling in his seat, his face distorted with grimaces. It was plain that he could not enjoy Nature's balm of repose. Something was wrong, and when sundry groans emanating from him seemed likely to disturb the peaceful quiet of the Formroom, Mr. Crowell looked up.

"Feeling unwell, Armstrong?" he inquired gently.

"Toothache, sir," responded the junior promptly.

"You had better run along to Mrs. Poulter. I have no doubt she has an excellent remedy for your trouble," continued the Form-master in the same pleasant monotone.

With great alacrity, Armstrong got up to go. As he reached the door his face drooped, for Mr. Crowell had beckoned him.

"One moment, Armstrong. You need not come back to class this afternoon. Take your grammar book with you and go to your study after you have seen Mrs. Poulter. I cannot have you interrupting the other boys here."

As Armstrong departed, once more a calm descended upon the Form; but not for long. A certain buzzing was going on in the vicinity of Fullwood, Gulliver and Bell, the cads of Study A. This was succeeded by a faithful reproduction of Armstrong's symptoms.

Once more Mr. Crowell looked up.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Fullwood, Gulliver and Bell, come here!"

The three cads obeyed, holding handkerchiefs to their faces.

"Also suffering from toothache, I presume?" asked Mr. Crowell.

"Yessir," answered Fullwood. "I think it must have been the treacle pudding we had for dinner, sir."

"Ah, very likely," said Mr. Crowell.

By this time several of the boys were fully awake, including Handforth.

"The awful spoofers!" muttered Edward Oswald. "I bet they're only trying to wangle the afternoon off to play cards. I hope Crowell gives them a wiggling for their sauce."

But Mr. Crowell did nothing of the kind. Instead, he gave them the same sympathetic treatment he had accorded to Armstrong. As they returned to get their grammar books, the trio of Study A bestowed sardonic grins on the less fortunate Removites, several of whom put out their feet to trip up the impostors, with the result that Fullwood and Co. stumbled violently.

"There seems to be a great deal of noise this afternoon," said Mr. Crowell irritably. "If there are any other boys suffering from toothache as a consequence of eating treacle pudding, I shall be glad if they will come forward and let me know."

Meanwhile, Handforth had been whispering to his chums, Church and McClure, violent denunciation of Mr. Crowell's inability to see through Fullwood's little game. In fact, he had been urging the other boys to complain that they had just as much toothache as Fullwood. Mr. Crowell's remark, however, settled things. Handforth strode forward, expecting the whole Form to follow suit. Only Church and McClure supported him.

Exactly the same consideration was shown Handforth and his chums as in the instance of the other sufferers from toothache.



(Continued on next page.)

THE TOOTHACHE CURE*(Continued from preceding page)*

"Now perhaps we shall have a little peace," remarked Mr. Crowell, as Handy went out to make war on Study A. Then the Remove dozed once more over their French grammars.

A special surprise tea in honour of Mr. Crowell's birthday took place that evening in the big hall. Cakes and jam *ad lib.* were provided, and every boy in the Remove contrived to be present. Even the toothache patients were there—Mr. Crowell's kindly sympathy saw to that.

"Old Crowell's not a bad old stick," Handforth was heard to remark as he

wandered fruitlessly round the Remove table, looking for a vacant chair.

Then a firm hand gripped Handy's shoulder. He turned to find Mr. Crowell regarding him with that same beatific smile he had bestowed on him earlier in the afternoon.

"Look sharp, my lad. You will find a seat specially reserved for you over there," said Mr. Crowell, indicating the direction.

"Thank you, sir—very much indeed, sir," answered Handy rather profusely.

As he drew nearer the table his expression changed. For sitting at the same table, looking very glum, were Fullwood and Co. and Church and McClure. Nor was this all. Stuck on the wall over the table was printed in big, black letters:—

**TOOTHACHE PATIENTS. NO CAKES
OR JAM TO BE SERVED AT THIS
TABLE.**

(Signed) B. CROWELL.

Who's Who at St Frank's**STUDY A.**

RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD—Who is the notorious leader of the "Knuts of Study A," a name appropriately given to Fullwood, Gulliver and Bell by the Remove on account of their taste for cultivating the gay bravado of "the man about town," which Fullwood thinks is smart, clever and sporting. But whatever admirable qualities there may exist in the hero of Fullwood's imagination, they seem to have escaped the notice of the leader of Study A. He loves to consider himself an adept at backing horses, playing cards for money, and smoking. Such habits as these are particularly detestable in a schoolboy, and would mean instant expulsion were he found out by any of the masters. But Fullwood is an expert at breaking bounds and avoiding collision with anyone in authority. Besides being an utter rascal in disregarding school rules, Fullwood is both a cad and a bully. The decent fellows will have nothing to do with him. On first acquaintance, Fullwood often strikes a new boy as being a good sort, for he can make himself very obliging and amiable when he is preying on the unsuspecting newcomer with a view to wheedling money from his victim by double dealing. It is then that he is most dangerous. Farman, De Valerie, Sessue Yakama, the Bo'sun, Pitt, Somerton, Singleton are only a few of the boys whom Fullwood has fleeced when they first came to St. Frank's. If a new boy does not appear to be worth plucking, he would be insulted and treated with contempt by the leader of Study A. It was in this way that he greeted Jack Grey, who came to St. Frank's as Jack Mason, the son of

a humble Bermondsey carpenter. When Fullwood discovered that the new boy was really the son of a baronet, his attitude towards Grey changed considerably. This vindictive form of snobbery also affords Fullwood an opportunity of putting on airs and graces of affected superiority to the new boy whose family or personal shortcomings offer scope for Fullwood's vicious tongue. Being no respecter of persons or rules, it naturally follows that Fullwood has little regard for the truth. When it suits him to tell a lie—and he has frequently to resort to this convenience—he can do so with the practised skill of an artist. Fullwood is no lover of healthy outdoor sport, where physical endurance and fair play are required. Sport for him is only another word for gambling. Hence, he is a regular patron of the White Harp, a dingy public-house in Bellton, owned by Jonas Porlock, who is a bookmaker on a small scale. At one time he was captain of the Remove, a position that he created for himself. When Nipper came to St. Frank's his reign soon came to an end. As captain, he had behaved like a despot and gave Nipper a warm time until he found Nipper to be more than a match for him. Fullwood is first mentioned in "The Nelson Lee Library," No. 112, in a story entitled "Nipper at St. Frank's." Other stories in which he appears prominently are "Fullwood's Victory," No. 116; "The Verdict of the School," No. 118; "Fullwood's Cunning," No. 129; "The Bo'sun's Predicament," No. 138, and "Singleton's Rival School," No. 246.

SPECIAL FEATURES NEXT WEEK!

PECK'S BAD BOY and his "PA"

SCHOOLBOY HOWLERS.

(Continued from page 16.)

could do nothing except rave.

Fortunately the cellar was dry and well ventilated, and the prisoners came to no actual harm. But they were cold, and the lack of comfort only angered them the more. In the whole cellar there was not even a chair—nothing but the hard concrete floor.

The Loyalists looked on with great interest, wondering how the Tribunal would be able to deal effectively with so many prisoners.

It was a problem which even the Tribunal itself hardly dared to think of!

CHAPTER V.

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY!



NELSON LEE chuckled.

"As I expected, Nipper, our youthful followers of Communism are rapidly tying themselves into knots," he observed drily. "Given a free hand, they are finding that the principles they were so enthusiastic about are exceedingly difficult to put into practice."

"They're getting into a hopeless mess, gov'nor," I said. "And instead of every fellow being equal, as they first reckoned, the Supreme Council holds all the chaps in the hollow of its hand. It's an autocracy that beats anything that's ever been at St. Frank's. It's like a lot of slaves being under the command of a bullying driver."

"Such a system as Tucker and his followers are putting into practice must necessarily strangle itself sooner or later," exclaimed Nelson Lee. "In a way, it is not true Communism, but a mongrel breed of Tucker's own invention. However, it contains the main principles of Communism as we know it, and it is rather interesting to watch the progress of these self-styled reformers. If the majority of the boys don't beg to revert back to the old conditions within a week I shall be surprised."

"I don't even give 'em a week, sir," I said. "They're getting fed up to the neck already. But I didn't come here to talk about those asses, sir; I want to ask about the Head, and Trenton, and all the rest of it."

Nelson Lee nodded, and looked more serious. We were in the gov'nor's study—not his true study, but a temporary one in the College House. It was evening, tea just being over.

"With regard to Dr. Stafford, I am pleased to tell you that he is enjoying a complete rest, and is regaining all his old strength and vigour," said Nelson Lee. "These frequent bouts of violence brought on by Trenton's infernal drug had weakened him a lot."

"And what about Trenton?" I asked.

"Mr. Trenton, our smooth-tongued science-master, is still very popular with most of the boys, who do not know the precise kind of serpent he is," said Nelson Lee grimly. "Trenton is playing a waiting game, Nipper;

he is constantly on the watch, hoping that he might be able to seize upon an opportunity to administer another dose of his drug."

"But you're guarding the Head closely, aren't you, sir?"

"Night and day," replied Nelson Lee. "The Head, as you know, is at present upstairs in his own suite of rooms. He never ventures out, and he is completely shut off from everybody else in the school. These are my orders, not the Head's own wishes. At the present moment Dr. Brett is guarding the Head, so there is no fear that anything untoward will happen during my absence, and I must attend to my duties some time, Nipper. Brett is a very good fellow."

"Rather, sir—one of the best," I agreed. "What about this drug of Trenton's? It's played the dickens with the Head lately; and once you got a dose of it. Do you know exactly what it is, sir?"

Nelson Lee looked at me thoughtfully.

"I know this much, Nipper," he replied. "The stuff is Trenton's own concoction. He discovered it, and no other man on earth knows the formula. It is called Zaxzol—merely a distinguishing name, I suppose. And, as far as I can judge, there is a big plot afoot to use this stuff in various schools all over the country."

"What on earth for?" I asked blankly.

"It is being used against headmasters, who disgrace themselves while under its influence, and are immediately dismissed," said Nelson Lee. "The representative of Trenton's combine then steps in. It was planned that Trenton himself should apply for a senior mastership at St. Frank's if he succeeded in driving Dr. Stafford away."

"And what's this combine you speak about, sir?"

"It consists of four or five men," replied Nelson Lee. "The chief, I believe, is a certain Professor Holroyd Garth—"

"Why, he's a famous scientist, sir!"

"Famous in a way, yes," agreed Nelson Lee. "Another man is Dr. Roger Paxton, and there is another man named Chandler. They are all in this thing together, and, although I don't know the precise object of their conspiracy, I have a half-formed opinion as to what it is. But I can't go into any details just now, Nipper."

"Isn't it probable that these men might take some action, sir?"

"It is probable, and, indeed, quite likely," said Nelson Lee. "But while the school is in its present state I fancy these men will hesitate to act. That is one reason why I have allowed these Rebels to try their Communism. It is doing no real harm, and the Head is benefiting by the enforced rest."

"Why didn't you collar the whole crowd, and bring it to a finish?" I asked curiously. "What's the idea of delaying, sir?"

"The precise idea is that I want to catch Trenton red-handed, so that he may have no loophole of escape," said Nelson Lee. "Furthermore, I wish to get a few more facts together. I have enough evidence at the



Nelson Lee found me down in the cellar, helplessly bound, and quite alone.

moment to have all these men arrested——"

"Then why don't you go ahead, and get it over?"

"Because when this conspiracy is exposed the story will be so extraordinary that nobody will believe it unless I can produce the most concrete proofs," said Nelson Lee. "The story, in fact, will sound well nigh impossible, and if I fail to back my accusations with cast-iron evidence, the whole prosecution will fail—the enemy will wriggle out. Therefore, I must wait until Trenton himself makes a decisive move. I don't think I shall have to wait very long."

"Let's hope not, guv'nor," I said.

"I suppose you are aware, young 'un, that you are interrupting all my work?" smiled Lee. "If you want to make yourself useful you can run down to the village for me. There are one or two things I urgently require, and I cannot get away personally. As soon as I have finished this work I am due to relieve Dr. Brett."

"I'll go, sir—any old thing you like," I said promptly. "Tell me what you want, hand out the cash, and I'll be off. And, speaking of cash, reminds me that I could do with a bit to be going on with."

Nelson Lee laughed, forked out handsomely, and soon afterwards I bustled into the cloak-

room and donned my overcoat and muffler. Then, mentioning to my chums that I should not be more than half an hour, I departed.

I pride myself on being pretty keen, as a rule, and I was on the look-out for any attempt to follow me. I didn't actually expect anything of the sort, but it's part of my nature to be always on the alert.

It certainly wasn't my fault that I failed to observe Mr. Hugh Trenton at the window of his study. The window was quite dark, and the science master himself was invisible to everybody outside. But he had witnessed my departure, and there was a grim, half-eager light in his eyes as he turned away from the window after I had passed out of the big gateway.

Trenton, apparently, had been fully on the alert, and he must have known that I had been paying a visit to Nelson Lee. He pulled down the blind at once, and switched on the electric-light. Then he went to the telephone instrument and removed the receiver from its hook. He impatiently gave the number of the White Harp Inn, in Bellton. The public-house was by no means a high-class one, and it possessed a somewhat unsavoury reputation. Nevertheless, it had excellent accommodation, and there were apparently some visitors staying there at present.

Having got through, Trenton immediately asked for a Mr. Jones to be brought to the telephone. This was quite palpably a false name—more particularly as a second man was staying at the White Harp named Mr. Smith. The two had come together, and were always in company.

"That you, Jones?" asked Trenton softly. "Yes," came the reply. "You're H. T., aren't you?"

"Yes. There's something for you to do at once," replied Trenton cautiously. "It's pretty urgent, so you'd better lose no time. The youngster has just left, and he's coming straight to the village——"

"Yes, but we don't want to get hold——"

"Strictly speaking, it would be better to interview his senior, but it might be just as well to have a little chat with the young fellow first," said Trenton. "He ought to be down in the village within six or seven minutes. So if you want to buttonhole him, you can't do better than act at once."

It was clearly obvious that Trenton was speaking in guarded terms. Telephones are not always strictly private, and the science master had no desire to commit himself to anything definite. The man he was speaking to thoroughly understood, and it was quite sufficient.

"All right, I'll have a chat with the youngster," said the voice. "I think I can manage to get a word with him. Shall I keep him?"

"By all means," said Trenton. "I think you know the arrangement? You might be able to get into touch with the boys' principal if you go about it in the right way. That's all; I can't keep you any longer."

"You've got everything ready, I suppose?"

"Yes, everything."

"Good! Do your best to bring the deal off."

Trenton hung up the receiver, and turned away from the telephone with a peculiar smile on his face. Almost everything he had said to Mr. Jones had possessed an inner meaning—a meaning which no chance-listener could penetrate. It would seem indeed, that some kind of a deal was in contemplation. This, however, was very far from the truth.

I was not exactly suspicious as I walked briskly down the dark lane. At the same time, I was well on the alert, for I knew only too well from past experiences that Nelson Lee's enemies sometimes attempted to strike at him through me. I had no intention of being caught napping now.

With my eyes wide open, and my ears stretched to catch any unusual sounds, I passed along the lane, and at length arrived at the old stone bridge over the River Stowe. The village lay just ahead, with one or two tinkling lights showing in the darkness. There was little prospect of any attack upon me now.

The evening was cold, but not very frosty. There had been one or two thaws of late, and although the ground was hard again, practically no ice remained on the river, except in backwaters here and there where the water was still and calm. I could hear the current gurgling against the buttress of the bridge as I entered upon the approach.

Then something seemed to touch me like a light hand out of the darkness. I came to a halt and swung round, all my wits on the alert. As I did so, a sharp, fierce grip tightened round my body and arms. For the first second I was rather bewildered, then I jumped to the truth.

A rope had suddenly coiled through the air, had descended over my shoulders, and had been drawn tight, pinning my arms to my sides. In spite of all my efforts, I had been caught! But I could never have anticipate any such ruse as this.

I struggled desperately to free my arms, but before I could succeed, two black forms loomed up out of the darkness. They sprang upon me without uttering a sound. I could not even run, since I was held by the rope. Strong fingers were placed upon me, and I was helpless.

The moon came out from behind a rift of thick clouds, and I could see that my attackers were two strongly built men. Their overcoat collars were turned up, and their hats were drawn right down over their features.

"Over with him!" muttered one of them sharply.

"You—you scoundrels!" I gasped desperately. "What's the idea of this? Help! Help—"

Before I could utter another sound a cold hand was clapped over my mouth, and immediately substituted by a thick muffler.

Then, in spite of my struggles, I was carried bodily to the parapet of the bridge, and hoisted up.

A ghastly thought came over me. These men were about to drop me into the river, hopelessly bound as I was! The water was deep here, and death would come swiftly in the icy grip of the water. But I need not have felt so alarmed, for scoundrels though these men were, they were not quite so bad as that.

I was swung over the edge of the parapet, and then dangled in space, held by that strong rope. Swiftly, I was lowered down. But instead of my feet dropping into the water, they came in contact with some hard object which sounded hollow against my foot. I then realised that I had been lowered into a waiting boat.

The whole incident occurred within twenty seconds, and even if somebody had been coming along the road, it is extremely doubtful if they would have suspected anything. In spite of the moonlight, the darkness was intense in the shadows. Moonlight, indeed, always seems to accentuate the darkness in those spots where the silvery light does not penetrate.

Once in the boat, I was immediately seized by a third man, pulled up into the bows, and held there. The boat slid silently under the bridge, where the darkness was utterly and absolutely intense. In a very short time the loose end of the rope was passed round the forward seat, thus securing me down in a prostrate position so that I could scarcely move.

Then the man took his oars, pulled out from the arch, and nosed silently towards the nearest bank. The two men who had first attacked him were there, and they at once jumped in. No time was lost in pulling up the stream. And now, inwardly raging, I was wondering what these men intended doing to me. One thing seemed fairly obvious; they had grabbed me in the hope that they might be able to grab the gov'nor later on. If I could help it I grimly told myself, they would never succeed in their object.

After a while my rage subsided, and I became cold and calm. After all, they couldn't do much harm to me; they would not serve any useful purpose by resorting to violent methods. So, instead of fuming, I coolly awaited the next move.

I had an idea we shouldn't go very far, and this idea turned out correct. For just as we drew abreast of Willard's Island, the nose of the boat was turned, and we grounded amidst some thick rushes in shallow water. A number of willows grew near by, and they cast a black shadow on this particular patch of the bank. From a distance of twenty yards we were invisible; and in any case, it was improbable that there would be any watchers on the river bank on a cold winter's evening.

I knew Willard's Island almost as well as I knew the Triangle at St. Frank's. It was

a place of many memories. It had been the headquarters of the Remove during that memorable barring out when we had defied the notorious Mr. Hunter, then Headmaster of St. Frank's.

The island was not particularly big, but it had one peculiarity. Right in the centre of it there was a quaint little building, constructed of stone after the style of a twelfth century castle. It was only partially completed, and had no windows, but there were dry cellars below.

This strange edifice had been erected by the now defunct Mr. Willard—an eccentric old fellow who had had a queer idea of building a home for himself in the middle of the river. The building was still known as Willard's Folly.

I knew what the game was now, and I was not at all surprised when I was carried into the old stone place, and then down some steps into the small, well-built cellars. One of the men had gone on in advance, and when I arrived, there was a light gleaming in the smallest of the cellars, and I found that this light was proceeding from an oilstove. The glow it cast was quite sufficient for ordinary purposes; and it had the added advantage of warming the chilly atmosphere.

I looked round with grim interest. This thing had evidently been prepared in advance. There was a little folding table there, and a camp stool. And, upon the table there was a writing-pad, some envelopes, a bottle of ink, and a pen. The door of the cellar was closed, and the rope was taken from me. I stretched my cold arms rather gratefully.

"Now, what's the idea of this?" I asked bluntly.

The three men had all lifted up their woollen mufflers so that their faces were completely obscured with the exception of the eyes. Yet I could see that they were not common vagabonds, and I half suspected them to be Dr. Paxton and Chandler, and perhaps even Professor Garth. If these men would descend to such dastardly methods with the Head, it was feasible to suppose that they would descend to this.

It was not until later that I learned that two of them had been staying at the White Harp under the names of Jones and Smith.

"Your name is Nipper, I think?" asked one of the men grimly.

"It is," I replied. "I'd be awfully obliged to know the meaning of this pretty little melodrama. If it had been done in daylight, it would have been almost good enough for the pictures! It's been surprisingly interesting."

"You appear to be a cool customer, Master Nipper," said the man. "That is all to the good, since it indicates that you possess sound common sense. You have something of a reputation for astuteness, my lad, and here is a chance for you to prove it. We want you to do just a little service for us."

"Such as decoying Mr. Lee here?" I asked bluntly.

The man laughed.

"Well, well!" he said softly. "Since you put it so plainly, and since you have guessed so accurately, I might as well agree with you at once. Yes. It is our object to make you bring your master here to us. You will therefore sit down and write to my dictation. You will write your master a note, stating that you are on the track of something very big and important, and that you require his immediate presence. You will instruct him to come here, where you will be waiting—quite alone. But perhaps you had better write exactly according to my dictation."

I laughed.

"Nothing doin'!" I said shortly. "I'm not quite so soft."

The man changed his attitude, and took a menacing step towards me.

"Listen to me, my young friend!" he said sharply. "I don't mean to hurt you, and I don't want to hurt your master. But we've taken a lot of trouble to get him. We've got an old score to wipe off, and we mean to have the whole matter out."

I felt like saying that this was no old score, but directly connected with Trenton and the Headmaster. But I thought wiser to keep quiet on the point. There's never any sense in giving information to the enemy.

"You won't get me to write anything!" I said doggedly.

"I think I shall!" exclaimed the man. "Listen to me, Nipper. Unless you write this message—now, and exactly as I order—two of my men will watch closely for Nelson Lee, and under the cover of darkness they will shoot him down—relentlessly, mercilessly. It is for you to choose. Will you write the message?"

I glared round savagely.

"I suppose there's nothing else for it!" I said fiercely. "You've got me beaten, you—your hounds! Yes, I'll write!"

CHAPTER VI.

NOT HAVING ANY!



WHILE this little drama was in progress, the Supreme Council was sitting for the evening session; and it now became automatically changed into a tribunal. There was a heavy, formidable list of cases to be tried.

The Tribunal was sitting in the Council Chamber of the Supreme Council, in other words, Mr. Crowell's old study. It was a fairly large apartment, and it certainly had the appearance of a court.

The members of the Tribunal were seated behind a long table, with Timothy Tucker in the centre. On either side of the table stood a steward, looking impressive with

their arm-bands. There were other stewards by the door, and a number of seats for the "public." This consisted of as many fellows as could squeeze in. Others hung round the open door.

Doyle was the Clerk of the Tribunal, and he sat at a separate table with several note-books in front of him. In these note-books were all the charges against the various prisoners.

Kenmore of the Sixth was smiling amiably, and he was looking forward to a pleasant evening. There were many punishments to administer, and Kenmore was quite ready to perform the work of chastising the victims.

Now and again he glanced over to a screen which concealed something from the public view. Evidently, the object which was behind the screen was known to Kenmore, and the bully of the Sixth liked it.

"Well, let's get to business!" he said briskly.

"H'm! H'm! Quite so—quite so!" exclaimed T.T. "Now, let me see. Comrade Doyle, be good enough to state the number of prisoners awaiting trial."

"Twenty-seven!" said Comrade Doyle promptly.

"Dear, dear, dear!" murmured Tucker. "Twenty-seven! Lamentable—quite lamentable, my dear sir! The position is evidently serious. I greatly regret that these drastic measures should have been necessary on the first day of full control. However, it is necessary to be cruel to be good—"

"Oh, stow that rubbishy talk!" said Kenmore. "Who's the first prisoner?"

"Really, my dear sir!" protested T.T. "I must beg of you, Comrade Kenmore, not to interrupt me! It is most undignified. Pray allow me to remind you that I am the President of this Tribunal, and it is unseemly for you to characterise my remarks as rubbishy talk! Comrade Doyle, you will kindly call out the name of the first offender to be tried by this Special Court."

"Any old thing you like," said Doyle obligingly. "There are so many giddy prisoners that I hardly know who to start on. There's Handforth, of course, but he's a Loyalist. Fullwood was the first of our own prisoners to be taken down to the cells."

"Stewards, bring Comrade Fullwood before the Tribunal at once," said Tucker.

"And be quick about it!" said Kenmore.

The stewards at once went off—four of them. On their way to the cellar, they discussed the best possible way of getting Fullwood out from amongst the other twenty-six. To tell him that he was about to be tried and punished would hardly be discreet. As one of the stewards remarked, Fullwood would probably refuse to come.

An idea was decided upon at length, and when the cellar was reached the door was cautiously opened, and the stewards looked down into the dark void.

"Fullwood, you can come up now!" shouted Merrell. "It's O. K.! But don't

let any of the other fellows come with you. They'll be released a bit later, one at a time."

Fullwood, eager enough to escape from that dark and chilly prison, raced up the stairs with a number of other prisoners behind him. He got through the door first, and it was immediately slammed and bolted. The remaining prisoners yelled with rage, and the door was violently hammered.

"You—you rotters!" roared Handforth's voice. "Let us out!"

Fullwood looked round and grinned.

"Well, they didn't get out, anyhow," he said. "You bounders! Keepin' me there all that time! I'm goin' to smash Tucker—"

"Seize the prisoner!" said one of the guards, a Fifth Form fellow, in a stern voice.

"What the deuce— Hi, leggo!" gasped Fullwood, in alarm.

He was violently seized, and held. Probably he had imagined that the end of his troubles had come, and he was so pleased to be out of the cellar that he was almost in a good temper. But now he scowled ferociously.

"By gad!" he panted. "You miserable worms! I—I'll—"

"You'll come along with us!"

And the stewards yanked Fullwood along to the Tribunal Chamber. He arrived flustered, hot, and indignant. He was placed in the dock—or, in other words, he was made to stand between two chairs which were placed back to back.

"What's all this rot—" he began.

"The prisoner will remain silent!" said Kenmore curtly. "Now, we'll get ahead with the punishment. I suggest that we give the blighter twenty swipes—"

"Dear, dear!" interrupted Tucker gently. "Pray allow me to point out, Comrade Kenmore, that strict and impartial justice will be meted out by this Tribunal, and no offender will be sentenced until he has been proved guilty. H'm! That is so. I call upon the Remove stewards to outline the case against this prisoner."

Fullwood raved for a minute, but at length came to the conclusion that his best policy was to remain quiet. Doyle stood up, note-book in hand. He was the Clerk of the Tribunal, but he also happened to be one of the Remove stewards.

"The charge against this prisoner is a serious one," he said. "He was openly insulting to Mr. Crowell, our Form-master. He went far beyond the limits of freedom, and behaved like a blackguard. He declared that he would take no notice of Mr. Crowell, and he called Mr. Crowell a miserable old sinner."

"To his face?" asked Chambers, frowning.

"Yes, to his face."

"Bad—very bad indeed!" exclaimed the President. "Dear, dear, dear! This offence is of the most serious character, since it indicates that the prisoner imagines that freedom and equality is merely another

term for insolence and ungentlemanly behaviour. The Tribunal will decide upon his punishment."

The Tribunal put their heads together.

"Twenty swipes, I say!" muttered Kenmore. "Fullwood's a beastly little cad, and it'll do him good."

"I think it would be better, Comrade Kenmore, to make our punishment fairly easy at the commencement," said Tucker. "I therefore suggest five cuts with the cane—"

"Five!" interrupted Armstrong. "He'll hardly feel 'em! I say ten!"

"I agree with Comrade Armstrong," said Chambers.

"Yes, ten will meet the case, I think," said Carlile.

At last it was decided by the vote. Kenmore and Grayson were anxious for twenty cuts to be administered, Tucker suggested five, but the other three members of the Tribunal were unanimous for ten. They had the majority, and so the decision was reached.

Timothy Tucker adjusted his glasses, and gazed severely at the prisoner.

"The Tribunal has decided that your offence is a most serious one, and that your punishment shall be correspondingly severe," he said impressively. "Much as I regret to pass this sentence, Comrade Fullwood, I must inform you that you will now receive ten lashes with the birch, and for this purpose you will be placed upon the punishment-block."

"You—you bally little fool!" snarled Fullwood. "Do you think I'm going to take any notice of what you order? You'd better touch me with the birch, that's all! You stick yourself up on a pedestal, an' think you're a kind of lord an' master of everybody else—"

"Silence!" shouted the stewards.

"Dear, dear, dear! This is most regrettable!" exclaimed T. T. painfully. "I fear that you fail to appreciate the position, my dear sir. You must realise, Comrade Fullwood, that this is not merely my decree, but the decree of the Supreme Council. It is the decree of the 'All St. Frank's Tribunal.' That decision is absolutely final."

"Absolutely!" echoed Armstrong.

Armstrong, as a matter of fact, was feeling somewhat out of it all, and he welcomed an opportunity to get a word in. Until the Communists had actually come into force Armstrong had been the active leader of the malcontents. He had led the rebels skilfully and determinedly; but now that they had their desire, now that St. Frank's was being run under Communism, it was Timothy Tucker who took over the leadership. He was the chief idealist, and now there was no fighting to be done. At active warfare Tucker was useless, but warfare was finished with now.

Fullwood was seized by the stewards and held firm. They took quite a particular de-

light in dealing with the cad of Study A. He had never been popular, except in his own circle, and all the fellows were glad to see him in trouble. The administering of ten cuts with the birch would be most entertaining.

"All right; you've got me in your rotten hands, an' I'm helpless!" snapped Fullwood savagely. "But if you expect me to support you after this, you've made a bloomer! An' what's this rot about a punishment-block? I think you've all gone out of your silly minds!"

"It isn't good for prisoners to talk too much!" said Kenmore curtly. "If you make any further remarks, Fullwood, you'll receive five extra cuts. I'm on the Tribunal, and that is my order!"

Fullwood thought it wiser to remain silent. He looked on at the proceedings with very great interest, for he was somewhat scared. This talk of a special punishment-block sounded rather alarming.

And then, while he watched, two of the stewards crossed over to the screen, drew it aside, and folded it up. And there was revealed the master-stroke of the Communists—the invention which was calculated to instill terror and respect into the hearts of all wrongdoers.

As a matter of fact, the idea for the punishment-block had been conceived in the ingenious name of Simon Kenmore. A bully at heart, he put all his energies into the perfecting of this special instrument for the punishment of offenders. And the finished production was not unlike some of the contrivances which were used in the Spanish Inquisition.

The very look of it was enough to strike terror into a prisoner's heart. It had been manufactured, under Kenmore's orders, and under his eye, by a party of Fifth Formers and Removites. Several hours had been secretly spent on the work in one of the big out-houses at the rear of the domestic quarters. And the finished product, although rather roughly finished, was certainly business-like. It was made mainly from sections of thick wood, nailed and screwed securely together, and it was in the form of a cradle. The centre of it was raised and smooth, and at one end there were straps and buckles—two of them. At the other end there were two other sets of straps and buckles.

"What are you going to do with me?" demanded Fullwood nervously, as he was led towards this fearsome-looking object. "You—you cads! You torturers! By gad! Is this what you call freedom? Is this what you call—"

"The prisoner must be silent!" interrupted one of the stewards. "Now, comrades, on with him, and give him no chance to struggle."

Fullwood was suddenly flung forward and thrown on the top of the punishment-block. He lay full length across it face downwards, so that the rear portion of his anatomy was fully and invitingly exposed. His hands were stretched out upon special pieces of wood

which had been provided. And his wrists were securely strapped so that he could not move. At the other end his ankles were similarly strapped down. In this position it was quite impossible for Fullwood to make any movement. He was utterly and horribly helpless. The Supreme Tribunal looked on with approval, but the members of the public were not quite so enthusiastic. They could not help thinking that their turn might come if they happened to do anything opposed to the dictates of the Supreme Council. For the first time, in fact, the schoolboy Communists were beginning to realise that this new regime was likely to develop into something very much akin to terrorism. They

like. He stood ready, and two official counters were near by to see that the exact number of strokes were delivered.

Up went the birch, and then it descended with appalling force. It struck Fullwood, fairly and squarely, and the cad of Study A let out a really unearthly howl.

"Yow--wow--yaroooooh!" he bellowed in anguish.

"One!" said the counters solemnly.

Then the other strokes were administered--evenly, relentlessly. Fullwood's howling made no difference. The Tribunal sat calmly watching, and all the other juniors in the room were interested. Ralph Leslie Fullwood received a thrashing which beat anything



"Drat your Communism!" broke in Mrs. Poulter angrily. "If you think the likes of us are going to be dictated to by you young gentlemen you've made a mistake. As for you, Master Tucker, you need a downright good thrashing."

hadn't had sense enough to see that such a state of affairs was bound to come, sooner or later.

"Hadn't we better gag the prisoner?" suggested Doyle. "He's bound to make a terrific noise--"

"Let him make it," said Kenmore. "All the better! The other fellows will hear what's going on, and they'll begin to understand that we're in earnest, and not simply running a Sunday-school treat!"

Kenmore was not merely a member of the Tribunal. Like most of the other fellows on this extraordinary administration, he had a second official appointment. He was, in fact, the Chief Punishment Server, and it was an appointment which pleased him immensely.

He strode forward, swishing a powerful birch with obvious relish. He had rolled up his sleeves, and he was looking quite business-

like that had ever been seen in Big Hall. Under Communism the lot of the helpless follower was not likely to be very rosy.

At last Fullwood was released, panting and sobbing. He was hurt. He was smarting, and he knew very well that he would not be able to sit down for two or three days.

And he raved and threatened until he was ejected from the Tribunal Chamber. No notice whatever was taken of his threats. There was no redress for him--there was no higher appeal. For the highest authority in the school had inflicted this punishment, and Fullwood could do nothing but complain to the thin air.

And then the next prisoner was fetched, and he was promptly tried. He received five cuts, and the fellow after him received three. Every offender was "swished" according to the extent of his particular crime.

And in the meantime tremendous agitation had been going on in the cellar. Handforth was the chief talker. He had stormed at his Communist fellow-prisoners, asking contemptuously why they were content to put up with this tyranny, and if they meant to knuckle under.

"You blessed weaklings!" he roared. "You've got no determination, or anything else! Those chaps who've gone out have been swiped, I expect, and the same thing is going to happen to you. Take my advice, and chuck the whole thing up."

"Yes, but how can we?" growled one of the others. "It's too late now——"

"What rot!" snapped Handforth. "Too late to come back to the Loyalists, I'll agree. We wouldn't have you at any price! But it's not too late to show your precious pals that you're not standing any rot! When these fat-headed stewards come next time we'll be ready for 'em—at the top of the stairs. And as soon as the door opens we'll burst out and punch them into pulp!"

"Good idea!"

"Rather!"

"We won't put up with this kind of thing!"

There were still well over twenty prisoners in the cellar. Most of them were hungry and cold, and they were bitterly angry against the Supreme Council for having treated them in this way. And, although Handforth was a Loyalist, they agreed to do as he suggested. They would defy the Supreme Tribunal.

And the escape proved quite easy when it came to the point. Without Handforth the prisoners would never have had the initiative to start this trouble, but, under his leadership, and fired-on by his biting, scornful words, they lay in wait. And there, silent and breathless, they crowded at the top of the stairs.

The four stewards arrived after a brief interval, and the door was unbolted.

"Now!" roared Handforth.

The prisoners swept out, and the surprised stewards were bowled over before they knew what had happened. The whole thing was dramatic and sudden. In less than three minutes the escaped offenders were out in the Triangle, shouting and agitating against their leaders, and they were surrounded by a sympathising crowd.

The stewards, having recovered, ran like rabbits to the Council Chamber, and gasped out their story to the Supreme Tribunal. Tucker and his fellow-councillors were amazed and indignant—and decidedly dismayed.

They had never anticipated anything of this kind. Kenmore was simply furious, and suggested an immediate round-up. He had been swindled out of his evening's enjoyment, and he didn't like it at all.

But, after a lengthy discussion, the Supreme Council decided that no effective action could be taken. It was easy to seize one prisoner at a time, but to go and collect a crowd of over twenty was too stiff a proposition. In future better safeguards would be taken.

And all the escaped offenders were marked down for future attention. They would receive their punishment, sooner or later, even if they thought they had escaped.

The evening had certainly failed, but the main body of the St. Frank's Communists had received a hint of what was to happen if the Dictators were not obeyed!

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAP!



DR. JAMES BRETT opened the door of Nelson Lee's study, and briskly entered the apartment. He was wearing his overcoat and cap, evidently in readiness to venture out into the cold evening.

"Just ready, old man," said Nelson Lee, looking up. "I was expecting you down at any minute. How is the Head?"

"Somewhat irritable," replied the doctor, as he closed the door. "He doesn't quite cotton to this enforced idleness, you know. He's got an idea the school's going to the dogs while he's absent from duty. And, by the look of things, he's not far wrong!"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Don't you believe it, Brett," he said lightly. "The boys are having their own way just at the moment, I will confess, but there's nothing to worry about. I'll guarantee that they'll give up all this nonsense well within a week, and after that they'll be far more satisfied with the ordinary school routine. This experiment will do them all good."

"Well, you know best, of course," said Dr. Brett, producing his pipe. "I'll be glad when the whole business is finished. Between ourselves, Dr. Stafford is as right as ninepence, and there's no reason why he should take any further rest; but, of course, we've got to keep him out of Trenton's way—eh?"

"Exactly," said Lee. "It won't be very long now, Brett. By the way, I suppose the Head is quite safe?"

"I shouldn't have left him otherwise," replied the doctor. "Mrs. Poulter is looking after our charge, and I'll guarantee she doesn't allow another soul to come near him."

"Good!" said Nelson Lee, rising to his feet. "But we can't be too careful, Brett. Trenton is a snake, and he's as cunning and clever as almost any criminal I have ever come across. Outwardly he appears to be a good-looking, youthful gentleman of refined manners. But this cloak disguises a character which is black and sinister. The man is an atrocious scoundrel."

"No need to tell me that," said Brett. "I consider——"

A tap had sounded upon the door, and Brett at once stopped speaking. But it turned out to be Tabbs, the page-boy, and he brought a letter. It was somewhat grubby

in appearance, and Lee glanced at it sharply. He recognised my handwriting at once, and he gave it a second, keener look.

"Who gave this to you, Tubbs?" he asked sharply.

"It was brought up by a boy from the village, sir," replied Tubbs.

"Is he waiting?"

"No, sir, he went off at once——"

"Then hurry out and overtake him!" snapped Lee. "Run as hard as you can, and bring that boy back. Sharp now—hurry!"

The startled Tubbs stared blankly for a moment, and then made a flustered exit. There was no mistaking the urgency of Nelson Lee's tone. Dr. Brett was regarding the famous detective somewhat curiously.

"Why this thushness?" he inquired. "What on earth do you want the boy for?"

"It is quite possible that I do not require him at all," replied Nelson Lee calmly. "But, on the other hand, if I do wish to question him, it will be far better if he is on hand. While reading the note the messenger would vanish altogether, and so I sent Tubbs for him without any unnecessary delay."

Nelson Lee had ripped open the envelope by this time, and he withdrew a plain sheet of notepaper. The words upon it were not very many, and Lee glanced through them rapidly. There was no change in his expression.

"Important?" asked Brett briefly.

"Well, rather important," said Nelson Lee. "This note is from Nipper, and by the tone of it he seems to have got on the track of something pretty big. Read it yourself, and let me have your opinion."

"But Nipper's at the school, isn't he——"

"I sent him to the village some little time ago," said Lee. "He seems to have met with an adventure, and is communicating with me at once."

Brett took the note and soon read it through. It merely stated that I was on the track of something very special, and that I required Nelson Lee's assistance at once—without any delay. I urgently requested the gov'nor to come to Willard's Island the very instant he received this message.

Dr. Brett passed the note back, and removed his overcoat, with a sigh.

"Farewell, cheery fireside!" he said resignedly. "I wonder how many patients will be disappointed? Of course, you want me to stay here while you go gallivanting about the countryside in chase of Nipper?"

"As a matter of fact, Brett, I was going to ask you to stay," smiled Lee. "This matter is evidently highly important, or Nipper would not write in such a strain. I really must go to Willard's Island and see what it is all about. I'm awfully sorry to keep you——"

"Don't mention it, old man; these little things will happen," said Brett lightly. "You can go as soon as you like; I'm game. As you say, it's most important that Nipper should be attended to. Do you suppose he's

on the track of something connected with our own domestic conspiracy?"

"Most probably," said Lee. "I think—— Come in!"

Tubbs entered, breathless, and he was followed by an equally breathless village boy—quite a youngster, raggedly attired, with a grubby face and a somewhat vacant expression.

"I got 'im, sir!" said Tubbs triumphantly.

"So I observe, Tubbs," said Nelson Lee. "Come here, young man," he added to the urchin. "I want to ask you one or two questions."

Lee rattled some loose coins in his pocket suggestively, and for a second a flash of intelligence—or greed—entered the urchin's eyes. But for the most part he kept his gaze fixed upon the floor, and he shuffled his feet restlessly.

"Who gave you this letter to bring up to the school?" asked Lee.

"A—a young gent, sir," replied the boy nervously. "Master Nipper, it was."

"Oh, Master Nipper gave it to you?" said Nelson Lee. "At what spot? Where did he give it to you?"

"Why, just against the bridge, sir—— I—I——"

The urchin hesitated and seemed confused. "Just near the old stile agin the wood, sir," he added hurriedly. "I was walkin' along, and Master Nipper give me a shillin', and told me to bring the note up."

Lee nodded, and pursed his lips. He wasn't satisfied. Tubbs by this time had gone, and Lee and Brett were alone, except for the village boy.

"I want you to tell me the truth, young 'un," said Nelson Lee grimly. "This note was not given to you by Master Nipper at the stile, but by a man somewhere near the Stowe. Come, now, am I right?"

"It was give to me by Master Nipper," said the boy doggedly. "I never took it from no man!"

"Supposing I were to tell you that Master Nipper is in the school at the present time, and has been here all the evening?" asked Nelson Lee smoothly. "No, my lad, this kind of thing won't do. If you want to save yourself getting into trouble you'd better tell me the truth at once. I shan't keep my patience with you much longer. The truth I want—and at once!"

The urchin began to blubber.

"I—I didn't mean no 'arm, sir," he mumbled. "It was give to me by a man, agin the bridge. He give me a whole 'arf-crown, and said I was to bring the note, and that I was to say that Master Nipper give it to me. You can't do nothin' to me for that. The gent told me most pertikler that I was to say that Master Nipper give me the note——"

"That's quite all right, my boy, you need not say any more," said Nelson Lee. "You can go home now, and here's another half a crown as a reward for being truthful. And in future do your best to stick to the truth. Telling lies is very wicked."

The urchin was only too glad to escape. But Nelson Lee was quite certain that he had told him the exact truth. Dr. Brett was looking rather concerned, and a keen, alert light had entered Nelson Lee's eyes.

"What have we here?" asked Brett. "I don't quite like the look of it, Lee. I'm not much of a hand at your game, but it seems uncommonly clear that Nipper has met with a little bit of trouble."

"I imagine the same thing," said Nelson Lee. "This note was not sent by Nipper, but by one of our enemies."

"You mean that it's a forgery?"

"No, it's genuine enough," said Lee. "Nipper certainly wrote it. But I imagine that he did so by force. If you'll be good enough to remain with the Head until I return, I'll look into this little matter at once."

"Hadn't I better come with you?" asked Brett concernedly. "There might be some danger, and I'd like to lend a hand."

"Thanks, old man, but I think you'll be far more useful here," said Nelson Lee. "The idea, no doubt was to decoy me away from the school so that something could be done during my absence. But I can trust you implicitly, and if you guard the Head, all will be well. I shall come to no harm."

Three minutes later Nelson Lee was off. He could have said a lot more to Dr. Brett, but he did not wish to do so. The men who had planned this had not guessed that Lee would jump to the truth; but, as a matter of fact, the famous detective had known for an absolute certainty that trickery was afoot the very instant he glanced at my letter.

For he had noticed the certain peculiar little flourish in my signature. It meant nothing to any ordinary person, but it had special significance for the gov'nor. He and I had arranged that flourish years before, and we had used it on more than one occasion.

It meant danger, and it told Nelson Lee at once that this message was not a bona-fide one. We had another sign, also expressed by a flourish, which signified, "all square." So, even before Lee had questioned the village urchin, he knew for a fact that the note was really a decoy message.

And it therefore followed that I had fallen into the hands of an enemy, since I would never have written this note under any conditions. And Lee felt fairly certain that the affair was connected with Trenton. He was not prepared to make any captures just yet, but he felt that it was quite necessary to get me out of trouble. And so he was coming along to do it. And he was confident that he would be able to do the thing single-handed. For he had his eyes wide open, and he knew the exact state of the situation.

Quickly crossing the playing fields in the moonlight, he approached the river, and walked along to the boathouse. He soon had a light little craft in the water, and then he rowed swiftly and strongly down-

stream towards Willard's Island. To all appearances, he was walking straight into the trap.

He arrived opposite Willard's Island, and he made no attempt to conceal his movements; but turned the nose of the boat round, and drove it noisily into the reeds. Tying her up to a willow sapling, he made his way up the rising ground to the centre of the island, where stood the little castle-like building.

The moon was shining quite brightly now, but in the shadows cast by the trees the blackness was pitchy and intense. Nelson Lee was passing one of these black patches when something seemed to materialise out of the darkness. It was the figure of a man, and he held in his hand a heavy bludgeon.

He waited until Nelson Lee had just passed, and then the heavy wooden club was raised.

He had made no sound, and it seemed impossible that Nelson Lee could have received any warning. But as the bludgeon whirled down, straight towards Nelson Lee's head, the detective performed a really remarkable manoeuvre. As quick as a flash he turned on his heel, clenching his right fist as he did so. And as he completed his swing, he drove his fist upwards with terrific force in the face of the stranger.

Crash!

The blow was of such power that the whole of Nelson Lee's hand was numbed. The bludgeon flew harmlessly to the ground, and the rascal who had made the dastardly attack gave one grunting sound and dropped. He was utterly knocked out.

"So much for you, my friend!" murmured Lee. "Now we'll see about Nipper."

He ran lightly towards the building, and came upon it in the moonlight. Lee, as a matter of fact, had seen that black shadow as he passed, and he knew precisely what was coming. Therefore, before the deadly blow descended, Lee had been ready for it. Instead of the victim falling, the attacker had been felled.

Lee hastened into the building, and immediately found his way barred by the figure of another man. This fellow was unrecognisable, since he was wearing his muffler drawn right up to his eyes. He grimly presented a revolver to Nelson Lee's breast.

"Hands up, confound you!" he snapped harshly.

Nelson Lee laughed, reached forward sharply, and snatched the weapon away with remarkable coolness. He flung it far out through the open door, right into the river.

"Not this time, thanks," he said coolly. "Your little trap has not been successful in catching its victim, although the bait was quite an excellent one."

Lee made no attempt to seize the man, who, after one startled gasp, fled out into the open. He nearly stumbled over his companion, who was just picking himself up, groggy and staggering. They both crashed

through the bushes to a boat, and within a minute they were rowing for dear life down the river.

Nelson Lee watched them go, and he laughed lightly.

"Even easier than I anticipated!" he murmured. "I could have captured the pair of them, but I don't want to be bothered with them just yet. And now we'll see what's happened to the unfortunate Nipper!"

A brief search was sufficient. Nelson Lee found me down in the cellar, helplessly bound, and quite alone. Within a minute I was released, and I quickly told my story to the gov'nor. He was calm and quite cool. I chuckled with delight when I heard his side of the yarn.

"Great, gov'nor!" I said enthusiastically. "I knew we'd dish the beggars, and leave 'em in the cart. It's a good thing I remembered that private flourish in my signature."

"The whole thing was hastily and crudely planned," said Nelson Lee. "If these fellows think that they can defeat me by such methods, they are vastly mistaken. This is all to the good, Nipper. My evidence is accumulating, and I shall soon be able to strike the vital blow."

Five minutes later we were on our way back to St. Frank's, perfectly serene and happy in the knowledge that our little brush with the enemy had ended in complete defeat—for them.

CHAPTER VIII.

TROUBLES BEGIN!



RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD waved his hand vigorously.

"Are we goin' to stand it?" he demanded. "You've heard what happened to us, an' the same thing would have happened to you if you hadn't escaped. Are we goin' to put up with this rotten terrorism?"

"Not likely!"

"Never!"

Fullwood was addressing an excited meeting round the steps of the Ancient House. It was quite dark, and not altogether cheerful out in the Triangle. But the fellows were not thinking of the weather conditions just then.

Most juniors in the crowd consisted of those who had been sentenced by the Tribunal, and those who had remained prisoners for the greater part of the day. They were sore and furious. Their feelings towards Communism had undergone a complete and drastic change. To be exact, they had no liking for the system now that they had had a taste of it. Theory was one thing, and practice another.

"The whole thing's rotten to the core!" declared Gulliver. "It's all very well havin' liberty, an' it's all very well for us to be equals, but that's all moonshine, in practice we ain't equals at all."

"No, these Supreme Council cads have got all the power!" shouted Bell.

"Can't we throw them over?" asked somebody.

"How?" demanded Fullwood savagely. "What can we do? The whole thing's organised now; it's all in goin' order. Once a lot of chaps get power, it's almost impossible to drive 'em out. An' unless we stick together we shall go through all sorts of other tortures!"

"We'll jolly well leave the Rebels, and go over to the Loyalists!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, will you?" shouted Cecil De Valeric, on the outskirts of the crowd. "You'd better think again, my merry Rebels. You chose to follow Armstrong's lead, and if you don't like it you'll have to lump it. We're not giving you any shelter in the College House!"

"By George, rather not!" shouted Handforth. "I warned them what would happen before they ever started this rotten Communism. You can jolly well boil yourselves now! if any of you chaps come over to our side, I'll punch your faces until they look like chunks of beef steak!"

"We must do something!" growled one of the discontented Rebels.

"You will do something—you'll put up with your cheerful leaders!" roared Handforth. "I'm on the look-out for them now, as a matter of fact. When I catch Armstrong by himself, I'm going to smash him! When I catch Tucker alone, I'm going to pulverise him! When I catch Kenmore on his own I'll paralyse him!"

"He's far more likely to paralyse you!" said Church. "Kenmore's a Sixth Former, and a pretty hefty beggar!"

"Huh! Do you think I care for a bully like Kenmore?" snorted Handforth. "He's just about my mark! When it comes to a fight he'll crumble—and I shall be able to punch him into mincemeat! I'll show this Supreme Council what I think of them, by George!"

And it was just at this moment that Nelson Lee and I entered the gateway. We saw the crowd over by the Ancient House, but we took no notice. But just as we got to the centre of the Triangle, two or three of the juniors moved towards us. The next moment there was a rush—they had recognised Nelson Lee in the moonlight. And in this, their hour of trouble, the fellows turned to Nelson Lee. They didn't even know that they appealed to him instinctively. But it was really a fine tribute to the gov'nor's popularity. Outwardly, he was scorned, and particularly by the Rebels—but in their hearts they turned to him when they wanted advice.

"What's all this, boys—what's all this?" asked Nelson Lee, as he came to a halt.

"We—we want to tell you what's been happening, sir!" shouted Bell. "Tucker an' Armstrong an' all the other chaps on the

Supreme Council have been actin' like brutes, sir!"

The crowd of Rebels, between them, lost no time in detailing the whole story, and their account was, naturally, somewhat exaggerated. They were all highly indignant and enraged. And they finally ended up by pleading with Nelson Lee to do something.

"What on earth is the good of coming to me?" asked the gov'nor, blankly.

"But can't you do something, sir?"

"I?" repeated Nelson Lee, mildly. "Surely you are joking, boys! What can I do? What power have I got to take any action whatsoever? Your own leaders deprived me of every vestige of power as a Housemaster, and they are running the school. It is no good coming to me—I am quite helpless!"

The crowd looked dismayed.

"But you can punish Armstrong and the others——"

"Indeed, and how?" asked Nelson Lee. "Since all masters have been deprived of the power of inflicting punishment, my hands are absolutely tied. You must remember that the school is under the control of the Communists—your own leaders. If you wish to make a complaint, you must lodge it with them—not with me."

And the gov'nor calmly walked on, leaving the Rebels blank and almost speechless. I remained behind, and I gave vent to a soft chuckle.

"Lovely!" I whispered into the ear of Church. "That's the stuff to give 'em, my son! Did you ever hear anything quite so rich?"

"It was gorgeous!" grinned Handforth. "Good old Mr. Lee! He hasn't got any power—he can't do anything for 'em! Oh, topping! Just wait until they get tied up into some more knots! All this Communist rot will come tumbling down into the dust!"

The story swept rapidly through the ranks of the Loyalists, and they were all chuckling and yelling before half an hour had passed. The Rebels were not being quite so successful, after all.

In the meantime, Nelson Lee had joined Dr. Brett, and he quickly told the medical man what had occurred. Brett was a bit startled at first, but he smiled when he learned how neatly Nelson Lee had turned the tables.

"Wonderful, old man," he said. "Everything's been all right here, during your absence. Dr. Stafford is quite safe—although I honestly believe that an attempt was made to trick me soon after you left."

"In what way?"

"Tubbs brought up some urgent message to say that I was required on a life and death case," replied Brett. "A message, I understand, had come through the 'phone. I took no notice whatever."

"You did quite right," said Nelson Lee. "I'll wager a penny to a pound that Trenton originated that ruse. It was an attempt

to get you out of the way. This has been a very bad day for our energetic friends—the enemy."

It had also been a bad day for the Communists—and this, too, was the very first day of full control! And the day ended in complete disaster.

For, in the Ancient House, a message came up to Timothy Tucker that the domestic staff was anxious to have a word with him—and not merely a word—but a good many. T.T. was rather alarmed.

Without any delay he sent stewards hurriedly round, and a meeting of the Supreme Council was called. The Supreme Council, as a matter of fact, had been sitting on and off, nearly all day.

The six members of the Council were not particularly good-tempered as they took their seats in the Council Chamber. But they tried to look impressive, and a steward informed them that a deputation from the servants' hall was awaiting.

"What the deuce do they want?" snapped Kenmore. "Like their infernal nerve to come bothering us at this time of night. If they've got any grumbles to make we'll soon settle 'em."

"How?" asked Carlile soberly. "It's all very well to talk big, Kenmore; but if the household staff cares to cut up rusty, we can't very well jib. We can't treat them in the same way as the fellows are treated."

"Oh, can't we?" put in Armstrong. "The school's under Communism now, and we'll soon show the servants that they can't do as they like! We'll have this deputation in, and hear what it's going to say."

The steward went off, and soon returned with the deputation. It consisted of two maid servants, Mrs. Poulter, a scullery youth, and one of the kitchen staff. Mrs. Poulter had been elected spokesman.

"Dear, dear, dear!" exclaimed Tucker, rubbing his hands softly together. "Now, what is all this about, my good people? I sincerely trust you have no cause for complaint? You must realise that Communism——"

"Drat your Communism!" broke in Mrs. Poulter angrily. "If you think the likes of us are going to be dictated to by you young gentlemen, you've made a mistake. As for you, Master Tucker, you need a downright good thrashing."

"Good gracious me!" exclaimed the President.

"They all need thrashings, if you ask me!" said one of the maidservants indignantly. "Such goings on! Whoever heard of it! I'd soon show the young wretches what I'd do if I had my own way!"

"You've got to do what the Supreme Council orders!" declared Armstrong aggressively. "Conditions are changed at St. Frank's now——"

"Yes, Master Armstrong, they have changed!" interrupted Mrs. Poulter grimly. "And I want you to understand that from this very minute that we're not going to

stand any more nonsense like we stood to-day."

"Nonsense, Mrs. Poulter?" repeated Armstrong.

"Yes, young gent, nonsense!" insisted the House matron. "Such as taking up meals into the studies, and all manner of that kind. The domestic staff has had a long talk about it, and we've all decided that we won't put up with it any more. You've got to return to the usual routine. Meals must be served in the proper dining hall, and everything else must go on as usual—"

"Look here, Mrs. Poulter, if you think you can come here and brow-beat us, you've made a mistake!" shouted Kenmore violently. "Our orders are that the meals shall be served in the studies—and they've got to be served there. Understand?"

"Well, I never!" gasped Mrs. Poulter. Such brazen impudence, to be sure! Look you here, Master Kenmore—"

"Really, this is most regrettable!" interrupted T.T. in distress. "Indeed, it is quite lamentable! You must realise, Mrs. Poulter, that conditions are changed. We are no longer living under the bloated capitalist system. We are now enjoying the full benefit and freedom of Communism!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" snapped Mrs. Poulter. "Every one of you boys ought to be horsewhipped for getting such dangerous ideas into your heads! Well, there it is—if you don't leave the household staff alone, we'll all walk out in a body. And not tomorrow morning, but now—within half an hour!"

"Before supper?" shouted Armstrong furiously.

"Yes, Master Armstrong, before supper!"

"All right—do it!" roared Kenmore. "Do it—and you'll be jolly sorry afterwards! We can get on without you—servants are more trouble than they're worth, anyhow! The order of the Supreme Council stands, and don't you forget it! We don't take back anything!"

Mrs. Poulter opened her mouth to speak, but then closed it like a mouse-trap, with a snap. She turned, and walked straight out, all the other members of the deputation following. Kenmore grinned triumphantly.

"There you are!" he said. "Not a word to say! You've only got to be bold to these kind of people, and they crumple up!"

"I sincerely trust the threat will not be carried out!" said Tucker anxiously. "It

will be a serious blow to us if the domestic staff deserts. It is all very well to say that we can get on without them—but I can foresee grave troubles—"

"You young ass, it was only bluff!" said Kenmore.

"I hope that you are right, Comrade Kenmore," said T.T. "But you must allow me to remark that you were needlessly blunt. A little exhibition of diplomacy, I feel sure, would have been advisable. Diplomacy is a great asset—"

The other members of the Supreme Council would not listen to him. But they remembered his words half an hour later—when it was discovered that every servant in the Ancient House had walked out in a body.

It had been no bluff, but a genuine threat!

Again there was a hurried meeting of the Supreme Council, and the situation was discussed anxiously. Mrs. Poulter was firm. She had stated, before leaving, that she would never come back until the usual conditions were restored.

The Supreme Council sent a delegation without delay to Nelson Lee, begging him to say what should be done. The delegation returned crestfallen with the news that Nelson Lee had blandly informed them that he was quite powerless.

As he explained, the boys were running the school themselves, and could expect no outside help. And thus dismay was spread throughout the Communist ranks. But never for a moment did they think of giving in.

This blow had come upon them, and they would weather the storm. At least, this is what Timothy Tucker declared.

In the meantime, Nelson Lee was busily chuckling over the whole situation. Exactly as he had expected, the schoolboy Communists were finding their hands more than full. And Lee was convinced that they would soon be beaten by the very weight of their own responsibilities.

Nelson Lee's policy was wise.

He had given the Communists their chance—and, in actual practice, this kind of Communism was proving to be an elusive joy.

However, the schoolboy Rebels needed a few more hard knocks before they were willing to come back to their senses.

And they were destined to get hard knocks—and quite a number!

THE END.

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(Now read on.)

CHAPTER XI.

Why Pubsey was not at the Match—The Poacher's Threat.

IN the hall of the schoolhouse, two persons were wrangling—one wanted to go out, and the other was making strenuous efforts to keep him in.

The latter was Wooden Jerry.

"I tell you, Master Pubsey," he was saying, "that you ain't fit for no living person to look at. If you go out you will give your lady mother a scare as she won't get over in a year."

Master Pubsey!

Mrs. Wrasper heard Wooden Jerry call him by that name, or she would never have dreamed that it was her son who stood before her.

He was in his every-day attire, it is true, but his head and face were like those of an Indian who had put on his war-paint, and then made an ineffectual effort to wash himself.

Lines of red and black mingled together, with here and there a patch of either colour. His two small eyes looked like beads stuck in the centre of a block of coarse marble.

"Pubsey!" exclaimed Mrs. Wrasper. "Is it you?"

"Of course it is," he answered roughly. "Who the deuce should it be?"

"But what have you been doing to yourself?"

This question had an exasperating effect on Pubsey.

He began to rave and talk incoherently, but was cut short by the appearance of his father and a number of the boys who now entered the house.

At the same moment Foster Moore also appeared, and stared like the rest at the strange spectacle before him.

Everybody was excited except Sam Smith, Turrell, and McLara. That trio tried their hardest to look as much astounded as the others, but the attempt was a dismal failure.

When order was a little restored Mr. Wrasper got at the main facts of the case of Pubsey's non-appearance on the football-ground.

He had, it appeared, come back with his mended boot just after his parents had gone, and had gone to a cupboard in the lumber-room, where he kept a lot of odd things, to get the other boot.

While he was groping about for it among the jumbled odds and ends, a sack had suddenly been drawn over his head, and his arms pinned to his sides.

He kicked out, but his legs were soon secured, and he felt himself carried across the room, and thrown down.

A door banged, and having struggled out of the sack he found himself in darkness.

"I was in solitary," he said furiously, "and I've been there for hours, hammering and crying out! Why didn't you come?"

His angry insolence was almost more than his father could bear, but Mr. Wrasper restrained himself.

"Come into the study, Pubsey," he said. "You boys need not remain. Go and change your dress for tea."

He took Pubsey by the arm and led him into the study—Mrs. Wrasper and Foster Moore followed them. Then a long questioning of Pubsey followed, but he could give no clue to what Mrs. Wrasper called "the outrage."

Everything had conspired for the success of the plot.

No prisoner being in solitary, the door

had been left open as usual to ventilate the dismal hole.

Wooden Jerry had left in the lumber-room an old sack with a little mixed red and black ochre in it. The quantity, indeed, was very small, and its presence might have been overlooked.

The door of the narrow prison closed with a spring and could only be opened with a key which was kept on a nail in the study.

For hours, Pubsey, frantic with rage and terror, had been hammering at the door, and nobody had come to his assistance.

Wooden Jerry was outside the house surreptitiously watching the match from behind a wood-shed, the cook was deaf, and the only person who could have heard the hammering was Jane, the housemaid.

Jane, on being questioned, stoutly denied that she had heard anything—which was probably true, seeing that she also had watched the match surreptitiously from an upper window, her interest in the contest being due to the fact that a brother of hers was playing for the quarry team.

Among the boys the affair caused general joy. "Eagles" and "Cuckoos" united for once in their glee. Even Jonah Worrey, bosom crony of the victim though he was, laughed till his sides ached.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, Tom Tartar had gone on with Sir Claude Freshly and Cecil to the Hall, where he was received by Lady Freshly with

the utmost kindness. She was grateful to him for having saved Cecil's life; so much so, indeed, that she somewhat embarrassed Tom by her expressions of thanks and admiration for his bravery.

After dinner, Sir Claude questioned him about his friends, and learned that his father was a fairly prosperous merchant in London.

"And why did he send you down here to Mr. Wrasper's school?" asked Lady Freshly.

"Well, you see," explained Tom, with a whimsical smile, "the school I was at before was awfully dull and dignified. It didn't suit me somehow, and I—well, I didn't suit the headmaster! He complained to my father about me. Said I had what he called 'a superabundance of vitality,' which upset discipline. And so—and so we parted, and my father sent me down here to see what Mr. Wrasper could do with me."

"I see," said Sir Claude thoughtfully.

And then they all laughed, and the subject was dropped.

Next morning Tom went to the village church with his new friends; while in the afternoon he and Cecil rambled about the Hall, which was older even than the school-house, and was full of secret passages and hiding-places.

Cecil showed Tom some of these, and then he took him into the library—a panelled room with a finely-carved ceiling—and

(Continued on next page.)

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(Continued from page 39.)

showed him the chair in which his grandfather—Sir Rupert Freshly—had been found dead under tragic circumstances.

"He was murdered," explained the boy, in low, solemn tones. "Somebody crept up behind him as he sat in that chair, and struck him on the head with an old iron mace. The mace used to hang on the wall by the window yonder, but since then it has been kept in this cabinet."

He opened the door of an ebony cabinet and took out the gruesome weapon—a formidable thing with a short handle, and a spiked metal ball on the top.

"And who was the murderer?" asked Tom, with a shudder.

"He was never found out," answered Cecil. "A man was suspected, but there was no proof. The suspected man was the grandfather of young Powner—the boy they call 'Rosy Ralph.' The Powner family have been a bad lot for generations. Rosy Ralph's father is always up to some sort of mischief. We think it was he who threw me into the lock."

"Then why don't you have him arrested?"

"Because there's no proof. You couldn't swear to him, could you?"

"No," said Tom. "The whole thing happened so quickly that I didn't get a fair look at the man."

"Yes, that's the difficulty. And Powner's an awfully cunning chap. He says he was down at the withy beds at the time you and I were in the water, and his son would swear he saw him go in that direction an hour before."

"And swear falsely?"

Cecil Freshly nodded.

"Ralph is treated like a dog," he said; "but, all the same, he wouldn't give his father away. That's certainly one good point about the Powners—they're faithful to one another. Where they like, they give all; where they hate, they never forgive!"

Tom inwardly resolved to get an early glimpse of Rosy Ralph's father, to see if he could recognise him at all. He felt pretty sure that it was Posh Powner who had attempted to take Cecil's life.

Tom was up betimes next morning, and he and Cecil had breakfast together. The meal had been prepared specially early in order that Tom could start back to the school in good time. But before Tom set out, Sir Claude and Lady Freshly appeared to bid him good-bye.

A dog-cart had been ordered for him, but Tom declared that he would much prefer to walk. So, having shaken hands with his friends, he started on his way.

When he came in sight of the old lock, he saw a man standing on its narrow foot-bridge.

Although he could not definitely recognise the man, he felt sure it was Posh Powner,

and that he was Cecil Freshly's dastardly assailant.

Tom strode on and reached the narrow bridge. The man took no notice of him until Tom asked to be allowed to pass. Then he looked up with an evil expression on his coarse, beer-sodden face.

"You're the new lad at the school, ain't you?" he asked sullenly.

"Yes," replied Tom; "and you are Powner, the poacher, I suppose?"

"My name's Powner, and I've never denied as I poaches—and glories in it! What I does, I does; but what I does have got to be proved!"

"Just so," agreed Tom quietly. "And it may be proven one of these days!"

"Will you do it?" demanded the poacher fiercely, and glaring at Tom as though he were about to spring upon him.

"I shall do what I can," replied Tom, facing the ruffian quite calmly; "for I believe it was you who tried to murder Cecil Freshly."

"Oh, you do, do you? Then why don't you swear to it—eh?"

"Because I wouldn't swear to anything I'm not absolutely certain of! Let me pass!"

With a growl, Posh Powner stood aside, whereupon Tom stepped on to the bridge and passed him. Then he turned and looked steadily at the poacher.

"Here is where you stood when you pushed him in," he said.

"Prove it!" snarled Powner.

"You don't deny it?"

"Yes, I do! I were down at the withy beds! It's what the lawyer blokes calls a halibi—see! You cussed young hound!"

And, shaking his fist at Tom, the poacher turned and slouched away; while Tom, deep in thought, resumed his walk schoolwards.

CHAPTER XII.

A Meeting of Tom's Enemies.

IN the village there was a small public-house, with the sign of "The Peal o' Bells."

Wooden Jerry, that overworked and underpaid servitor of the house of Wrasper, was in the habit of slipping down to the "Peal o' Bells" during morning school-time to have a pint and a chat with Diggles, the gardener of "Cecilia School for Young Ladies."

At these meetings they compared notes, of course, about their employers and the pupils of their respective schools.

One morning Wooden Jerry went down as usual, and found Diggles had just arrived, looking hot and vicious.

He had just been rated by Miss Smatterly for neglect of work, or as he put it, "had had his hair combed upwards."

(Continued on page iii of Cover.)

(Continued from page 40.)

"Old maids and boys are the bitters of life," he declared.

"Boys," said Wooden Jerry solemnly, "is gall and wormwood."

"I wish I could find out the boy who got up that murder game," said Diggles. "He was one of yours, of course?"

"Yes, our new 'un," replied Wooden Jerry. "I heard 'em laughing about it."

The door was darkened, and Deaf Durdles appeared. He also was one who had a liking for a morning refresher.

He entered into the conversation, and a lot of bawling went on for a time. Then they drank to each other.

"How is that cheeky one getting on?" he asked of Wooden Jerry.

"Him as hassaulted you in your cart?" bawled Jerry.

"Yes, him. Why warn't he put into that solitary cupboard as you told me on?" shouted Durdles.

Like all deaf people he thought others were as hard of hearing as himself.

"Old Wrasper seems afraid of him," replied Jerry.

"What for?"

"I don't know. Anyway, he ain't had his dose of solitary yet."

"The tutor then? Why don't he do something to him?"

"Anyway he don't," said Wooden Jerry. "But he seems to me to be a kind o' working hisself up to do something."

"You are talking about your new boy," said somebody behind him.

Wooden Jerry turned and saw Posh Powner, the poacher, with his hands in his coat pockets, and a lurcher at his heels.

Nobody sought the society of the ruffian,

but when accidentally thrown in his way fear induced all the people of those parts to treat him with a show of respect.

"Mornin', Mister Powner," said Wooden Jerry.

"About this cub—this Tartar," said Powner, without returning the salute, "he wants to be took down?"

"He do," agreed Jerry and Diggles together.

Wooden Jerry, it appeared, had several grievances against Tom, the chief of which seemed to be that since Tom's arrival everything that went wrong before was going "wusser!"

"And now young Pubsey is down on me," he grumbled, "'cause I didn't hear him hollerin' in solitary! They can't expect me to hear everythink on my wages!"

The beer-mugs were filled again and again, and Deaf Durdles having departed, the other three had it all to themselves for a while.

Then Rosy Ralph slipped quietly into the bar. For some minutes he stood there unheeded, listening with a queer expression on his face to the threats which his father was uttering against Tom Tartar.

Presently, still without being observed, the ragged, ill-cared-for lad stole out of the bar, and, sauntering through the village street, struck along the road leading to the quarry.

Next to Tom Tartar, his greatest hero on earth was Noddy Berrill, the boy who had captained the quarry team in their match against the school.

On arrival at the quarry, Rosy Ralph found that the boys had left off work, and had gathered in a body to eat their dinners.

(To be continued.)



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By

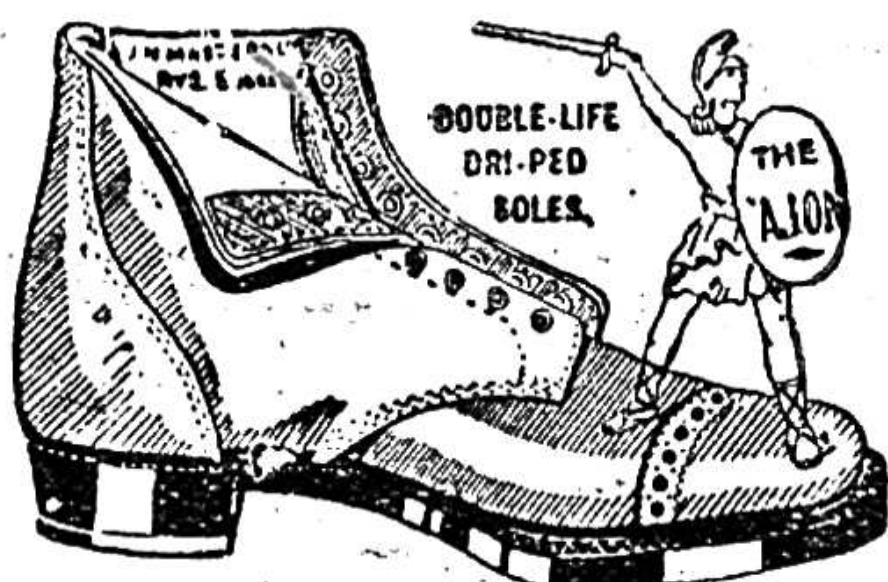
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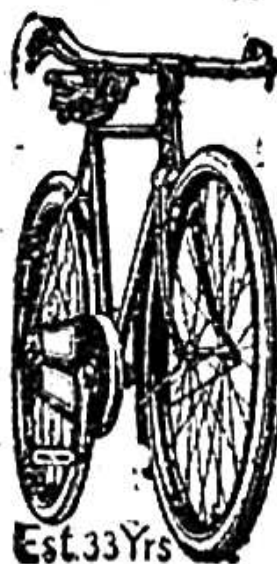
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