

MORE "SCHOOLBOY HOWLERS" IN THE "MAG."

THE

# NELSON LEE

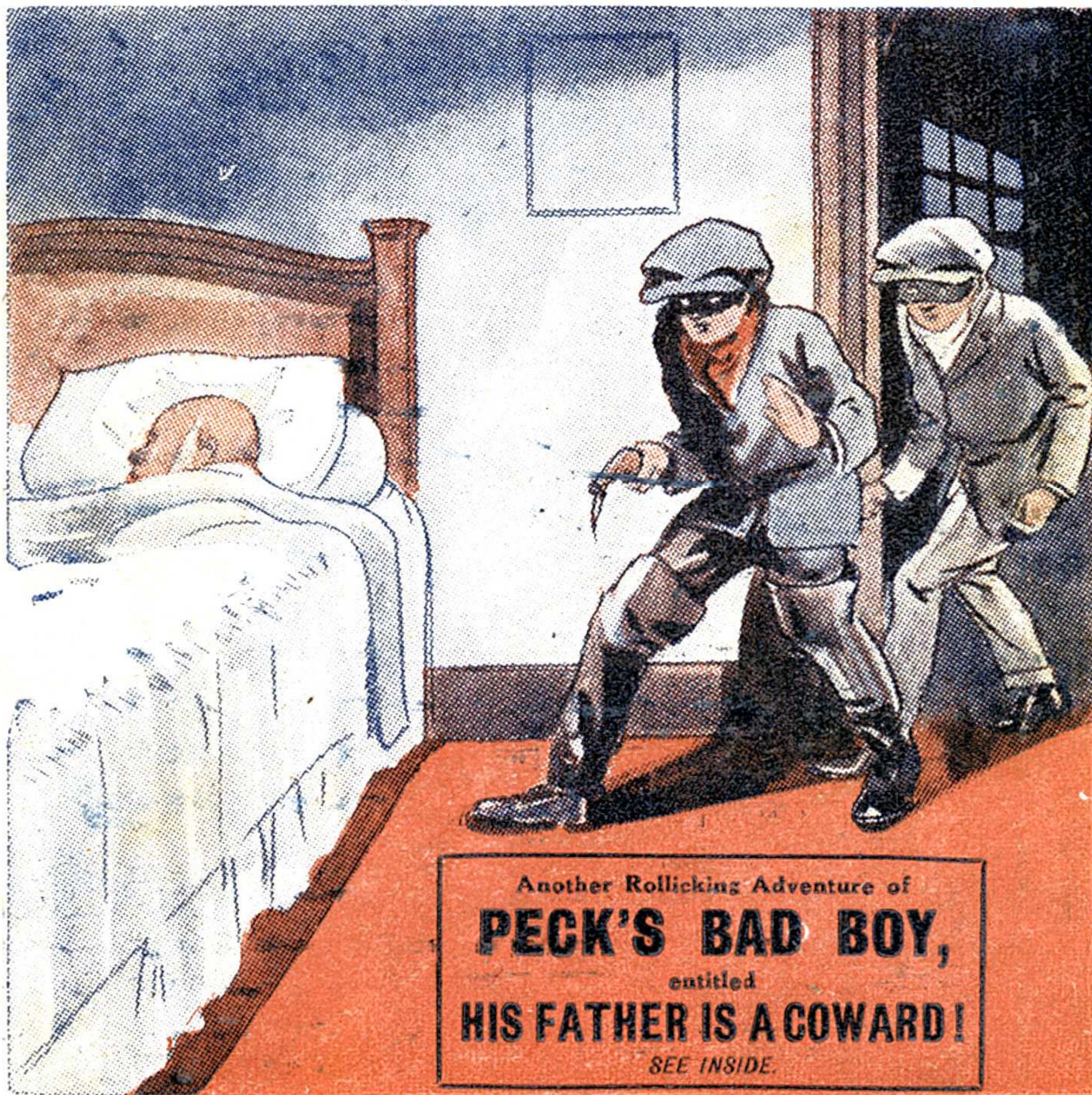
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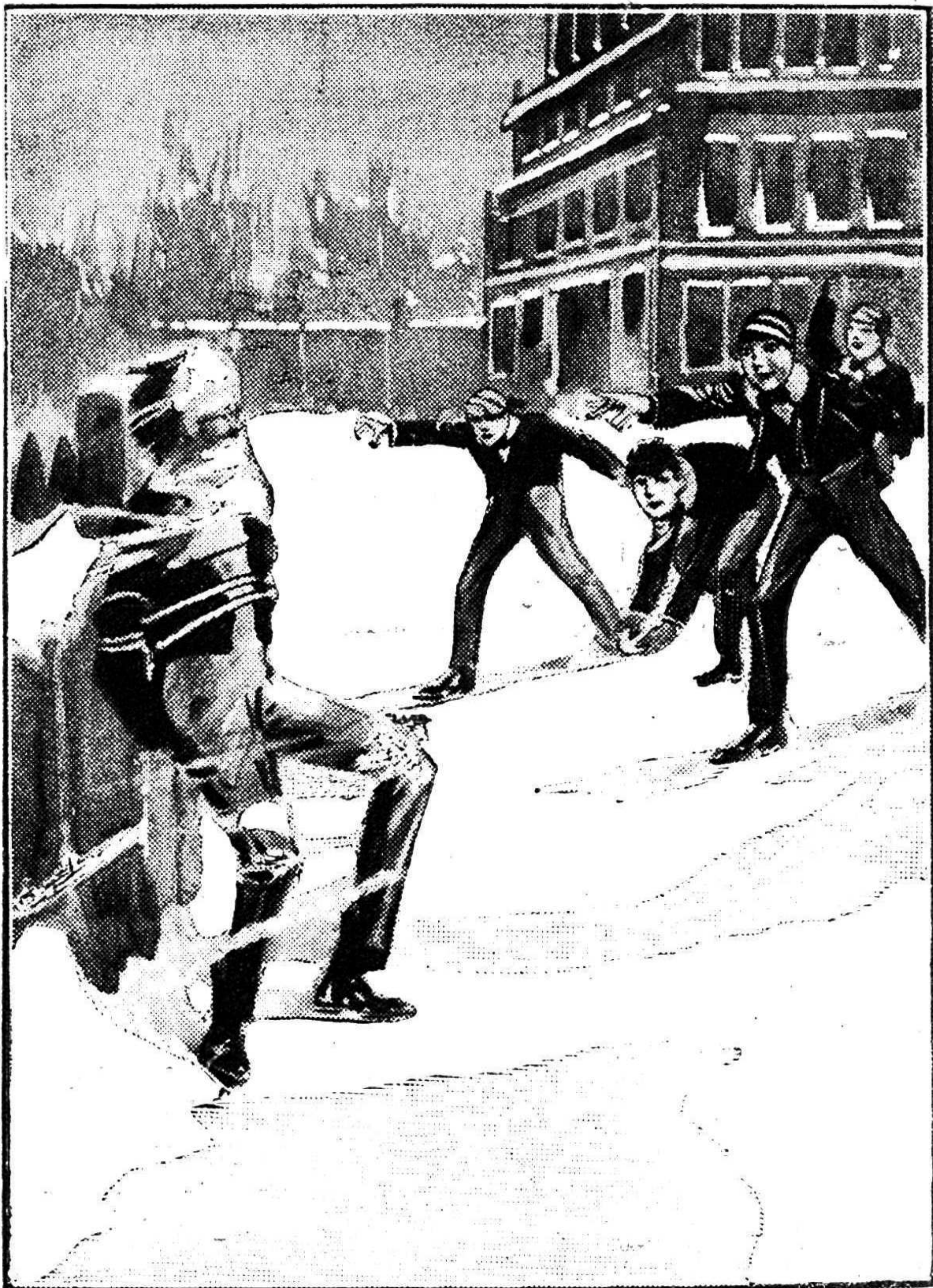
Another Rollicking Adventure of  
**PECK'S BAD BOY,**  
entitled  
**HIS FATHER IS A COWARD!**  
SEE INSIDE.

*This Week's Rousing St. Frank's Story—*

## THE DISMISSAL OF NELSON LEE.

*Fine Photo - Plate of Famous Footballer Given Away!*





The chums of Study D collected a quantity of loose snow together and manufactured a number of soft snowballs. These they hurled at Timothy Tucker, who, of course, could not even dodge.



# The Dismissal of Nelson Lee.

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 Communist School," "Staunch to the School," "The Supreme Council," and many other stirring Tales.

(THE STORY RELATED THROUGH-  
OUT BY NIPPER.)

## CHAPTER I.

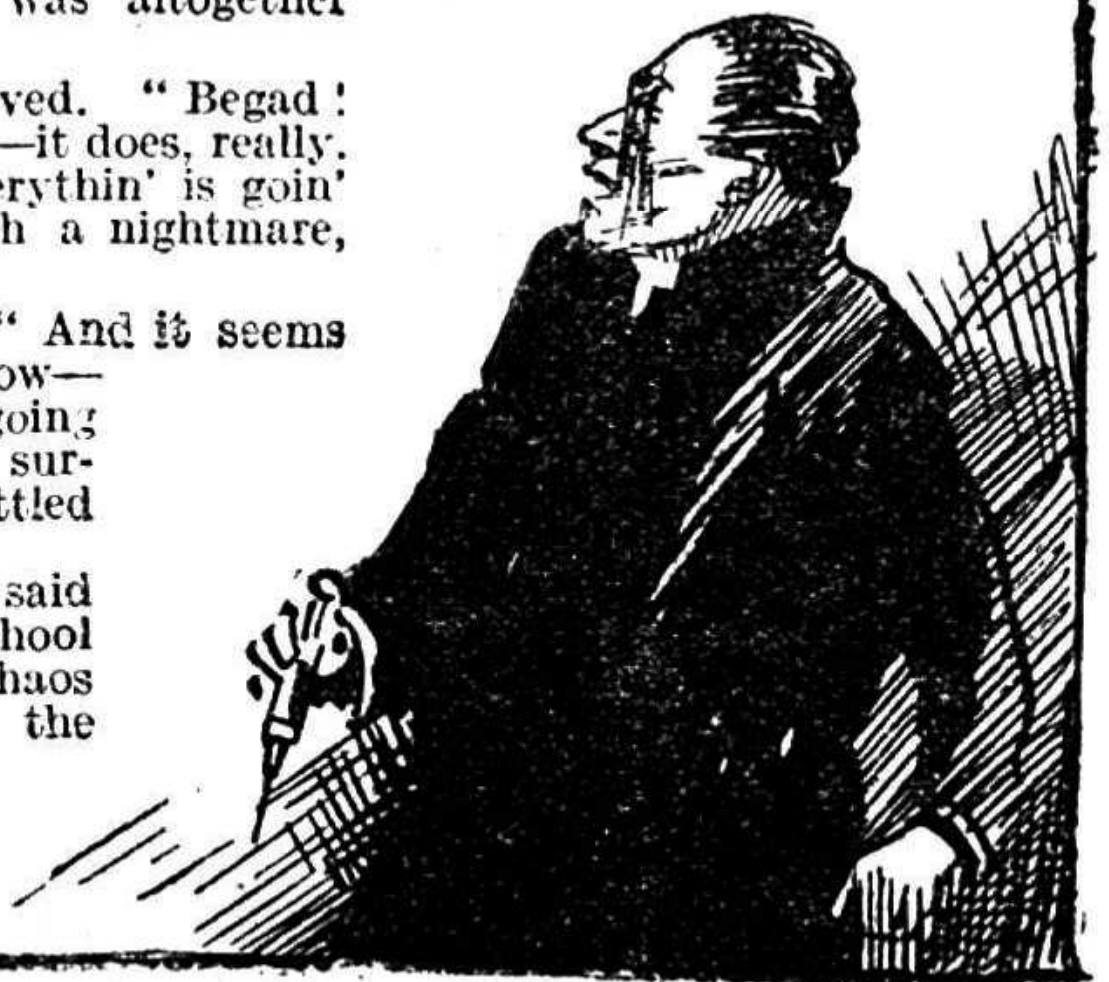
AS YOU WERE!

SIR MONTIE TREGELLIS-WEST lounged elegantly out of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, and gazed over the snow-covered Triangle with an air of approval. The atmosphere was frosty, the sun was shining, and the morning was altogether delightful.

"Rippin', dear old boys," he observed. "Begad! The air seems sweeter, to-day, you know—it does, really. What a glorious thing to know that everythin' is goin' on as usual. We've been passin' through a nightmare, but now we're awake again!"

"That's the idea, Montie," I agreed. "And it seems that we're in for a peaceful time now—and we shall be able to get the football going properly, and all the other sports. It's surprising how quickly the chaps have settled down to the old order of things."

"I can't quite believe it, you know," said Tommy Watson. "Only yesterday the school was being run under Communism, and chaos and confusion was the giddy order of the day. And now, as though by magic, everything is turned back, and here we are in the same merry old rut!"





Watson looked across the Triangle cheerfully. There had been some snow during the night, and the ground and the hedges and the trees were covered. The aspect was wintry, but very alluring. There is something so clean and comforting about snow. It is strange, but snow does not convey an impression of coldness.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Pitt, coming up. "We'll be able to have some sport to-day, my sons. 'What about footer practice, Nipper?'"

"You've got to turn out at two-thirty sharp!" I replied promptly. "It's a half-holiday, so we're all serene."

Armstrong and Doyle and one or two others emerged from the Ancient House. They looked rather self-conscious.

"How did you enjoy breakfast?" asked Pitt politely.

"Oh, dry up!" growled Armstrong.

"My dear chap, I'm asking you a civil question!" said Pitt. "Personally, I enjoyed breakfast very much indeed. But then, of course, I've been used to having good breakfasts. I thought you chaps might have offered up a special prayer of thanksgiving, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Armstrong and Doyle went very red, and passed on. There was apparently nothing particularly significant in Pitt's remark. But, as a matter of fact, it meant a very great deal.

Armstrong and Doyle had been two of the chief officials under the Communist régime—which had just come to a swift and untimely conclusion. Communism at St. Frank's had been all the rage—until the fellows found out what it was! The leaders had vainly attempted to keep the system alive by means of terrorism, but this had only hastened the end.

For the terrorism had been meted out by Kenmore and Grayson and all the other bullies and cads in the school. Naturally, these young blackguards had exceeded the instructions of the Supreme Council. And their Hunnish methods had soon brought swift and awful disaster.

But Communism had been doomed to failure from the very start. Nelson Lee had only allowed it to proceed because he knew very well that it would very soon strangle itself.

If he had put his foot down on the scheme at first, discontent would have been spread throughout the school. Lee had allowed communism to have a chance—and communism had failed.

And now that it was all over the juniors and the seniors of both houses were so heartily glad, that the ordinary school routine seemed sheer luxury by comparison. They were all contented and happy. The weight of responsibility which had been lifted from their shoulders was almost more than they could realise.

The leaders, particularly, were over-joyed. Armstrong, Doyle, Carlile, Chambers, and all the other more decent fellows. — They had been nearly driven out of their wits with worry—for all the responsibilities of the running of the school had been on their shoulders.

And now they were free again, and they filled their lungs with pure air, and breathed contentedly. How glorious it was to be under

the old system once more. The most rabid communist had forsaken the cause for ever.

There was, however, one exception.

It is hardly necessary to say that this exception was Timothy Tucker. Tucker, indeed, had been the originator of the whole wild scheme. In the beginning, Armstrong had led a rebellion, and this, by various degrees, had developed into the communism which the fellows would so long remember. Tucker had mooted the idea in the first place, and he had planned practically everything. He had been President of the Supreme Council, and the most important person in the school.

Now, in a flash, as it were, he had been dropped into the insignificance of obscurity once again. His period of triumph had been a short one. Timothy Tucker was once more the tame lunatic of the Remove—only now he was regarded as several degrees more insane than ever.

T. T. had been warned, not by one fellow, but by scores, that if one breath of communism came from between his lips in future, he would be slaughtered on the spot, and then hung, drawn and quartered. This threat, however, had no effect upon the amiable Tucker.

For, with all his mad ideas, T. T. was certainly cheerful enough. Hard knocks had no effect upon him. He accepted them all as a matter of course, and came up smiling every time.

This morning he suddenly appeared from the Ancient House, and he descended the steps into the Triangle. He was looking untidy as usual. He walked slowly, with his hands clasped behind his back, with his trilby hat a peculiar angle, and he adopted a peculiar strutting kind of stride, which was quite characteristic of him.

Presently he found himself near one of the junior study windows. The sun was shining clearly, and Tucker was standing at such an angle that he could see his reflection in the windowglass quite clearly. He paused, stared at his own image, and pushed his hat back.

"Remarkable," he murmured. "Most remarkable! Do you realise, my dear sir, that things have been going badly? H'm! H'm! That is so! I regret to say that the position is lamentable!"

T. T. made a peculiar grimace, and he followed this up by making the most extraordinary contortions with his face. It evidently amused him, and now and again he gave a little chuckle.

"H'm! I must admit, my dear sir, that you are remarkably handsome!" he observed, addressing his image. "Quite so! Most surprisingly handsome, in fact!"

The occupants of the study, however, were somewhat mystified.

It happened to be Study D, and Handforth and Church and McClure were at home. They were engaged in a bit of an argument—and this, of course, made them feel more at home than ever. It was splendid to be back in Study D, and the three juniors were feeling supremely content.

It was Handforth, of course, who had started the argument. It was only a trivial matter, and of no importance. Just as things were



warming up, a shadow fell across the window. Church turned, and stared.

"Cheeky boulder!" he observed. "What on earth is the ass looking in here for? My hat! What's he up to?"

Handforth ceased the argument, and looked at the window. There was certainly every reason for the three juniors to be mildly surprised. Tucker stood there, and he struck an attitude. Then he proceeded to twist his face into the most wonderful contortions. Handforth's face grew redder and redder as he watched.

"By George!" he roared. "Are we going to stand this? Are we going to let that mad fathead come to our window and make faces at us?"

"I don't think he knows we're here?" grinned McClure. "He's making those faces at himself! I've seen him doing it in his own study! He's properly dotty, of course, but he's quite harmless!"

"Oh, yes!" sneered Handforth. "Harmless! What about that communism rot? Tucker started all that—and I tell you he's deliberately come to this window to insult us. I'll show him!"

Handforth strode to the window. But the unconscious T. T., on the other side, was sublimely in ignorance that Handforth was so near by. The sunlight on the glass made it impossible for him to see through into the study.

"Yes, my dear sir; I must admit that you are remarkably handsome!" he repeated, nodding and making another shocking grimace. "Ha, ha! Did you speak to me, my dear sir? I must be allowed to remark that your nose is singularly well-formed!"

Inside the study, Handforth and Co. heard the words distinctly.

"Clean gone, poor chap!" said Church sadly.

"He'll be clean gone in a minute!" snorted Handforth.

He tore up the sash and pushed his face forward towards Timothy Tucker. The latter started back, confused and somewhat alarmed.

"Dear, dear, dear!" he exclaimed. "Really, my dear Handforth——"

"I'm not your dear Handforth, and you'd better not come to this window and use it as a mirror!" roared Handforth. "You funny fathead! What the dickens is the idea of jawing at yourself like that?"

Tucker pulled himself up and looked dignified.

"I am permitted to do as I please!" he replied. "You will kindly understand, Comrade Handforth—that is to say——"

"We don't want any of your Communist rot!" snapped Handforth curtly.

"Really, my dear sir," protested T. T., "it is most unseemly of you to characterise Communism in that way. You must allow me to remark that Communism is the solution to all social evils. True Communism can never be conquered; that is so. If I had been allowed a longer period——"

"You would have been murdered!" interrupted Handforth. "As it is, you're going to get wiped up on the spot! Didn't I warn you yesterday that if you breathed

another word about Communism, I'd pulverise you?"

"Pray do not be so ridiculous!"

"This chap needs a lesson," said Handforth, turning to his chums. "He's got to understand that Communism is barred—absolutely and positively barred! He needs another lesson, and we'll oblige!"

Handforth leapt out of the window, and Church and McClure followed him. Timothy Tucker scented danger, and turned to flee; but he was too late. Handforth and Co. were upon him, and they held him firmly.

"This—this is most undignified and unnecessary!" exclaimed Tucker stiffly. "You will please realise, my dear sir, that I object to treatment of this nature. Do you know who I am? Do you know that, unless you desist at once, I shall be compelled to administer disciplinary treatment——"

"Gag him!" said Handforth gruffly. "We're doing this for his own good, don't forget. We've got to think of something that'll make him remember it for weeks. He's got to be so scared that he won't even remember the word 'Communism' at all!"

"All right, suggest something," said Church.

"Haven't you got any ideas?" demanded Handforth. "It's all very well to leave it to me. By George, the very thing! I've got it, my sons! Bring him along. We'll shove him up against the fence and tie him there!"

"What's the good of that?"

"Every good," said the leader of Study D. "We'll pelt him with snowballs until he howls for mercy!"

"That's not so bad," admitted McClure. "The snow's quite soft, and it can't hurt him; and he certainly needs cooling!"

"That's exactly my idea," said Handforth, nodding. "Tucker is suffering from a very serious complaint. His bearings are overheated; his gear-box is nearly seized up. In fact, he's feverish, and it stands to reason that he needs cooling. Cooling is the only remedy that will do him any good!"

Timothy Tucker didn't seem to think so.

"This—this is an outrage!" he protested shrilly. "I object to such treatment, my dear sirs! It is not only undignified, but decidedly painful! I urge you to release me at once!"

"You can urge until you're blue in the face; it won't make any difference!" said Handforth calmly. "You've been trying to make out that Communism is good, and we've already warned you that we're fed-up with the whole rotten thing! You need cooling, and you're going to be cooled! Haul him along!"

Tucker, in spite of his struggles, was taken along to the neat wooden fence which separated the playing fields from a portion of the Triangle. Here he was held by Handforth and Church, while McClure hurried off to obtain some rope. McClure soon returned, and in less than a couple of minutes the unfortunate T. T. was securely tied up. Then Handforth and Co. retreated, and surveyed their victim with evident relish.

"Now then, as many shies as you like,



all free of charge!" said Handforth. "As this isn't exactly a punishment, but a cooling process, we'll make the snowballs soft and not too big. Go ahead!"

The chums of Study D collected a quantity of loose snow together and manufactured a number of soft snowballs; then, with one accord, they hurled them at Timothy Tucker, who, of course, could not even dodge.

Whizz! Hiss! Whizz!

The volley of snowballs went shooting through the air, and many of them flew harmlessly past Tucker's head, or splashed themselves decoratively upon the fence. But a good few did their utmost to obliterate the unhappy junior. They burst over his chest, over his face, and over almost every portion of him. After Handforth & Co. had been at it for a couple of minutes, Timothy Tucker had almost ceased to be in evidence. He had vanished behind a thick coating of snow.

"Hallo! What's the game?"

Reginald Pitt and one or two others strolled up, and they were soon informed of the situation. Pitt looked very severe.

"Heartless wretches!" he exclaimed, horrified. "Of all the inhuman acts! To tie a chap up and then pelt him with snowballs! Horrid! Lemme see if my aim's any good!"

Pitt quickly manufactured a couple of snowballs, and his aim proved to be so accurate that Timothy Tucker, who had just managed to find his voice, now suddenly discovered that he was unable to speak owing to the fact that his mouth was full of snow. It was unfortunate that he should have opened his mouth just as Pitt was aiming.

Other fellows came along, and they all joined in the sport. But after a few minutes had elapsed it was considered that Tucker was cool enough. He was released and rolled in the snow, and then informed that this ordeal was a mere nothing compared to the fate which would befall him if he was heard to whisper even the word "Communism" within hearing of any mortal. Tucker crawled away, quite unharmed, but exceedingly uncomfortable and inwardly indignant.

Communism was certainly very unpopular now. The St. Frank's fellows had had more than enough of it, and it was clear enough that they had no intention of standing any more.

And, upon the whole, the school was more content than it had been for many months past. True, there was still an uncomfortable feeling that Dr. Malcolm Stafford might break out again. There was really no guarantee that he would not do so.

The rebellion which had led to the Communist period had been mainly precipitated by the Headmaster's extraordinary and unaccountable outbursts of violence. Should he have another attack of that kind, there would be no further rebellion—St. Frank's had had enough of disorder—but there would certainly be a big and determined outcry against the Head, and a general demand for his resignation.

At the moment, however, things were going singularly smoothly—rather too smoothly, I thought. The change had been too sudden

to last, and I was wondering what the happenings of the near future were likely to be.

Dr. Stafford was at his duties again, quite as usual, but none of the fellows had forgotten his recent behaviour.

In Dr. Stafford's study, Nelson Lee was chatting with the Head. They were looking quite serious, and, indeed, the subject of their conversation was serious enough. The trouble at St. Frank's was by no means over.

"I understand, then, that the governors are coming down to-morrow?" asked Nelson Lee, as he lit a cigarette.

"Yes," replied Dr. Stafford. "They are coming down to-morrow, Mr. Lee, although there was some little doubt about the actual time or day. Originally, they intended coming yesterday, I believe; but I am glad they delayed their visit. Do you think there is any cause for concern?"

"Not the slightest," replied Nelson Lee confidently. "In fact, Dr. Stafford, I am extremely pleased that the governors have decided upon this course, for it will give me an opportunity to put the whole facts before them. It is the facts they need, and hitherto they have heard nothing but rumours and false reports. Do you know exactly who the party will consist of?"

"Well, there will be Sir John Brent," said Dr. Stafford. "Sir John, as you probably know, has recently been appointed chairman of the governing board. I am rather pleased by this, for Sir John is a level-headed, considerate man, and not in the least prone to form hasty conclusions. There will be three others, I think—Sir James Henson, Mr. Alexander Stevens, and Mr. Roger Hale. They are coming to make a complete investigation on the spot. Frankly, Mr. Lee, I am intensely worried."

Nelson Lee laughed.

"There is really no reason why you should be," he said.

"No reason!" echoed the Head. "But, my dear sir, you don't seem to realise the serious nature of my position! I have repeatedly suffered from these appalling attacks of violence during the last few weeks, and there are hundreds of witnesses—the whole school, if necessary—who will be ready to assure the governors that I am no fit person to rule over the destinies of—"

"These fears on your part are quite unfounded, Dr. Stafford," interrupted Nelson Lee. "Let the Governors come—let them investigate. Nothing could be better. I have all the facts at my finger-tips, and I shall be able to give them the full details of the plot which has been engineered to bring about your disgrace and downfall."

"But—but I don't know many of these details—"

"No, I have kept most of them from you," said Nelson Lee. "The reason for this will be obvious when the whole truth comes out. I did not wish you to be unnecessarily worried, and I think I have helped matters considerably by keeping you in the dark. It was the best way, Dr. Stafford."

The Head frowned and looked worried.



"Sir John Brent will immediately start questioning me," he said. "What shall I say? What excuse can I offer—"

"None whatever," said the famous detective. "Leave all the explanations to me, please. I will be waiting in my study when the Governors arrive, and I want you to send for me the very instant these worthy gentlemen press you for any explanations. I will then step in and tell them the whole truth. I will guarantee that the air will be completely cleared."

"It is very good of you, Mr. Lee, to take all this trouble over me," said the Head gratefully. "I don't quite know how to thank you. I know that you have been working hard on my behalf, and, indeed, but for you I should have been enveloped long since."

"My only regret is that I have been compelled to delay for so long," said Nelson Lee, rising to his feet. "Please do not worry, Dr. Stafford, and remember that I will do all the talking that is necessary. I have the facts at my finger-tips, and the Governors will have no cause to complain."

Soon afterwards Nelson Lee took his departure. He was looking confident and pleased—but, at the same time, a grim light could be seen deep in his eyes. The morrow would not be without its dramatic moments!

But exactly how dramatic they were to be, even Nelson Lee did not guess.

## CHAPTER II. THE PLOTTERS!



**M**R. HUGH TRENTON sat in his study in the Ancient House, staring intently and unseeingly into the fire.

Mr. Trenton was the science master. He was also several kinds of a scoundrel. Such a combination is, fortunately, extremely rare, and in Mr. Trenton's case it was peculiarly difficult to discover, for, outwardly, he was one of the most genial gentlemen one could possibly meet.

He was always cheery, inclined to slight slanginess of expression, and his manner was free and easy with the boys. His popularity at St. Frank's was firmly and deeply established. From the very first moment of his coming, he had made it his business to seek the boys' company, and give them advice—and Mr. Trenton always took care to give the very advice which was welcome. The fellows, seniors and juniors, were nearly all under Mr. Trenton's spell. There were only a comparative few who distrusted the science master.

And these few were my own immediate chums and myself, and just one or two far-seeing fellows in the Upper School. I had scented Mr. Trenton's real character as soon as ever he arrived, and I had never trusted him.

Now, of course, I knew him to be one of the blackest-hearted rogues the gov'nor and I had ever come across. In spite of his smooth ways, his excellent education, his undoubted clever-

ness, Mr. Trenton was a villain. He was associated with several other men of similar characteristics—clever, highly educated men, with honourable positions in life. Yet, secretly, they had formed a combine and were deeply sunken into this dastardly conspiracy.

It was a conspiracy against the social order of things, as far as I could judge. Mr. Trenton's chief aim was to get rid of Dr. Malcolm Stafford, and he had used all kinds of methods in order to achieve his object. His greatest and most powerful aid was a strange and peculiar drug of his own concoction. This drug, which Trenton had called Zaxzol, possessed properties which the normal human mind could hardly realise. The results of one small doze were staggering.

For the drug caused the victim to turn from an ordinarily humane man into a brutal savage, with the instinct of murder and torture in his heart. It deprived its victims of every kind and gentle instinct—leaving bare the slumbering savagery which is present in us all.

Such a drug as this had never been heard of before, and if it had been suggested, scientists would have scoffed at the idea. But Nelson Lee and I knew that it was an actual fact—we had seen the results. Again and again Mr. Trenton had doped the headmaster, each time resulting in an appalling outburst of violence on Dr. Stafford's part.

At first it had seemed that Trenton would have an easy time of it. But when he came to St. Frank's he overlooked the fact that Nelson Lee was on the spot, and the gov'nor had been keeping his eyes well open of late—he had been so much on the alert, to tell the truth, that Trenton had had no opportunity of continuing his plan. And now he was beginning to fear that all his trouble had been for nothing.

He glanced at his watch after a while, and started up. Then he rose from his chair, and hastily prepared for immediate departure.

"I had no idea it was so late," he muttered impatiently. "Confound it all! I shall probably miss the train now—and be late for the appointment!"

He wasted no time, but left the study, hurried to the cloakroom, and obtained his hat and overcoat. Then he sallied out into the dark Triangle. It was evening, and St. Frank's was gleaming with lights. The glow came out from scores of windows, falling upon the disturbed snow, and causing the frozen crystals to sparkle and gleam. The air was still and crisp, for the keen frost held.

Mr. Trenton went to the village at something like a trot, and he was greatly relieved to find on his arrival at the station that the local train had not left. It was, in fact, just steaming in.

The science master took a return ticket to Bannington, and he soon reached the big neighbouring town. Emerging from the station he paused for a moment under a street lamp, and noted an address which he had scrawled on his cuff. Then he walked briskly forward, and reached the High Street.

He soon turned off, however, and ultimately found himself in a high-class residential road where all was quiet and peaceful. One big



house had a bright electric lamp over the gateway, and this was Mr. Trenton's destination.

The place was, in fact, a private hotel, and a very select one, too. The science master passed into the cosy lobby, and asked to be directed to Dr. Paxton. Without delay he was ushered into a comfortable room.

There were three men here, who rose and greeted the newcomer warmly, but without undue enthusiasm. The door was closed, and Trenton advanced into the apartment. He looked at his three companions rather grimly.

"I suppose it's quite safe here?" he asked bluntly.

"Perfectly."

"I don't quite like the door—it doesn't seem particularly thick——"

"Don't be absurd, man!" interrupted one of the others. "There is no possibility of eavesdroppers. In any case, we have but to collect round the fire, and speak in low tones, and we can consider ourselves perfectly safe. Come closer, Trenton. You seem very short-tempered to-night. You haven't even shaken hands with us."

Mr. Trenton remedied the omission, and sat down in an easy chair. The four men were now collected close round the cosy fire, and they were, in truth, perfectly private.

This conference had been suggested only the previous day, and Trenton's three companions had come down from London especially to participate in it. For matters were becoming very urgent—and something had to be done.

The trio were all distinguished-looking. At a glance it could be seen that they were gentlemen by birth. And yet, somehow, they had an air of peculiarity about them. Any healthy, normal human being would have detected a subtle difference. It was not exactly dress, or manner of speech. But these men were cranks—eccentrics. Every one of them possessed a certain peculiar kink.

On the left of Trenton sat Professor Holroyd Garth, the eminent scientist. It was well known, of course, that Professor Garth was an unusual kind of man, but he had never been considered anything but harmless. His writings were extreme, perhaps, and now and again he had been severely criticised by leading public men. But he had never been taken too seriously.

The two others were Dr. Roger Paxton and a man named Chandler. Paxton was a physician with a high-class practice in Bayswater, and Chandler was the editor of an idealistic periodical which had, on various occasions, come dangerously near to the point of being banned.

It will be seen, therefore, that these men were not habitual crooks or criminals. They had never seen the inside of a prison cell, and Scotland Yard contained no records concerning them. They were outwardly a quartette of distinguished gentlemen. But, in reality, they were rogues of the worst type.

"I don't know why on earth you proposed this meeting," said Trenton, after he had been sitting down for a few moments. "It's no earthly use, Garth. If you had given me more warning I should have told you all not to come."

"And yet, Trenton, it seems to me that a meeting of some kind was very necessary," said Professor Garth very softly. "You must permit me to remark that you do not seem to be progressing as satisfactorily as we have a right to expect."

Trenton grunted.

"How in the name of goodness can I progress while that infernal fellow is at my heels day and night?" he demanded impatiently. "I can't move a step—I can't take the slightest action—without being afraid that he's watching."

"You refer to Nelson Lee?"

"Who else?" growled Trenton. "The fact is, we never ought to have come to St. Frank's—it was a bad mistake in the first place. We overlooked the fact that Lee was here. There is only one thing to be done, gentlemen—and I intend doing it. My only policy is to clear out at once."

"After all your trouble and pains?" asked Dr. Paxton.

"Yes," replied Trenton. "I tell you it's no good staying—you can't understand it as I do, Paxton. You haven't been on the spot—you haven't any idea of the difficulties that I am fighting against. With Lee on the premises, I am tied hand and foot. That's just the plain truth."

"This fellow, Lee, seems to be very energetic," said Chandler, grimly. "I quite realise, Trenton, that your position is a difficult one, and I am almost inclined to agree that this particular case had better be abandoned."

"Tut—tut!" snapped Professor Garth. "When we start on a thing, gentlemen, we finish it! Not for a moment will I consider an abandonment of our project. What does Lee know?"

"Very little, I believe," replied Trenton.

"Then he couldn't produce any evidence against you?"

"I'm not afraid of him in that way," said the science master. "Lee only suspects—and I'm not even sure that he suspects me. But he is taking the most elaborate precautions to have Dr. Stafford guarded—not only during the night, but during the day. I find it impossible to administer any further doses of Zaxzol."

"It seems very strange that we should be thwarted so persistently by this one man," exclaimed Paxton, frowning. "More than once we have tried to get hold of him so that we could keep him out of the way. But he's too slippery. It seems to me that the only chance, now, is to try direct action."

"Oh!" said Trenton. "How?"

"Paxton is right," interrupted Garth. "Direct action must be adopted. There are ways and means in which things can be done. Personally, I have no intention of forsaking this scheme. St. Frank's is one of the biggest schools in the kingdom, and it would be a great triumph for us, Trenton, if we could install you there as Headmaster. We must do our best——"

"It's all very well to talk like that," interrupted Trenton. "Talk, after all, is a very different thing to action. I keep on telling you



that my hands are tied. And on the top of this the school governors will be down at St. Frank's to-morrow, including the chairman, Sir John Brent.

Professor Garth leaned forward.

"The Governors will be down to-morrow," he murmured. "This is interesting—exceedingly interesting. We might make capital out of the fact. Indeed, the coming of the Governors will probably assist us in a very material way."

"It is far more likely that their arrival will end in disaster to us," said Trenton, gruffly. "The great trouble is that I am not sure how much Lee knows. But it is quite certain that Lee himself is not deceived. He is fully aware of the fact that Dr. Stafford's fits of violence have

The time has come when we must emerge from the darkness into the daylight. We must act openly."

"And get ourselves into the hands of the police?" asked Trenton, curtly.

"Not at all—not at all!" murmured the Professor. "There is a way—yes, there is quite an easy way. It needs just a little thought and planning. In fact, we will stake all on this one last effort, and the odds are a hundred to one that we shall succeed."

"But, man alive, we can't afford to take such risks!" said Dr. Paxton. "It would be foolish in the extreme to endanger ourselves just because you have determined to get the



"The school governors will be down at St. Frank's to-morrow, including the chairman, Sir John Brent," said Trenton.

been artificially produced. He will explain all this to the Governors—and he has such a way with him that they will believe him implicitly——"

"Lee will not explain to the Governors," interrupted Garth.

"How do you mean?"

"Why, there is our chance here," said the Professor tensely. "I might say, gentlemen, that the whole position is working itself out in such a way that these people will play right into our hands. An idea has just occurred to me—daring, it is true, but at a time like this we must be prepared to go to somewhat unusual lengths. There is an old saying that desperate ills need desperate remedies."

"You're not thinking of anything violent, I hope?" asked Chandler, mildly.

Professor Garth nodded.

"In a sense it will be violent," he replied. "But we must not hesitate because of that. Bold action is required, and bold action is the only way in which we shall achieve our purpose.

better of Nelson Lee. The policy is a mistaken one, in my opinion."

"You don't know my plan, Paxton, or you would not talk like that," said the professor. "Our chance is to act to-morrow."

"While the Governors are at the school?"

"Exactly."

"Don't you think it would be too risky——"

"The fact that the Governors will be there is the main reason for my suggesting the plan," said Garth. "Our opportunity has come, gentlemen—an opportunity which will never occur again. If we fail to take advantage of it then, indeed, we must admit defeat, and retire from this affair altogether. But I think you will agree with me that my plan is not only safe, but virtually certain of success."

"I shall be very interested to hear what your plan is," said Dr. Paton.

"You shall hear—and now."

And Professor Garth bent forward towards his companions, and softly unfolded the scheme which was in his mind. It was not perfect in



every detail; but this was a matter that could soon be remedied."

And as the other three men listened, their doubts began to vanish. They could see, in fact, that Garth's proposal was by no means a wild one, and that direct action in this case was likely to be attended by complete success.

"The question is, will you gentlemen agree to assist me in this little enterprise?" asked the professor, at length. "I can assure you there will be very little risk, and even if we fail, we shall have plenty of time to get away."

"It is utterly impossible for me to come," said Dr. Paxton. "I must be in London again by to-night—indeed, it is only with the greatest difficulty that I spared the time to run down here."

"Well, well, we can probably get on without your services, Paxton," said the professor. "I think that Chandler and I will be capable of carrying the matter through, indeed, it will be far better for two of us to do the work. Trenton, of course, will be on the spot, and his task will follow immediately ours is accomplished. Do you favour the plan, Chandler?"

Chandler smiled.

"Unfortunately, I am not in a position to plead an urgent return to London," he said. "If you are willing to take the risk, Garth, I'm certainly with you. I will enter into this affair with you if you like."

"Good!" said Professor Garth, with gleaming eyes. "We will discuss the whole thing, and make final plans. And, gentlemen, we shall succeed!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### DESPERATE MEASURES.



"**H**ERE they are!"  
"In all their giddy majesty!"

"Make way there, you chaps, and don't forget to look humble and meek!" grinned Handiorth.

"In fact, I suppose we ought to grovel. The high and mighty ones have arrived, and it's up to us to kow-tow!"

And Handford proceeded to grovel and to kow-tow by thrusting his hands into his pockets, and staring aggressively at the large motor-car which had just rolled into the Triangle.

The leading members of the school Governors had arrived. It was mid-day, and morning lessons had only been over for a short time. Everybody knew that Sir John Brent and some of the other governors were coming down—and, naturally, the whole school had been agog during the morning. It was a matter of common gossip that the Governors were making this trip for the especial purpose of investigating the Head's recent behaviour. And there were many fellows who half hoped that Dr. Stafford would be requested to go. Even though they believed that the Head would be all right in future, there was something rather exciting

in the thought that St. Frank's might have a new Head.

The fellows were on their best behaviour.

Quite a crowd stood about the Triangle, and there were no shouts, no signs of rowdyism, or any disorders. The school, in fact, looked exactly the same as it had always looked. There was not even the faintest indication that so much trouble had recently been afoot.

Sir John Brent, in the car, looked round critically as he caught sight of the orderly boys and the imposing, ivy-covered buildings. Sir John was a biggish man, rather stout, and with grey hair.

"H'm! Most remarkable!" he observed, removing a large cigar from between his lips. "What do you make of it, Henson?"

"Everything seems to be all right," said Sir James Henson. "No indication of disorder here, Brent. I was half expecting to find the school upside down."

"No need to have come at all!" growled Mr. Stevens, a thin, ill-tempered old fellow. "I said so at the very beginning. We needn't have taken any notice of those rumours. Pah! The school is as orderly as ever it was."

The Governors were really surprised to find everything looking so quiet and normal. The appearance of St. Frank's in no way agreed with the various reports they had heard. Indeed, they had fully expected to find a rebellion in full swing, with the boys defying all orders and authority. And the Governors had come, in all their majesty, to quell the uprising.

But, to all appearances, there was no uprising to quell. And, although surprised, the Governors were just a little disappointed. They had rather enjoyed the prospect of exhibiting their power.

Dismounting from the car, they majestically passed up the steps to the Head's doorway, and were then ushered straight along to Dr. Stafford's study. The Head, of course, was fully aware of their arrival, and he was waiting to receive them. He was looking quiet and calm—slightly pale, perhaps—as the four Governors strode in.

"Gentlemen, pray be seated!" he said gravely.

The four elderly gentlemen sank into the seats which had been placed for them, and they were in private with the Head. There was rather an awkward silence, for neither the Head nor the Governors cared to broach the subject which was uppermost in all their minds. In the end it was Sir John Brent who spoke, and his remark was quite commonplace and polite.

"We're very pleased to see you looking so well, Dr. Stafford," he said. "Deucedly cold weather we're having—what? It's an infernal job to keep oneself free from pneumonia and influenza these days."

"The weather is rather trying at times," said the Head quietly. "But I understand, Sir John, that you have come to St. Frank's for the purpose of holding an investigation into the recent trouble—"

"Not at all, not at all!" said Sir John, waving a hand. "Good gracious! We have already seen quite sufficient to satisfy us that



everything is going along smoothly and in a well-ordered fashion. At the same time, Dr. Stafford, since you have mentioned the matter, we should certainly like to have an account of the—er—trouble. I imagine that it was not so serious as we supposed?"

"There has been some disorder in the school," said Dr. Stafford steadily. "It would be foolish for me to speak of this matter lightly, gentlemen. For, to tell the truth, the whole affair was most grave at one time."

"There was a rebellion, I believe?" snapped Mr. Stevens.

"Well, yes——"

"And an outbreak of Communism, or some such absurdity?"

"The outbreak of Communism was really the remedy which cured the disease," said the Head, smiling slightly. "No doubt, gentlemen, you will not fully appreciate the nature of the position, but I can assure you that we did perfectly right in allowing the boys to have their own way for a few days. They attempted to run the school themselves—and naturally failed. And they are now perfectly content, and only too pleased to abide by the school regulations."

"We shall have to go into this matter thoroughly," said Sir John Brent, sitting forward. "Yes, Dr. Stafford, we shall have to probe into it quite deeply, I can see. But you mentioned 'we'?"

"Exactly," said the Head. "It was Mr. Nelson Lee's suggestion that the boys should be given their own way—and I agreed. I will admit that I was very gravely concerned regarding the result. But, as events have proved, Mr. Lee's foresight was excellent. The rebellion crumbled to the ground very rapidly."

"That may be, that may be!" put in Mr. Alexander Stevens. "But that's not the point, sir—that's not the point! What caused this rebellion?" he barked. "What made the boys revolt against authority?"

"Yes, that's the point we wish to get at," said Mr. Hale.

The Head stiffened himself slightly.

"With regard to that matter, gentlemen, I must refer you to Mr. Lee," he said quietly.

"To Mr. Lee?" demanded Sir John Brent sharply. "Why? For what reason? Are you not capable of explaining——"

"I am fully capable, Sir John; but it was Mr. Lee's own request that I should let him talk to you on this subject," said Dr. Stafford. "He is waiting even now to be summoned to my study."

But the Head was wrong.

Certain dramatic effects had been taking place since the moment of the Governors' arrival—events which could not have been foreseen. Even Nelson Lee, alert and careful as he was, had not considered such a possibility.

Only a few minutes after Sir John Brent's car had rolled into the Triangle, Tubbs, the page-boy, presented himself at Nelson Lee's study in the Ancient House. The detective was waiting, calmly and collectedly. He had his facts all marshalled together, and he was eager now for the crisis to arrive.

He did not exactly welcome the appearance of Tubbs.

"Well, my boy, what is it?" he asked impatiently.

"There's two gents outside, sir," said Tubbs. "They says they want to see you most urgent—a matter of life and death——"

"I cannot see anybody now, Tubbs," interrupted Lee.

"We must apologise for breaking in upon your privacy, Mr. Lee, but we claim urgency," exclaimed a voice behind Tubbs. "The subject of our visit will admit of no delay, and we ask you in all earnestness to grant us five minutes of your valuable time."

Lee looked over the page-boy's shoulder, and saw two strangers in the doorway. They were in motoring attire, with heavy coats and mufflers, and the man who had spoken was obviously a gentleman.

Lee suspected them on the instant. However, he did not betray any sign of this.

"Tubbs, you may go," he said shortly.

He closed the door behind the page-boy, and then faced his two unexpected visitors. The detective was certain now that these strangers had forced their way into his study with a deliberate object, and he had only permitted them to remain because he was curious regarding what that object might be.

He was soon to know.

"We are very sorry to disturb you in this manner, Mr. Lee," said one of the men. "But I trust that you will help me. I am Lord Verney, and I have been robbed of a very valuable packet of diamonds. The matter is already in the hands of the police, but I thought I could not do better than to come to you."

"I am most interested," said Nelson Lee smoothly. "Please be seated, gentlemen."

He went to his own chair at the desk, and sat down. He knew perfectly well that the man was not Lord Verney, and was equally certain that no such person existed. He knew as a matter of fact, that these intruders were Professor Holroyd Garth and Mr. Chandler. It was rather an interesting situation, and Lee felt that he would quite enjoy it.

"Please give me the details," he said briskly.

He gave the men no sign that he suspected. And he was rather keen to know why they had come, and what they hoped to attain. He was fully on the alert—but it must be admitted that he was not ready for the movement which took place next. Nelson Lee did not believe that these men would have the nerve to resort to desperate action. The idea in his mind was that the pair were attempting to lure him away from the school. And this, indeed, seemed the most reasonable thing. Alert as he was, Lee had no reason to suspect the cunning nature of the plan.

"I will tell you, Mr. Lee," exclaimed Garth grimly. "My friend and I were travelling down from London by car, and we were held up by four desperate ruffians just on the other side of Bannington, on a lonely stretch of road. We had utterly no chance, and the men got clear away with their booty."

"That was unfortunate," commented Lee.

"It was a disaster," said the other, rising



and bending over Lee's desk. "You don't realise what it means to me, Mr. Lee. If you will help— Now then—quick!"

The last words were rapped out in sharp tones. And, even as they were being spoken, Garth hurled himself forward. He knew well enough that the only way in which to defeat Nelson Lee was to take him by surprise. Garth half believed that the detective was already suspicious, so he was leaving nothing to chance.

He threw himself over the corner of the desk, and landed with tremendous force upon Nelson Lee's chest. The detective acted like lightning, but even then he was not quick enough to avert the disaster.

He tried to fling himself back, but Garth struck him, and the pair rolled to the floor with a dull crash, Lee toppling over backwards, chair and all.

This was just what Garth had intended. And Nelson Lee knew well enough that once over, the pair would have the advantage. He sprawled on his back on the floor, with Garth beside him. Even as it was he would have got the better of the man within a few seconds.

But Chandler acted on the instant.

As Lee and Garth went over, Chandler dashed forward. From his pocket he drew a great pad, and he clapped this right over Nelson Lee's face, and he held it there firmly and tightly.

"Hold him—keep him down!" he panted.

Lee was struggling fiercely. He had taken one breath as the pad was forced over his face, and as he did so a numbing sensation seemed to creep through all his limbs, and his brain reeled.

It was a drug—not chloroform but something which seemed to have no distinctive odour. The pad was a large one, and it completely covered Lee's mouth and nostrils, and it was pressed down firmly.

The detective was madly furious with himself for allowing this to happen, and yet even then, with his senses leaving him, he realised that the whole thing had been unavoidable. He had never bargained for anything of this nature. Who, indeed, would have suspected that these men would resort to such desperate methods?

Nelson Lee tried to hold his breath in while pretending to breathe. If he could only fool these rascals, all would be well. But they were prepared for any such trick, and never for an instant did Chandler relax the pressure.

And at last sheer necessity forced Nelson Lee to take in a breath. Human endurance had reached its limit. It was a gulping intake, too, and Lee could feel the drug entering every corner of his lungs. He could feel it stealing through his limbs, rendering them incapable of action. He seemed to lose all interest, he didn't care whether he struggled or not.

And then his mind became a blank.

The drug had done its work. He became absolutely limp. His last struggle ceased, and he lay there on the floor, motionless and silent. But still Chandler held the pad over his face. He was taking no risks.

"That'll do—that'll do!" said Garth

abruptly. "He's off now, man, fairly gone. Take that infernal pad away!"

"We must be sure," muttered Chandler.

"I tell you it'll do."

The other man removed the pad at last, and thrust it straight into his overcoat-pocket, and buttoned up the flap. There was a faint, indefinable something in the atmosphere, something which could hardly be described as a smell. Both Chandler and Garth felt slightly giddy.

"He's safe for an hour like that," said Garth. "We've done well—far better than I hoped for. And there's not a sign that we shall be disturbed. Splendid! Better feel his pulse."

"Oh, he's come to no harm, this stuff is perfectly safe," said Chandler. "There's not a moment to waste, Garth. Have you got the whiskey?"

"Yes."

Professor Garth produced from his ample pocket a full bottle of whiskey, the cork of which had already been drawn, and replaced so that it could easily be removed. Garth also produced a small glass, and he quickly filled this with the spirit. Between them the two men raised Nelson Lee's head, and the whiskey was forced down the unconscious detective's throat.

Three doses were administered, and there was not much chance of the spirit acting as restorative, for the drug was certain in its action.

Lee was lifted up, and laid full length upon the couch. Here he was left in a sprawling, careless attitude, as though he had flung himself down, and some of the whiskey was sprinkled over his shoulders and waistcoat. The bottle and the glass were left prominently upon the desk.

Garth sniffed the air, and smiled grimly.

"The place positively reeks now," he said softly. "Our work is finished, Chandler, we will go at once."

As he finished speaking there came a sound at the door. Both men turned round abruptly and stared. The door-handle turned, and Mr. Trenton entered. The conspirators breathed with obvious relief.

"All right?" asked Trenton quickly.

"Yes."

"Good!" said Trenton. "You can go as soon as you like, the coast's quite clear. If any of the boys stare at you, don't take any notice. They don't understand, and can't understand."

Without a word Garth and Chandler walked past Trenton and strode out. They talked gravely together as they passed along the corridor. Any juniors meeting them would never suspect that they had just been perpetrating a criminal outrage on the Housemaster of the Ancient House.

Left alone, Mr. Trenton gave Nelson Lee a quick glance, and then touched the bell-push. Everything depended upon swiftness now. It was left to Trenton to put the finishing touch to the plot.

He walked to the door, and stood half in and



half out, and while he stood there he kept up a pretended conversation with somebody inside the room.

Tubbs the pageboy came sailing round the corner.

"Oh, it's quite all right, Mr. Lee, the boy's coming now," said Trenton loudly. "Shall I send him at once? Right! Here, Tubbs!"

"Mr. Lee rang, sir," said Tubbs.

"Yes, he wants you to go to Dr. Stafford at once," said Trenton briskly. "Tell Dr. Stafford that Mr. Lee urgently wishes to have a few private words with him in his own study. To be more exact, ask the Head to come here at once."

"Right you are, sir," said Tubbs promptly.

The page-boy, in common with most of the others at St. Frank's, had formed an altogether wrong impression of the science master. Tubbs thought that Mr. Trenton was one of the best. But then, of course, Tubbs' opinion had been greatly influenced by the fact that Mr. Trenton had tipped him with surprising generosity upon several occasions.

Tubbs hurried off with his message, and in less than five minutes Dr. Stafford came striding along and tapped at the door.

"Come in!" said a voice.

The Head entered, rather puzzled, and not a little impatient. It had been rather awkward for him to leave the Governors, and he could not possibly understand why Nelson Lee had departed in this way from his original plan.

Dr. Stafford came to a sudden halt after he had stepped into the study. For he caught sight of Nelson Lee sprawling on the couch in an attitude which was more eloquent than any amount of words.

But then, before he could utter a sound, something sprang on him from behind, something which had been crouching behind the door. The door slammed to, and Mr. Stafford staggered forward.

He didn't even see his assailant during those first few moments, but he was carried over by the weight and the suddenness of the attack. He dropped heavily on his knees, and sprawled on his face. Somebody was holding him down tightly, and pressing his face to the carpet.

"Good heavens!" gasped the Head. "What—what—"

He uttered a sharp little cry as a fierce pricking pain attacked him high up at the back of the neck, just where his iron-grey hair fell in thick locks. It was so unexpected that the Head could not keep back the gasp.

But it was soon over, and then the form leapt up.

Turning swiftly, Dr. Stafford caught sight of him. He saw the figure of a man but not the face. The face was a blank—a hideous, white death-like blank, with eyes that gleamed. The whole thing was so incongruous and startling that Dr. Stafford wondered if he was dreaming.

Then the figure slipped to the door, opened it, and passed out.

Mr. Trenton had performed his part of the scheme.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SAVAGE.



DR. STAFFORD rose somewhat dazedly to his feet, and held on to the table for support, although unaware of the fact, he had received a dose of Trenton's Zaxzol drug which far exceeded in strength any dose he had previously taken.

Hitherto, the drug had been administered by means of throat tablets, or some such agency. The drug, in fact, was taken into the system by means of the stomach. But this time Trenton had used more direct methods. It had, indeed, been impossible for him to force anything down the Head's throat, and so he had a small hypodermic syringe ready, and had injected the stuff straight into his victim's blood.

And this dose was of enormous strength.

Dr. Stafford was dazed and bewildered. He held on to Nelson Lee's desk, and attempted to pull his wits together. Was this really happening, or was it nothing more than a ghastly nightmare?"

The Head looked round him in a dull kind of way. He was aware of a peculiar throbbing at the back of his neck. He caught sight of Nelson Lee, and he wondered what on earth was the matter with him. Why was Lee lying there so still—so abandoned? It seemed that Lee was helplessly drunk. But that was ridiculous—out of the question. Lee was not that kind of man.

And then the Head attempted to reconstruct what had happened.

He had entered the study—he knew that. But then somebody had sprung upon him. It was somebody he couldn't recognise. He remembered seeing a face—a white, drawn, blank face. Yes, it must have been a mask. That was it! The Head suddenly realised that his assailant had been effectively disguised.

Something was evidently very wrong.

The Head called to mind the fact that the Governors had been left to themselves. They would be wondering what had happened. Well, let them wonder! What did he care for the Governors? They were only interfering busybodies, anyhow.

Abruptly, the Head pulled himself up with a jerk. He instinctively felt himself losing grip. He was thinking in a different strain. He didn't care—his feelings towards the Governors had undergone a change. And then a dreadful thought came to him.

Something had happened! Something had been done to him which would bring on another of those horrible attacks. He knew it—at that second he was absolutely sure of it, and everything became clear to him.

He had been tricked into this—and Nelson Lee had been rendered helpless beforehand. It was appalling—ghastly! The Head tried to pull himself together—he fought hard to resist the overmastering sensations which were taking possession of him.

"Heaven help me!" he muttered hoarsely. "Within a few minutes I shall be incapable of



controlling myself—and then—then— Oh, it is too awful to think of! I must go to Sir John at once, and warn him of what might happen. At all events, he will be prepared if I do that. But to go off into a violent outburst with the Governors in total ignorance would be appalling in the extreme."

The Head forgot all about Nelson Lee. He forgot everything, in fact, except that he had to get back to his own study—he had to warn the Governors of what might follow. Unless they received that warning they would never understand. And then the great mischief would be done.

Even as the Head was turning to go out of the room another thought came to him. He would lock himself in. He would remain here—shut away, so that he would be unable to make an exhibition of himself.

The most extraordinary part of the whole thing was that the Head knew what was coming, and, in a pitiful kind of way, he was trying to avert it. He might just as well have attempted to stay the tide on the seashore.

With every second that passed the drug was getting a deeper and deeper hold on him. With his hand on the key of the door he gave a short, harsh laugh—the first real sign that his self-control was going.

Then he tore the door open, and strode out into the passage. It was well that he did so, for had he remained, Nelson Lee's life would not have been worth a toss. Dr. Stafford would have killed him as he lay there helpless.

Tubbs was out in the passage—curious and wondering. Tubbs, in fact, had heard one or two strange sounds proceeding from Nelson Lee's study, and for the life of him he couldn't understand what it meant.

But he had come too late to be a witness of anything important. He had not seen Trenton leave, for example, and he had not the faintest idea of what was really taking place.

Then the door opened and Dr. Stafford strode out—savage, awful and terrifying. Tubbs turned to flee, but slipped as he did so. The next moment the Head seized him by the scruff of the neck, and hurled him aside.

"Common brat!" snarled Dr. Stafford harshly.

Tubbs was hurt. He hit the wall with such force that he was rather dazed. And he was dimly aware of the fact that the Head passed him on his way down the corridor. And with every stride that Dr. Stafford took, his character changed, and by the time he reached the vicinity of his study he didn't care in the slightest degree what the school thought—what the Governors thought—or what the world thought.

His own character had vanished, and he was now a cruel, savage brute. He didn't even know what was wrong with him, for his own personality was drowned—and this new form of himself had full control.

He reached his study door, grasped the handle, and flung the door wide open. Sir John Brent was pacing up and down, talking seriously, and the other three Governors were all listening to him with polite attention.

Sir John looked up in surprise as the door burst open.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Surely it was not necessary to enter so roughly, Dr. Stafford," he protested. "Why, good heavens! What on earth—"

"Get out of this room!" shouted the Head, violently. "Who told you to come to this school, interfering with my business, and attempting to dictate to me what I shall do? Clear out before I have you thrown off the premises."

The effect upon the Governors was startling. Sir John Brent nearly fainted on the spot. He staggered back, his face as red as a peony, and he sank dazedly into his chair. Mr. Stevens nearly choked himself, and the other two were too amazed to speak or move.

"What—what does this mean?" panted Sir John, at length. "Have you taken leave of your senses, Dr. Stafford?"

"I am not inclined to go into any arguments!" snarled the Head, throwing back the door with a crash. "There's the door—get out! One more word from any of you, and I'll take you, and throw you out without compunction."

Mr. Stevens rose to his feet hurriedly.

"The—the man is mad!" he said faintly.

And, certainly, there was every indication that Dr. Malcolm Stafford had taken leave of his wits. And yet, at the same time, this was surely impossible, since he spoke rationally, and seemed fully aware of the true position.

"You apparently think that you can come here and browbeat me just as you wish!" shouted the Head. "But you are mistaken, Sir John Brent—you are all mistaken! I am the Headmaster of this school, and I shall do as I like, and say what I like. You have no authority here—I have every authority! And if you do not take your infernal presence away from the school I shall kick you out!"

Sir John Brent recovered himself with an effort. He was not the kind of man to take insults lying down, and his temper had been rising rapidly during the last few moments.

"Calm yourself, sir—calm yourself," he exclaimed shortly. "Good heavens above! Do you realise that you are shouting at the top of your voice?"

"I will shout as much as I please!" raved the Head.

"Upon my soul," panted Sir John. "Then—then these reports we have heard are all true! There is no exaggeration about them—no falseness. Your violence, Dr. Stafford, is not only unwarranted, but positively appalling. There is no trace of madness here—but merely an exhibition of uncontrollable temper and brutal savagery! But you cannot intimidate me. Why, what—what—"

Crash! Crash!

Without the slightest warning, Dr. Stafford seized hold of a chair, and sent it hurtling across the room with a tremendous force. It crashed into a massive picture, splintering the glass, and causing the picture to come thudding down.

The Governors were all on their feet now, staggered and really scared.

"You will dictate to me?" thundered the



Head wildly. "You ugly old fools! You mis-shapen, doddering figureheads! I'll soon show you whether I intend putting up with this kind of nonsense!"

"Good heavens!"

"This—this is too terrible for words!"

"The man is out of his mind."

"No—he's sane enough!" shouted Sir John angrily.

"Yes, I am sane—I know exactly what I am talking about?" thundered the head. "And I know that you came down here in order to poke your drink-stained noses into my affairs! Well, this is what you get for your trouble. What is more, you're going out—now!"

The Governors gazed at the Head, horrified.

They had every reason to do so, for Dr. Stafford was a terrible sight. His whole appearance had altered—he was not like the same man. His kindly expression had vanished, his handsome old face was changed almost out of recognition.

Now his eyes blazed, his face was distorted and repulsive, his lips twitching and curling, and revealing his teeth. And, somehow or other, his very form was different—he hunched his shoulders up, and clenched and unclenched his fingers continually.

"We must obtain help at once!" exclaimed Sir John. "This man is nothing better than a savage—and I am so amazed that I can scarcely control my thoughts. For heaven's sake, Dr. Stafford, pull yourself together!"

"I am fully aware of my actions, and I do not need your advice!" stormed the Head. "No, don't touch that. You cur! Leave it alone!"

Sir John had reached for the bell, in order, probably, to summon assistance. But the Head gave one animal-like leap, seized Sir John by the shoulders, and swung him round. It was terrible to witness.

As the Head felt his grip fasten upon Sir John, he uttered a wild, cackling cry. It was like the savage triumph of a cannibal of the jungle. Sir John turned as pale as death, and struggled feebly.

The next second, Dr. Stafford brought his fist round, and struck Sir John on the side of the head. The Chairman of the Governors sagged weakly at the knees, and fell to the floor, and rolled over. The Head kicked him viciously.

It was an appalling exhibition.

And then the Head turned with a snarl. For the other three Governors were rushing out of the study like terrified rats. They had seen far more than they had ever bargained for. With their own eyes they were finding out the rumours that had reached their ears were far short of the actual truth.

Nothing could have been more horribly unfortunate than this. For Dr. Stafford to go off into this violent fit before the very eyes of the Governors was a tragedy. It was exactly what Trenton and his confederates had been working for. Their triumph was even greater than they had hoped for.

As soon as Dr. Stafford saw the three Governors dashing out of the room he forgot Sir John, and rushed after them. He uttered a bellow which was heard all over St. Frank's,



**The Chairman of the Governors rolled over and the Head kicked him viciously.**

and the three terrified men fairly raced to the front door, and charged out into the Triangle.

In the meantime, crowds had been collecting. The juniors in the Triangle had heard the signs of disturbance first. They could not very well help doing so. For the Head was shouting at the top of his voice.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" inquired Pitt, as he saw a number of fellows hurrying across to a spot near Dr. Stafford's window. "Why this thushness? What's all the excitement about?"

"Haven't you heard?" asked Bob Christine breathlessly. "The Head's going off like a giddy steam engine! There you are—listen to that? He's storming at the Governors—yelling at the top of his voice!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Pitt rushed across with Bob Christine. They found Handforth & Co. there, and the three chums of Study D were unusually serious. Church and McClure looked quite scared, and even Handforth lacked his usual confidence.

"He's in one of his blessed fits," said Church, horrified. "This is the limit, you know—he'll be sacked after this, as sure as guns!"

"Serve him right, too!" said Armstrong. "We rebelled because the Head was such a brute—and this proves that we were right!"

"Rather!"

"Listen— Oh, my goodness—listen!"

The juniors held their breath. And then they could hear the sounds of violence within the Head's study. There came that terrible crash as the Head flung the chair against the wall.

"Hadn't we better do something?" asked



Pitt concernedly. "This is awful, you know. I say, Nipper—what do you advise?"

I had just come running up—hot and deeply concerned. I had been on the playing fields with my chums, and somebody had shouted out the information that the Head had "gone off the deep end" once more. I couldn't believe it, and so I'd hastened along to investigate.

Within a few seconds I was convinced.

"But—but I can't understand it!" I muttered, turning to Sir Montie. "The Governors are here, you know, and everything was coming out to-day!"

"That's what I thought, dear old boy," said Sir Montie. "I understand that Mr. Lee was goin' to do somethin' pretty startling, begad! But it seems that the Head is goin' it, instead."

"It's a mystery!" I said, frowning. "I know jolly well the guv'nor planned to bring out the truth to-day. But—but this is too ghastly for words! The Head's worse than he's ever been before—right in front of Sir John Brent and the others, too! Something's gone wrong!"

I didn't know what to think, and I stood there in an agony of suspense and doubt. What in the world could it mean? Why had Nelson Lee allowed this to happen? What could have possessed the guv'nor?

He and I had only been talking about the plan of action the previous day. He had explained to me that he had all his facts clear, and he could expose Trenton when he liked—that he was, in fact, intending to show the science master up while the Governors were at the school.

And yet—this had happened!

It meant one thing, of course—it meant that Trenton had succeeded in doping the Head, in spite of all precautions. And this, of course, simply spelled disaster. How would Nelson Lee be able to convince the Governors after this? Somehow or other, there had been a slip—an unexpected development. But even now I didn't know the worst—not by any means!

I was still standing there when the door flew open, and Sir James Henson came scuttling out like a rabbit from a hole. He was immediately followed by Mr. Stevens and Mr. Hale. They were all hatless, scared looking, and somewhat dishevelled.

They were immediately surrounded by a crowd of fellows.

"What's wrong, sir?" shouted somebody.

"Can we do anything, sir?"

"Is anything the matter?"

"Boys—boys!" gasped Mr. Stevens.

"Your Headmaster is mad—dangerously mad! He has nearly killed Sir John Brent, and—and——"

"Great Scott!"

"The Head!"

It was the Head—but he was like another man. He came tearing out into the Triangle in a series of leaps and bounds. There was something peculiarly horrible in this run of his, for it was so totally opposed to his usual sedate stride, and reminded one of a gorilla or an ape.

Just for a few moments the Head stared round

him, mouthing, claspings his hands and clutching at the air, and uttering wild kind of cries.

Then, suddenly, he gave vent to a shrill peal of triumphant laughter. It was diabolical to listen to, and I saw that many juniors had turned deathly pale. There was something absolutely terrifying in all this.

We wondered why he had made that inhuman sound. He was staring across the Triangle to the doorway of the Ancient House. And then, as I looked, my limbs stiffened, and I seemed to feel my heart miss a beat. For I saw something which filled me with frozen horror.

Nelson Lee had just appeared.

This, in itself, was not startling. But Nelson Lee was looking almost as unlike himself as the Head. He swayed as he talked, and seemed dazed and dizzy. Indeed, he had every appearance of a man who had been heavily drinking.

But this, of course, was impossible—out of the question. I knew, however, that something dreadful had happened. The guv'nor, in spite of all his care, had fallen a victim to his enemies.

Griffith and one or two others were coming out of the lobby close on Nelson Lee's heels, and they looked amazed and frightened as they ran towards us. Griffith held his fingers to his nose.

"Phew!" he gasped. "He's boozed!"

"Drunk as a lord!" gasped Griffith. "He simply niffs of whiskey——"

Crash!

I drove my fist into Griffith's face with savage force. His words made my blood boil, and I really wanted to hurt him. He spoke in a triumphant, gloating kind of way—as though he were pleased. I don't suppose he meant anything of the sort, and perhaps it was only my imagination. But I simply couldn't help myself. To hear the guv'nor talked of like that was beyond all limit.

"Yaroooooh!" howled Griffith wildly.

"You—you silly ass, Nipper!" roared Armstrong. "It's true enough! Mr. Lee simply whistles of it! He's as tight as a barrel!"

"Drunk, by gad!" said Fullwood, grinning evilly.

And before I could do anything—before I could even get near the guv'nor—the fellows scattered like chaff in the breeze.

For the Head was coming. Nelson Lee was standing almost still. He swayed about drunkenly, and he was trying, with every atom of his will power, to collect his wits together—to force himself to become rational and clear-headed. He knew that something appalling had happened, and he was afraid it was too late for him to put things right.

He saw the Head coming, and a flash of intelligence came into his eyes. Then he moved forward, but nearly collapsed as he staggered, just as an intoxicated man will stagger as he attempts to keep his balance.

The fellows stood looking on, amazed and startled.

"Drunk!" shouted Dr. Stafford violently. "That's what they're saying, is it? Now I can understand! You miserable cur! I'll show you how I treat such men as you, Lee!"



The Head seized Nelson Lee, and pulled him round. The guv'nor in his present condition, was incapable of fighting anybody. For the drug was still heavy upon him, and his limbs had not recovered their usual strength or agility. He had instinctively come outside for fresh air, his wits were in such a condition that he didn't care about the publicity.

And now that he was in the hands of the Head, he was like a baby in the grasp of an ape. Dr. Stafford hauled him round, and then delivered a kick which sent Nelson Lee staggering over and crashing to the ground. The Head uttered a wild shout, and picked up a great stone. He lifted it, ready to hurl down with all his force upon Nelson Lee's face.

I rushed up, my heart beating like a hammer, my blood boiling. I knew that in less than a second that stone would fall, and the force would probably be sufficient to kill Nelson Lee on the spot.

I was just in the nick of time.

Hurling myself at the Head, I diverted his arm, and the stone went flying harmlessly away. The Head turned upon me with a snarl of demonical fury. But now the other fellows were beginning to recover themselves.

And, before Dr. Stafford could touch me, he was fairly surrounded by scores of shouting, excited fellows. There were seniors among them, and the Head was seized by many hands.

Violent though he was, he could do nothing against such odds. He was held by his legs, his arms, his shoulders, by almost every inch of him. He raved and struggled and nearly foamed at the mouth, but he could do no further damage.

"Hold him, you chaps, hold him tight!"

"That's what we are doing!" gasped Handforth.

It was terrible to listen to, and far more terrible to watch; but I felt sure that the end would soon come, the Head's very frame would not stand this strain for long. He was bound to collapse within a minute or so.

In the meantime, Nelson Lee was still lying on the ground. He made one or two attempts to rise, but could not keep his balance. The drug had made him strangely giddy. It was not the whiskey, he had not taken sufficient to affect him in that way.

Sir James Henson and the other two governors, seeing that the boys were dealing with the Head, hurried across to Nelson Lee. They bent over him, and then glanced at one another significantly and amazedly.

"The man's intoxicated!" muttered Sir James huskily. "Good heavens! He's positively helpless with drink!"

"Terrible—terrible!" said Mr. Stevens.

"What does all this mean? What awful fatality has come over the school?" went on Sir James. "This is disgraceful—appalling! The scandal will be so great that it will be talked of from one end of the kingdom to the other."

"The very name of St. Frank's will stink!" said Mr. Stevens, horrified.

And then they became aware that three of the gardeners had come along. These men were now helping the boys to hold Dr. Stafford,

not that it was necessary to hold him much longer, for he was growing weaker and weaker.

And now he fairly collapsed and became limp.

Amid tremendous excitement he was carried indoors. I was on my feet now, and down in my heart there was a dull ache. Everything had gone wrong—hopelessly, horribly wrong.

It was a heavy blow to me, and I frantically tried to think what could have happened to the guv'nor. It was true that he reeked of whiskey, I had smelt it with my own nose.

But the very thought of Nelson Lee getting drunk never occurred to me. There was something else here, some plot which I could not fathom.

But the harm was done—that was obvious.

## CHAPTER V.

### FALSE EVIDENCE!



AFTERNOON lessons were in progress.

At least, they should have been. But the school was in such a turmoil that not any of the fellows even thought of work, and the various form-masters knew

well enough that it was no good exercising severity.

But the boys were all in their class-rooms—and quiet, that was the main thing. St. Frank's seemed deathly still after the excitement which had occurred at dinner-time.

I was not in the Remove form-room. Wild horses wouldn't have dragged me there. I was in Nelson Lee's study, searching, pacing up and down, thinking with every ounce of my brain power.

I could see the whiskey-bottle and the glass and I knew that they were both strangers in the apartment. I was trying to piece together the facts, and could not do so. One of my chief desires was to get hold of Mr. Trenton, and force the truth from his sneering lips. But I couldn't find him.

And now and again I went upstairs to be as near to Nelson Lee as possible. For the guv'nor had been taken up to his own bedroom and he was now in a sound, heavy sleep. Dr. Brett had been summoned, and he had gone to the Headmaster's study. I had not had a chance of speaking with him.

The Head was in bed, too—also asleep—but his was the sleep of exhaustion, and it was more than probable that he would not be himself for two or three days.

And in the Head's study the governors were holding an immediate inquiry. Sir John Brent was not badly hurt. He had received a nasty blow on the side of the head, but he had almost recovered by this time.

And he was in charge of the inquiry, and the facts that were being elicited were significant and rather terrible. All sorts of witnesses had been called—masters, prefects, and even some of the servants.

And the truth had come to light.



The full story of the rebellion had been told, the rebellion and the subsequent era of Communism. The governors had listened with grim faces, and their expressions had become even more grim when they had learned that the whole trouble had been precipitated by the Headmaster's violent attacks.

All the witnesses had been compelled to admit that the Head had repeatedly behaved in this strangely savage fashion. But the chief witness all through was Mr. Trenton, the science master.

Mr. Trenton had made himself agreeable to the governors from the very start, and they found him sympathetic and thoroughly practicable. Indeed, they liked him better than any of the other masters, for he gave his evidence without reluctance and with singular clarity.

The governors, of course, had appointed Mr. Trenton to his position, and they knew that he was a man of considerable learning, and, according to his previous scholastic record, a highly efficient master.

"The whole matter is very distasteful to me, gentlemen," said Mr. Trenton sadly. "Dr. Stafford has generally been the kindest of men, and it pains me greatly that I should be compelled to speak of him in this way. Indeed, it savours somewhat of disloyalty."

"Not all all, Mr. Trenton, not at all!" said Sir John Brent. "It is your duty to speak frankly, and I am full of admiration for your courage. You have told us the truth, and you are to be greatly commended for so doing. You are highly esteemed in the school I believe?"

"I think the boys get on very well with me," said Mr. Trenton.

"In other words, you are quite popular, eh?" said Sir John. "That is very good. I am pleased to hear it. Needless to say, to-day's happenings have appalled me greatly, and I am more thankful than I can express that I am safe and sound. At one time I feared that I should be gravely injured."

"Has Dr. Stafford been as violent as this on previous occasions?" asked Mr. Stevens.

"Never quite so bad as this," said Trenton. "But you can easily realise that his outbursts were serious by the very fact that the boys openly rebelled against his authority, and demanded his dismissal."

"Yes, that is certainly a significant fact," said Sir James Henson. "I have been given to understand that the other masters held somewhat aloof."

"Yes, all with the exception of one."

"You mean Mr. Lee?" asked Sir John.

"Yes," said Trenton reluctantly. "Mr. Lee was the only one who backed up the Head master in his harsh treatment of the boys. I am deeply sorry to tell you of this, gentlemen but I really think it should come to your knowledge. Indeed, I feel that it is my duty to also mention that, in my opinion, Mr. Lee's influence in the school is a bad one."

Sir John nodded.

"Judging by what we have seen, I am inclined to agree with you," he replied. "It is all very surprising and unexpected, for I had always regarded Mr. Lee as the very embodi-

ment of propriety and good conduct. Yet, after the exhibition we have witnessed, I am reluctantly compelled to alter my opinion."

"One moment, please!" interrupted Dr. Brett.

The medical man was in the room, and he had been listening to Trenton's talk with ever-growing indignation and anger.

"You wish to speak?" enquired Sir John.

"I do," said the doctor, curtly. "It is not my wish to cause any trouble, but I positively deny Mr. Trenton's statements. Mr. Nelson Lee's influence in the school is all for the good——"

"You say this, in spite of what happened to-day?"

"I do!" said Dr. Brett, stoutly. "What happened to-day is nothing whatever to do with the question. Mr. Trenton is trying to insinuate that Mr. Lee is in the habit of drinking, and that is not only false, but maliciously so——"

"Come, come!" interrupted Trenton, softly. "You must allow me to protest, Dr. Brett. I should like to ask you one question. On the average, how often do you come to St. Frank's?"

"Recently, I have been here quite a lot," replied Brett, grimly. "On the average, my visits are perhaps once weekly."

"I live in the school; I am in constant contact with Mr. Lee, and I see a great deal more than you do," said Trenton. "You cannot reasonably expect these gentlemen to believe that your personal opinion carries any weight against the facts which I can produce."

"What facts?"

"I have repeatedly seen Mr. Lee late at night when he has been—well, not in his usual steady condition," said Mr. Trenton. "You must realise, Dr. Brett, that Mr. Lee has never allowed you to see him in such a state, and, consequently, you cannot appreciate——"

"Nonsense!" interrupted the doctor. "You are manufacturing this evidence for your own ends, Mr. Trenton, and I do not mind telling you so to your face."

"In other words, you call me a liar?" asked Trenton.

"Yes—an unmitigated liar!" shouted Dr. Brett, hotly.

Sir John Brent jumped to his feet.

"This is appalling!" he exclaimed, sharply.

"I must insist upon an immediate apology, Dr. Brett. Good gracious! I cannot permit you to insult Mr. Trenton in that outrageous manner. You will please apologise at once!"

"I am sorry, but I shall do nothing of the sort!" said Brett, coldly.

"Please don't worry yourself, Sir John," said Mr. Trenton. "I take this insult quite calmly—since Dr. Brett has always been a close, personal friend of Lee's. It is only natural that he should stick up for his friend. But I insist that Dr. Brett is mistaken, and he will certainly apologise of his own free will sooner or later."

"Very well—we will let it pass," said Sir John, reluctantly. "Now, Mr. Trenton, since we have gone so far in the matter of plain speak-

(Continued on page 25.)



SPECIAL NEW FEATURE—PECK'S BAD BOY!

# NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

No. 10.

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

Jan. 28.  
1922.



"Ma followed us to my room, and took Pa's jointed fish-pole and mauled us both until I don't want any more burgling, and my chum says he will never speak to me again."—From *HIS FATHER IS A COWARD*—This Week's *PECK'S BAD BOY*.





# PECK'S BAD BOY

## AND HIS "PA".

### HIS PA IS A COWARD



*His Pa has been a Major—How He would deal with Burglars—His Bravery put to the Test—The ice revolver—His Pa begins to Pray—Tells where the Change is—"Please, Mr. Burglar, spare a Poor Man's Life!"—Ma Wakes up—The Bad Boy and his Chum Run—Fish-pole sauce—Ma would make a good Chief of Police.*

"I SUPPOSE you think my Pa is a brave man," said the bad boy to the grocer, as he was trying a new tin-opener on a tin biscuit-box in the grocery, while the grocer was putting up some tinned goods for the boy.

"Oh, I suppose he is a brave man," said the grocer. "Your Pa is called a major, and you know at the time of the reunion he wore a veteran badge, and talked to the boys about how they suffered during the war."

"Suffered nothing," remarked the boy with a sneer, "unless they suffered from the peach brandy and leather-pies Pa sold them. Pa was a sutler, that's the kind of a veteran he was, and he is a coward."

"What makes you think your Pa is a coward?" asked the grocer.

"Well, my chum and me tried him last night, and he is so sick this morning that he can't get up. You see, since the burglars got into Magie's, Pa has been telling what he would do if the burglars got into our house.

He said he would jump out of bed and knock one senseless with his fist, and throw the other over the banister. I told my chum Pa was a coward, and we fixed up like burglars, with masks on, and I had Pa's long hunting boots on, and we pulled caps down over our eyes, and looked fit to frighten a policeman.

"I took Pa's meerschaum pipe-case and tied a little piece of ice over the end the stem goes in, and after Pa and Ma was asleep we went in the room, and I put the cold muzzle of the ice revolver to Pa's temple, and when he woke up I told him if he moved a muscle or said a word I would spatter the wall and the counterpane with his brains.

"He closed his eyes and shuddered. Then I stood off and told him to hold up his hands, and tell me where the valuables was. He held up his hands, and sat up in bed, and sweat and trembled, and told us the change was in his left-hand pants' pocket, and that Ma's money purse was in the bureau drawer in the cuff-box, and my chum went and got them.

"Pa shook so the bed fairly squeaked, and I told him I was a good notion to shoot a few holes in him just for fun, and he cried and said:

**We fixed up like burglars, with masks on.**

"Please, Mr. Burglar, take all I have got, but spare a poor old man's life, who never did any harm!"





"Then I told him to lay down on his stomach and pull the clothes over his head, and stick his feet over the footboard, and he did it, and I took a shawl-strap and was strapping his feet together, and he was scared, I tell you.

"It would have been all right if Ma hadn't woke up. Pa trembled so Ma woke up, and thought he had the ager, and my chum turned up the light to see how much there was in Ma's purse, and Ma see me, and asked me what I was doing, and I told her I was a burglar, robbing the house. I don't know whether Ma tumbled to the racket or not, but she threw a pillow at me, and said :

"Get out of here, or I'll take you across my knee," and she got up and we run.

"She followed us to my room, and took Pa's jointed fish-pole and mauled us both until I don't want any more burgling, and my chum says he will never speak to me again.

"I didn't think Ma had so much sand. She is as brave as a lion, and Pa is a regular squaw. Pa sent for me to come to his room this morning, but I ain't well, and am going out to Pewaukee to camp out till the burglar scare is over. If Pa comes around here talking about war times, and how he faced the enemy on many a well-fought field, you ask him if he ever threw any burglars down a banister. He is a fraud, Pa is, but Ma would make a good chief of police, and don't you let it escape you."

And the boy took his canned ham and lobster and tucking some biscuits inside the bosom of his blue flannel shirt, started for Pewaukee, while the grocer looked at him as though he was a hard citizen.



**Pa shook as the bed fairly squeaked**

## THE EDITOR'S DEN

**IMPORTANT!**—Correspondence to the Editor of the Magazine should be addressed to The Editor, The Nelson Lee Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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

My dear Readers,—

A great number of you, if not at the school, are nevertheless keen followers of what goes on at St. Frank's, as revealed in the pages of "The Nelson Lee Library." Now I want every one of you, whether belonging to the school or outside, to write to me, addressing your letters—postcards will do—through "The Nelson Lee Library," as directed above.

### I WANT YOUR OPINIONS!

Let me know which contribution or feature you like best in this issue of the Mag., then what you like second best. Suggestions for improvements or other features will be heartily welcome. My sole object is to please as many of you as I can, and you can help me tremendously by sending me your opinions.

### A PORTRAIT OF THE GUV'NOR.

You will all be glad to hear that I have had a top-hole portrait of the guv'nor drawn specially for the Mag. I am keeping it in readiness for the first opportunity of publishing it on the cover, probably within the next fortnight.

### MARY JANE'S H'OPINIONS.

I have engaged Mary Jane to give her h'opinions on many other matters coming under her observation at St. Frank's. Although I cannot agree with all she says, I think you will find her point of view both amusing and entertaining.

Your faithful chum,

**NIPPER** (The Editor).



**THE H'OPINIONS OF MARY JANE****FOOTBALL.**

*EDITOR'S NOTE.*—We all know Mary Jane, with her dust-pan and broom. We have met her in various parts of the Ancient House, busy at her work. She never seems too busy, however, for a chatty word about the general news of the day. She differs from most of the other domestics at St. Frank's, because she always has her special "h'opinions" about everything—and does not hesitate to express them.

**A** WICKED waste of time, an' I don't care who hears me a-sayin' of it (declared Mary Jane, as she put her broom on one side and picked up a duster). I can't see the sense o' such goin's hon. It ain't for the likes o' me to critikise, but I've got my h'opinions just the same as anybody else, an' I ain't afraid of speakin' my mind. Sports is all very well on a holiday, or in the summer-time, but I don't hold as it's right for young growin' boys to throw their time away like, when they ought to be larnin'.

**OUGHT TO BE STOPPED BY LAW.**

There's that there football, now. Many's the time I've watched from one o' the upstairs winders—although, let me tell you, I ain't in the habit of neggerlectin' my work not for more than a minit. An' what is there in football? It ain't a game at all, really, an' it ought to be stopped by law. That's my h'opinion.

There's never no tellin' what boys will be up to—an' I 'ave heard that men play football reg'lar. Which they ought to know better. Big hulkin' men playin' football ain't men at all! It don't matter whether it's rainin' or snowin', there's allus a game bein' played on a 'arf-holiday. I've even seen the senior boys playin' when the ground was right flooded.

**MORE LIKE A FREE FIGHT.**

Now, that's what I call disgraceful. I've watched the game, an' it's more like a free fight than anythink else. Now, just look what 'appened last Saturday! Did you ever see anythink like it—that's what I ask you! Rainin' pourin' it was—a fair soakin' day, if ever I seed one. Why, it wasn't fit for a dog to be hout in, let alone boys. But there! Their mothers ain't 'ere to see what's goin' hon, else they wouldn't be allowed to do the likes o' that.

There it was, I sez, pourin' like anythink, an' them boys belongin' to the Remove come out like as if it was a fine day. An' if it wasn't bad enough for them to risk infloenza an' noomonia, a whole crowd of other boys come over from Bannin'ton. An' there they was playin' in all that rain.

**THEY DO THEIR BEST TO KILL THEMSELVES.**

Why, if I 'ad anythink to do with sech matters, I'd 'ave brought 'em all in an' spanked 'em, then an' there. What would their fathers an' mothers 'ave said? They takes all sorts of trouble to bring their kids up strong an' 'ealthy, an' then as soon as they come to school

they do their best to kill themselves! I was fair sick at the sight, that I was!

Why it wasn't more than ten minutes afore they was all soaked to the skin—which wasn't surprisin', seein' as they was wearin' only a few light things what ain't hardly enough to go to bed in! I ain't sure but what this 'ere footballin' dress ain't indecent! An' as for catchin' cold, how can anybody expect to keep 'ealthy when they goes about with as good as nothink hon? An' with cold winds blowin' about, an' rain pourin' down! It fair amazes me that the 'eadmaster is content to sit in his warm study an' let it all go hon.

**YOU COULDN'T 'ARDLY TELL 'EM FROM NIGGERS.**

O' course, it ain't for the likes o' me to talk about the 'ead, or what he does, but I will say that football is a nasty, rough, wicked game. An' it ain't only the rain what matters. There was those boys fairly messin' themselves up with mud till you couldn't 'ardly tell 'em from niggers. I watched 'em, an' I knows! Fallin' over in the mud they was, every minit, as you might say. A lot they cares about washin' an' ironin'! An' it wouldn't be so bad if gettin' muddy was the worst thing about football.

**RUININ' THEIR CLOTHES AN' THEIR 'EALTH!**

What there is in the game is more than can see! Them as plays it must find it interestin', I s'pose, else they wouldn't waste their time. But as true as I'm a-standin' 'ere there was a big crowd of other boys round the ropes lookin' hon! Now, ain't that disgraceful? In all that there rain, too! Gettin' themselves soaked through, a-standin' there an' ruinin' their clothes an' their 'ealth.

**THE 'USSIES WHO PLAY FOOTBALL.**

Eh? What's that? Girls play football! Yes, an' so I've 'eard tell! The 'ussies! Comin' out in front o' the public with next to nothink on themselves—the forward young bits o' things!

Mind you, football for girls ain't so bad if the game was altered for 'em. In my h'opinion they ought only to play on fine days, an' on a field what's sootable to 'em. An' they ought to wear proper clothes, an' new rules ought to be made, so the game ain't so rough.

But there! What's the good o' me talkin', an' a-wastin' of my time? Nobody won't take no notice o' me, so I might just as well be gettin' hon with my work! But what there is to see in football fair beats me, it does!



## SCHOOLBOY HOWLERS

(This popular feature will continue every week until further notice.)



A teacher in a school at Stepney, East London, was giving the class an examination on the scriptural work of the previous three months. Amongst other questions the master asked :

"With what weapon did Samson slay the thousand Philistines ?"

And one boy, evidently jumbling up his Old and New Testament knowledge together, stood up and replied :

"With the axe of the apostles."

\* \* \*

In the schools of large towns "peripatetic" teachers are sometimes engaged to give lessons on subjects of which they have a special knowledge.

One such gentleman, who was a specialist in physiology, once got a very blunt and unscientific answer from a lad.

The lesson was on the circulation of the blood. The teacher, in trying to make the matter clearer, said :

"Now, boys, if I stood on my head, the blood, as you know, would run into it, and I should turn red in the face."

"Yes, sir," said the boys, thoroughly understanding so far.

"Now," continued the teacher, "what I want to know is this. How it is that whilst I am standing upright in the ordinary position the blood doesn't run into my feet ?"

The majority of the boys utterly failed to see this. One boy, however, made very light of it indeed, for he at once replied :

"Why, sir, because yer feet ain't empty."

\* \* \*

A short time ago, I was examining a class of boys in commercial geography with relation to the interchange of products betwixt England and the Colonies. This naturally led to the subject of Imperial federation and the fiscal question.

Presently, I asked :

"What boy can give me the term which is commonly used in connection with

giving our colonies certain privileges respecting exports and imports betwixt us and them ?"

And shortly, one boy put up his hand, and cried out :

"Providential tariff, sir !"

\* \* \*

The children of a country Board School were being examined in the gender, etc., of nouns ; and, on the whole, they answered very creditably.

Presently, the inspector took the sentence, "Hark ! how the lark sings !" and asked one of the little rustics to give the gender of the word "lark."

"Masculine, sir," answered the lad.

"No," said the gentleman, "you are wrong this time. 'Lark' is a common gender. Surely, you should have known that !"

"Nay," persisted the little chap, "it's masculine, sir ; for I know it's only the cock wot sings !"

\* \* \*

The master of a "secondary" school, in looking over his pupils' home-lesson compositions, came across an exercise which was very badly done.

"Williams," he said, calling out to him the boy who had brought the exercise, "this essay of yours is done so abominably bad that I shall send it home to your father, and ask him to chastise you !"

"I shall be very sorry if you do, sir," rejoined the pupil, "for father is a good sort."

"A good sort, sir !" exclaimed the master ; "what do you mean ?"

"I mean," explained the boy, "that father himself wrote that essay for me !"

\* \* \*

And, speaking of composition exercises, schoolmasters get some excruciatingly funny specimens sometimes. For example, a teacher gave the following exercise to be worked by his class :

"Make a good grammatical sentence illustrating the meaning and use of the word 'Terminus'."

And one lad sent in his exercise as follows :

"The mother flogged the boy on the terminus."



## THE GREAT FIGHT

By E. O. HANDFORTH (Our Official Reporter.)

As leader of Study D, I considered it my duty to referee the boxing match between Church and Talmadge, which took place in the gym. last night.

Of course, neither of them know much about boxing, and they wanted a good boxer to take charge of the fight. That was why I offered to referee, though, as anybody knows, it is a very difficult job.

I was very surprised to hear some of the chaps suggesting that Nipper should take on the job. Nipper is a bit of a boxer in his way. But you have to know a lot more than just how to use your fists before you are able to be a good referee.

I took off my coat and rolled up my sleeves as Church and Talmadge entered the ring. I don't know what there was funny about my doing that. I think I've got a pretty good sense of humour myself. No one can deny that I see a joke quicker than most chaps. But I can't see what made those silly chumps start cackling.

I meant it to be a jolly good fight, and I was going to do all I could to make it so. I made a few remarks to the audience. Everybody knows that is what a referee is for. And I think it showed a lot of ignorance on the part of some of the chaps to interrupt my speech after about ten minutes.

But it was not worth worrying about. So after punching a few of their heads, I climbed back into the ring.

The first round was very dull and very long. When I looked at my watch, I found five minutes had passed so I sent them back to their corners. I don't think there was any call for the hoots and loud remarks that I overheard. It was quite a small oversight on my part. I admit that. In fact I asked any one who

could do the job better to come and take it on.

A crowd of fellows began to rush up to the ring. So I had to punch a few more heads. I should think that proves I was the best chap to referee if nothing else does.

In the second round Church got a punch on the nose and fell down. Naturally I told the silly chump to get up. Church is a fatheaded owl, but he is in Study D, and I wasn't going to have Talmadge knocking him out while I was there.

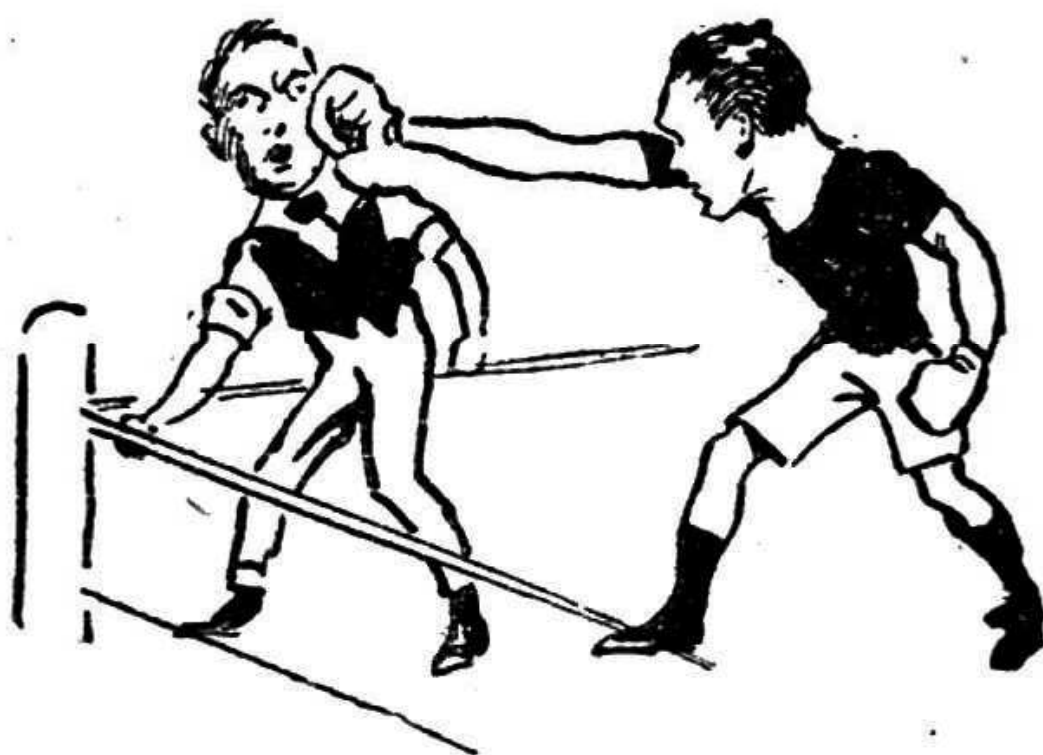
"You—you absolute ass," I said, and bent down to help him up.

Then the chaps began to edge into the ring, so I called the end of the round. The worst of these fellows is they don't understand that the referee is there to see that the rules of boxing are kept. No one is more fond of peace than I am, but it is true that I may have got a bit angry just then.

Fullwood, I am sure, thought I was angry, because I distinctly heard him mutter at me while he was trying to stop his nose bleeding with his handkerchief.

But I got Church up all right for the next round. I told him to go for Talmadge's jaw. As I was watching to see if he was taking my advice I found myself between the two boxers. And Church chose that moment to let out with a right hook. Of course, the fathead landed the blow right on my mouth!

Now I don't think I could be blamed for being a little annoyed at that. It is a bit thick when one of the boxers attacks the referee. I think I should have been within my rights if I had disqualified him.



It is a bit thick when one of the boxers attacks the referee.



But after all Church is a friend of mine. So instead of sending him out of the ring, I put up my fists. I thought it would be better for Church to teach him a little lesson in a friendly way than to give him the disgrace of being disqualified.

So I just put up my fists and sent in a few blows. You can imagine how surprised I was when Talmadge began to spar up to me.

After Church had fallen through the ropes I found Talmadge facing me. I could have disqualified him, too, but I have never heard of a fight where both boxers were disqualified.

As I was putting up my hands to defend myself against Talmadge, I noticed that the chaps suddenly stopped shouting. They had been making an awful din. I supposed they were waiting to cheer me when I delivered the knock-out blow.

But just as I was going to do so, I was surprised to see a figure coming up to the ring through the crowd. It was Mr. Crowell.

"Handforth," he said, "what does this mean? How dare you fight in here?"

I was so surprised at his question that I lost the power of speech for a moment. Then I saw that he was only joking.

"Me? Fighting!" I said. "Why, sir, I'm only the referee."

"Nonsense!" he said sternly. "I distinctly saw you in combat with Talmadge. And look at this poor fellow on the floor."

"But—but I haven't any gloves on, sir," I pointed out.

It is extraordinary how dense a master can be. Mr. Crowell refused to see the difference between refereeing a friendly bout and having a real fight.

I was so disgusted, I didn't even argue with him when he told me to follow him to his study. But I'm not going to help people any more.

When I came down I found some silly chump had fixed this notice on the board in the lobby:—

## "GREAT FIGHT RESULT!"

1. Mr. CROWELL. Won easily.
2. Handforth. Followed unwillingly.
3. Talmadge.
4. Church. Also ran—the spectators."

(Continued from column 2.)

I could inscribe a multiplicity of pages on the immense subject of knowledge, but I have been meticulously admonished by the sublime editor "to boil it down," as he elegantly expressed it. I will, therefore, curtail the remainder of my pithy article until a more opprobrious occasion.



## The Wonderful Knowledge

By  
HUSSI RANJIT LAL  
KAHN

THE great and most audacious editor of this precocious journal has honoured me by proffering me the infinitesimal space of his ghastly columns

to venerate my perverse notions on the derivation of knowledge.

I have come many leagues of miles to this presumptuous seat of culture, St. Frank's, to nurture my hopeless brain with many queer facts. Is it not giddily wonderful that the pinnacles of knowledge extend beyond the lofty and immeasurable heights of our mighty and insignificant Mountain of Everest?

Behold the tinkling little stars,  
The planets of Jupiter and Mars

are within the grasp of our misunderstanding, putting into the pale the incongruities of all the sapphires, diamonds, and rubies belonging to the most gorgeous rajahs of India.

The magnitudinous power of knowledge succeeds all things. Emperors and kings, princes and jans must bow in disrespectful indifference to the marvellous learned professors of the resplendid universities of the West. Every year hundreds of my beloved countrymen make a solemn pilgrimage to the sacred shrines of Oxford and Cambridge, that they may be diffused with unearthly wisdom.

It is my disgraceful ambition to become an inmate of one of the high Meccas of universal knowledge. I premeditate to ascend the University of Oxford for preferentiality, as I am induced that this infamous institution is most adaptable for one who inspires to literary cunning. But this would be incompatible without a most incomprehensive familiarity with the English vernacular and other dead languages. I am inconsequently perusing acutely the verbose dictionaries of the English, the Latin, and the Greek, and I flatter my august self that I am becoming more inefficient at each setting of the sun. My English, you will observe, is advancing with astonishing rapidity of profusion and intelligibility.

The culminating objection of all knowledge is to make this round globe, on which we are imprisoned, a more inhabitable place. There is no man too minute or lowly in caste who cannot consume the nectarine of choice learning. Misfortunately, the preponderating numbers of English boys I have met are not indisposed towards the enrichment of their intellects. They discountenance such habits which they designate as "swotting," while retaining overwhelming excitability in vicarious games played with a ball. I cannot comprehend such paradoxical nonsense.

(Continued at foot of column 1.)



**WASTED OPPORTUNITIES***By SOLOMON LEVI.*

**B**USINESS is business. Believe me, it is. Turn it the other way round and it reads just the same. Business is business. You can't hedge it, you can't shelve it, you can't back-heel it. Business is business.

**Wake up, St.**

**Frank's!**

This is what St. Frank's doesn't know. This is what the school won't see. The place wants waking up. I see good business chances slipping by all round me. It makes me tired to see them. It makes me weep to think of them.

**Why not let the playing fields?**

There's the playing fields. We use them two half-days a week, and during the evenings. The rest of the time they're idle. My stars, think of the athletic groups who would be willing to pay—handsomely, mark you all—to use them during that time! Isn't there any lozer with business talent enough to see that? But this is only one thing.

**The studies as offices.**

The studies. We're hardly in 'em during the middle of the day. What about letting them as day offices to business men? True, they may smell somewhat of frying kippers. Agreed, they may whiff slightly of bacon. But it's a sure thing there are some business men who won't mind that.

**A ducal scarecrow.**

And now there's the fellows. They make me tired. My luck, they make me gnash my teeth. Somerton, for one. A real live duke—the top title in the peerage, and going about dressed like a scarecrow! My luck, there's a fortune in that! Nobody of anything like his rank has ever thought of it before! What's he to do? Easy!

**How there's money in it.**

Send his photograph to all the illustrated papers, first. They'd cling to them, and pay well. Invite newspaper reporters to interview him—more easy money! And



write articles for all the leading papers—in this strain: "Why I prefer rags to rich linen!" "Burst-out boots before coronets!" etc. Money for mincemeat!

**Suggested openings for Teddy Long.**

Then there's Teddy Long. My luck, I've known some liars in my time, but never one to match Teddy Long. Why, that lozer's got an imagination like a newspaper reporter's! Why doesn't he make something out of it? Instead of telling Mr. Crowell why he didn't do his prep., and the Head why he couldn't possibly have broken such-and-such a window, and Nipper why he happened to have his ear so near to the keyhole—why doesn't he invent things for the films, or novels, or, of course, do reporting for the newspapers? Not a shemozzle of the business instinct.

**Sir Montie's cast-off clothing.**

There's Tregellis-West. I never could understand that lozer Tregellis-West. Why he wants so much in the way of apparel beats me all ends up. Now what does he do with all his cast-off garments, I wonder? They're cast off after about two days' wear, I believe. I gather he gives them to the first old clothes man lucky enough to pass.

**What are secondhand shops for?**

Now what does he think secondhand shops are here for? Aren't they here to do business? I groan when I think of what isn't made of this lozer's cast-off togs. Believe me, I groan aloud.

**Tucker's face would be his fortune.**

I could go on like this all day and all night. Believe me, I could. There's Tucker. With a face like his he'd make a mint of money out of pantomime. Instead of that he fools about with his Communism. If there's one thing that would knock all the interest out of business, it's Communism. Make money out of your business enterprises to share it among your brothers! My luck, who's having any!

**A great draw.**

Not that something couldn't be made out of Communism, though. It's the pantomime notion that I'm reflecting on. What price a comic Communist school, with Tucker as Headmaster, and the masters underneath him! Why, I don't believe a pantomime running now has got such a gag! My luck, it would draw!



(Continued from page 16.)

ing, we might as well continue in the same strain. I understand that Mr. Nelson Lee has been in the habit of drinking?"

"Yes," said Trenton.

"Frequently?"

"Well, it would not be truthful to say that Mr. Lee has frequently made an exhibition of himself," replied Trenton. "Indeed, to-day is the only occasion that I can remember that he has publicly revealed his secret vice. As a rule he has done his drinking privately, and generally late at night."

"You are quite certain of this?"

"I have seen Mr. Lee on many occasions—retiring unsteadily to his bedroom," replied Trenton, glibly. "And I maintain that such a man is not fit to rule over the destinies of the Ancient House at this school."

"I quite agree," said Mr. Stevens.

"Furthermore, it must be plain to you all that Mr. Lee and Dr. Stafford have been in league together," continued Trenton. "On every occasion Mr. Lee upheld the Headmaster——"

"You infernal rogue!" shouted Dr. Brett, beside himself. "Don't take any notice of this scoundrel, gentlemen! He is not only a liar, but for weeks he has been plotting and planning——"

"Control yourself, sir!" shouted Sir John. "Unless you do so at once, I shall insist upon your immediate departure!"

Dr. Brett swallowed hard, and sat down. He knew most of the facts, and it made him see red to hear Trenton traducing the characters of Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee in this dastardly fashion.

Yet he could not accuse Mr. Trenton on the spot. For Brett had no proof—no evidence to offer. And, in any case, it was Nelson Lee's own job to answer these accusations. Dr. Brett was wise in deciding to sit tight and say nothing but now and again he couldn't prevent an outburst.

Mr. Stockdale was requested to enter, and he was closely questioned regarding Nelson Lee, and he seemed very astonished when he heard that Lee had been accused of habitually drinking.

"To the best of my knowledge, there is no truth whatever in that statement, gentlemen," said Mr. Stockdale. "I have never seen Mr. Lee the worse for drink. Indeed, I did not know that he even partook of intoxicating liquor at all. I was under the impression that he was an abstainer."

"But you saw Mr. Lee to-day?"

"His condition is beyond my comprehension," said Mr. Stockdale. "Mr. Lee was certainly intoxicated to-day—it would be useless to say otherwise——"

"He was drugged!" interrupted Dr. Brett.

"Have you any proof of that?" demanded Mr. Trenton.

"Proof—proof!" shouted the doctor. "As much proof as you've got that Mr. Lee is a drunkard! These gentlemen must either take your word, or mine. Ever since I entered this

room, I have been telling the truth; ever since you entered the room you have been lying!"

"Really, Dr. Brett, I protest!" sternered Sir John hotly.

"Can Dr. Brett tell us, as a medical man, that Mr. Lee was drugged?" asked Trenton. "He has examined Mr. Lee, as you know. Ask him the result of his examination. He says he is a truthful man."

"Dr. Brett, what is the result of your examination?" asked Sir John.

Dr. Brett clenched his fists.

"To all appearances, Mr. Lee had been partaking of whiskey in large quantities," said he, in a low voice. "There was every indication that his condition was a direct result of over-indulgence of spirit!"

"Did you detect any sign of chloroform?"

"None whatever."

"Or any other drug?"

"None whatever."

"It stands to reason, therefore, that Mr. Lee was—to put it quite bluntly—drunk!" said Sir John, coldly. "Do you admit that, Dr. Brett?"

"I do not," said the doctor. "There are many drugs which do not leave any visible traces—or, at least, traces so insignificant that they can easily be drowned by the application of spirits."

"What, then, is your theory?"

"I believe that Mr. Lee was forcibly drugged, and, while insensible, a quantity of whisky was poured down his throat," replied Dr. Brett.

"You must allow me to say, doctor, that such a suggestion is palpably absurd," put in Sir James Henson. "All this talk is merely a waste of time. I am quite convinced that Mr. Lee was hopelessly intoxicated. And, furthermore, I am quite ready to believe that he has been in the habit of drinking."

"Hear, hear!" said Mr. Stevens.

"I really think you are wrong, gentlemen," said Mr. Stockdale. "I have the greatest respect for Mr. Lee, and this whole affair is a terrible shock to me. It is possible, of course, that Mr. Lee, has been keeping this vice a secret, but it is staggering to one who has known him so long."

"Such revelations are always staggering, Mr. Stockdale," said Sir John Brent. "They must necessarily be so, as you will realise."

"I really see no reason why we should prolong this discussion," put in Mr. Stevens. "We have heard overwhelming evidence that Dr. Stafford is not a fit and proper person to be the Headmaster of this school. We have further heard that Mr. Nelson Lee is totally unsuited for the post of Housemaster. I propose that they should be both summarily dismissed—in open disgrace."

"I quite agree!" said Sir James Henson.

"Really, gentlemen, I do not think that that is quite fair!" protested Mr. Stockdale.

"It's infernally unfair!" said Dr. Brett, curtly.

"Oh, and in what way?" asked Sir James.

"Surely it will be far better to postpone this enquiry until Mr. Lee and Dr. Stafford are able to face the charges which are levelled



against them?" suggested Mr. Stockdale. "That, at least, would give them an opportunity of explaining these singularly peculiar occurrences."

"Exactly!" said Dr. Brett, eagerly. "Good for you, Mr. Stockdale! Come, gentlemen, you must see the reasonableness of this suggestion. Postpone the whole business until the Headmaster and Mr. Lee are able to defend themselves. That, indeed, is the only course to adopt."

"I have no wish to see Dr. Stafford again—and I have certainly no desire to occupy the same room with that drunken wretch who disgraced himself before the whole school," said Sir James Henson. "The evidence is so overwhelming that no defence is possible. I am of the opinion that they should both be dismissed without further compunction."

"Without even giving them a hearing?" asked Mr. Stockdale.

"You must realise that such a hearing would be a mere farce," said Sir John. "What defence have they to offer? After such an open exhibition of violence, the Headmaster can do nothing, and words would merely make the situation more difficult. And I am not inclined to have any conversation with Mr. Lee. I have seen enough. Gentlemen, we will decide at once."

"Good!" said Mr. Stevens.

"There is just one point," went on Sir John. "We have come to the conclusion that both Dr. Stafford and Mr. Lee must go. They will leave the school the very moment they are able to do so. But it must be remembered that St. Frank's will be without a Headmaster, and the Ancient House will lack a Housemaster. We must come to some decision with regard to this."

"I do not think we could do better than appoint Mr. Trenton to the Headmastership," said Mr. Stevens, smiling, and nodding at Mr. Trenton. "He is young, perhaps, but quite capable, as we know. And perhaps it is a mistake to appoint men as elderly as Dr. Stafford. I propose, gentlemen, that Mr. Trenton shall be appointed temporary Headmaster."

"That is a very good suggestion," said Sir John slowly. "You are agreeable, Mr. Trenton?"

Mr. Trenton seemed almost overwhelmed.

"This—this is an honour I did not dare to hope for," he said quietly. "I—I hardly know what to say, Sir John. Naturally, I am delighted. I shall be only too pleased to do my very utmost to carry out my duties in a satisfactory manner."

"You will quite understand that this position is a temporary one," said Sir John. "If, however, you make good progress, it is more than likely that the position will become a permanency. With regard to the Ancient House, it will not be difficult for us to appoint a new Housemaster. We will have a reliable man sent down at the earliest opportunity. In the meantime, Mr. Trenton, you will have full charge."

Dr. Brett felt that he could have slain the gloating Trenton on the spot. For Trenton was gloating—not openly, but in such a manner

that Dr. Brett's blood fairly boiled through his veins.

The scoundrelly science master had triumphed—his hour of victory had come. In spite of all the efforts of Nelson Lee, Mr. Hugh Trenton had succeeded in driving Dr. Malcolm Stafford out of St. Frank's.

But Mr. Trenton was unwise in looking so victorious. For his victory was not to be a very lasting one.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BLACKEST HOUR!



"GUV'NOR!" I said softly. "Hallo, young 'un! Anything the matter?" murmured Nelson Lee. "Don't look so scared, Nipper."

"But—but you don't know, sir," I said.

"Hush!" whispered Dr. Brett, bending over me. "No need to say anything now, Nipper. Mr. Lee's not quite himself yet. Wait until a bit later on. What we want to know is how the whole devilish business took place."

Dr. Brett and I were in Nelson Lee's bedroom. It was late afternoon now, and we had been there for some little time. I had met Dr. Brett outside in the corridor and he had allowed me to go in. I could see, in fact, that the doctor was inwardly boiling with fury. And he had told me exactly what had taken place at the Governors' meeting. I was staggered by the news.

And now unexpectedly Nelson Lee had stirred, and we found that he had opened his eyes, and was looking at us. Dr. Brett lost no time in administering a restorative.

I was quite surprised and delighted to find that the guv'nor was recovering with far greater rapidity than I had hoped for. He insisted upon getting out of bed, and attired in his dressing-gown, he sat before the fire. With a cigarette between his lips, he looked almost himself.

"I gather that a few startling things have been happening?" he said calmly, as he looked at our grave faces. "Dear me! What oppressive gloom! What concentrated depression! Come, come, Brett! What's the trouble?"

"Trouble enough!" growled the doctor. "The fact is, I daren't tell you, old man. First of all, I want to know what happened to you."

"There's an infernal reek of inferior whiskey about me—I know that," said Nelson Lee. "Did you have the audacity to administer whiskey in an attempt to revive me?"

"Then you didn't drink the stuff?" asked Brett eagerly.

"I am no great lover of whiskey," said Nelson Lee calmly. "When I do partake of a drop I select a good brand—not this smelly stuff. I have every reason to suspect that our cheerful friend, Mr. Trenton, has achieved a glowing triumph!"



"How do you know that, sir?" I asked quickly.

"Your faces tell me much, my boy," replied Nelson Lee. "I'm right, eh? Well, I shall be most interested to hear the full news. But you want to know what happened to me?"

Yes."

"In the first place, I must admit that I was guilty of gross carelessness," said Nelson Lee. "I was quite prepared for activity on the part of our enemies on this particular day—and yet, when the crucial moment arrived I was foolish enough to fall into the trap which had been so carefully prepared for me—"

"My dear fellow, don't make excuses for yourself!" interrupted Dr. Brett. "We want to hear what happened. It must have been something particularly swift, or you would never have fallen a victim."

It did not take Nelson Lee long to tell us how the strangers had been brought to his study, and how he had suspected them from the very start.

"It was my idea that the fellows were simply attempting to get me away from the school by a decoy message," went on the gov'nor. "Therefore, although I was somewhat prepared, I was not exactly expecting a personal attack. But the beggars were too sharp for me, and without any warning they bowled me over backwards and—well, before I could really put up a decent fight they jammed an infernal pad over my face. As you can guess, that pad was soaked with some pungent kind of a drug. I vainly attempted to fight off the sensation of stupor, but it was no good. That's really the last thing I remember—until I woke up a short while ago."

Dr. Brett slapped his thigh vigorously.

"I knew it!" he said emphatically. "I told Sir John Brent exactly the same thing. I told him that you had been drugged, and that somebody had soaked you with whiskey afterwards. And Sir John simply laughed at me."

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Oh, so that was the game!" he said calmly. "Not at all bad, Brett—decidedly ingenious, in fact. So that's what they did after they'd got me senseless? Poured some whiskey down my throat—"

"Not only down your throat, but they must have given you a bath in it!" I interrupted. "You simply whiffed of the stuff, gov'nor. The dirty rotters! Who were they? Surely you must know—"

"I don't know, Nipper; but I have an idea that they were two of Mr. Trenton's particular friends," said Nelson Lee. "One was Mr. Chandler, and the other Professor Garth. I should like to know what has been recently happening?"

"Well, as far as I can gather, the whole thing was a prearranged plot," said Dr. Brett. "It was all worked out beforehand, and put into operation at a fixed time. Trenton had something to do with it, of course—that goes without saying."

"The Headmaster—what of him?" inquired Nelson Lee.

"Why, he had the worst attack of all to-day," said Dr. Brett quietly. "In fact, Lee, he



Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee left St. Frank's in awful disgrace.

tried to kill you, although I don't suppose you know it. He gave a terrible exhibition before the Governors—and, as you can imagine, they were greatly impressed."

"I don't wonder at it," said Nelson Lee quietly. "I take it that they saw me in a condition which was hardly in keeping with my position?"

"They assumed that you were intoxicated!" replied Brett fiercely. "The silly old women! I've never seen such a set of old fogeys in all my life, Lee! They're not fit to govern a babies' school! Trenton stands before them and lies until he is blue in the face, and they drink in every word. They simply swallow his yarn whole, and took it for granted that everything was exactly as he stated."

Nelson Lee chuckled.

"We've had quite a bad day, Brett," he said softly.

The doctor fairly glared.

"And all you can do is to sit there and grin!" he roared. "What on earth's the matter with you, Lee? Everything's gone wrong—horribly,



hopelessly wrong. And yet you sit there and seem to be as calm as ever. I've never known anybody so exasperating——"

"My dear Brett, what on earth is the good of worrying?" interrupted Lee quietly. "Just because Trenton has gained the upper hand, that is no reason why we should assume that the end of the world is coming, or that the position is hopeless. Trenton is treading on very thin ice, let me tell you, and although he is apparently standing firm just now, the ice will very soon give way."

"Can't you talk plain English, instead of using riddles?" growled Brett. "Upon my word, Lee, you're just about the limit. Can't you realise what all this means? Dr. Stafford is sacked—kicked out in disgrace!"

"With me, no doubt, to keep him company?" asked Lee, smoothly.

"Yes, you've both been dismissed," I said in alarm. "The fact is, guv'nor, you don't seem to understand properly. I expect you're still suffering from that rotten drug——"

"Not at all, Nipper," interrupted Lee. "I am thankful to say that my wits are quite sharp now. When I allowed that precious pair to drug me I was not on the alert, and I blame myself entirely for what has taken place. But we are all human, after all, and mistakes are unavoidable, sometimes. In a nutshell, the position is this—Dr. Stafford and I are dismissed, and Mr. Trenton has triumphed. Well, I'm not exactly crestfallen."

"Trenton's been made Headmaster, sir," I said grimly.

"Splendid!" chuckled Lee. "Better and better, young'un."

"You seem mighty pleased about it," snapped Brett.

"Since disaster has come, we might as well make what capital we can out of it," said Nelson Lee, tossing his cigarette end into the fire. "Trenton is Headmaster, eh? Well, we'll leave him in that position for the time being. We'll let him think that we're utterly beaten. By the way, surely the Governors will hold an inquiry over this matter?"

"They've already held one," said Brett.

"Without waiting for my evidence?"

"What do they care about your evidence?" said the doctor bitterly. "Haven't I already told you that they're a set of hopeless fools? I tell you, Lee, I stood in that study and I fairly raved. The old idiots were perfectly satisfied with Trenton's evidence, and on the strength of it they have dismissed both Dr. Stafford and you—and they don't mean to give you an opportunity of speaking."

"I'm hardly surprised," said Nelson Lee. "I shall see Dr. Stafford as soon as I can, and we'll leave the school together."

"Leave the school!" I shouted, aghast.

"Yes."

"But—but what about Trenton?" I demanded, in amazement. "Aren't you going to expose him, sir? Aren't you going to tell the Governors that they've made a ghastly bloomer——"

"I'm afraid the Governors are not in a suitable frame of mind now," interrupted Nelson Lee. "They would not be ready to admit that

they had made a ghastly bloomer, as you put it. It is galling, Nipper, but I certainly think it will be better for me to wait a little while longer—and then do the job thoroughly."

"But I want Trenton to be exposed now!" I insisted.

"Perhaps so—but I don't very well see how it can be done," went on the guv'nor. "You needn't worry—everything will come all right very soon. There is no reason why we should be down in the dumps."

"Oh, no reason at all," said Brett sarcastically. "Everything's gone wrong—you're utterly disgraced, and Trenton is literally gloating with triumph. Oh, there's no reason why we should be down in the dumps."

Nelson Lee soon brought us round to a different way of thinking. He explained that it would be almost hopeless to approach the Governors immediately after what had happened. Their minds were made up, and they would take a great deal of convincing. Moreover, Nelson Lee wanted to gather additional evidence. He informed us, in fact, that the opportunity of leaving the school for a few days was a very welcome one.

In the meantime, the Governors had come to a decision.

And, just at about tea-time, orders were given that the whole school was to be called together in Big Hall. The juniors were all thoroughly excited, and they had been half expecting something of this kind.

The events of the day had been very dramatic, and it was only natural that a public announcement of some sort should be made.

"The Head's got the sack—I'll bet a quid on it!" declared Fullwood pleasantly. "A jolly good thing too—we've been fed up with him for weeks an' months, and the sooner he clears out, the better."

"Say that again, and I'll knock you down," snapped Handforth, seizing Fullwood by the shoulder and hauling him round. "You miserable cad! You rotten worm! I'm going to smash you up——"

"Lemme go, you fathead!" growled Fullwood. "What's the matter with you? You ain't stickin' up for the Head now, I suppose—after what's happened?"

"Whether I stick up for him or not is my business," roared Handforth. "But I'm not going to stand here and listen to a cad like you running him down."

"I didn't ask you to stand there an' listen," said Fullwood sourly.

Crash!

Handforth's fist landed upon Fullwood's nose with tremendous force, and Ralph Leslie almost turned a back somersault as he thudded over. And the noise he created was quite appalling.

"Anybody else want some?" demanded Handforth, glaring round. "I'm just feeling ready, if you'd like to know."

"Don't be an ass," said Pitt. "I was ready to stick up for the Head before to-day, but it's hopeless now. And what about Mr. Lee? I'd never have believed that he could get drunk——"

Crash!



"Yow—yaroooooh!" howled Pitt wildly. "You—you dotty fathead."

"And I'll give you another one jolly quick if you talk like that again," snorted Handforth.

"Drunk! Who says that Mr. Lee was drunk?"

"I do!"

About twenty fellows answered in one voice, and Handforth seemed for a moment as though he were about to attack the lot. But he came to the conclusion that the order was somewhat too large, and he merely glared.

"You pitiful asses," he said bitterly. "You brainless lumps of rubbish! Anybody with a grain of sense would know that Mr. Lee wasn't drunk."

"Do you know it?" demanded Hubbard.

"Yes, I do."

"Then you admit that you've got a grain of sense?" asked Hubbard, hastily dodging behind four or five other fellows.

"I'll deal with you later!" said Handforth grimly. "Just wait until I collar you, my son! Simply because Mr. Lee went off into a fit or something, or was drugged or something, or was ill or something."

"There's a lot of something about it," grinned Jack Grey.

"Well, anyway, Mr. Lee was not drunk—and I stick up for him every time!" snorted Handforth hotly. "That's all I've got to say—just that, and nothing more! I'm not going to utter another word. And let me tell you this, if the Head and Mr. Lee go away from the school—"

"I thought you weren't going to utter another word?" asked McClure, nudging his leader.

"Dry up, Handy."

"And I don't want any interruptions from you, Arnold McClure!" bellowed Handforth, swinging round, and giving McClure a push which sent him staggering. "I'm fed up with you—I'm fed up with the whole crowd. You've got about as much brains in all your heads as Chubby Heath's white mouse."

And Handforth, feeling that he had told the crowd off, stalked away. A derisive yell of laughter which followed him made him squirm as he walked. The fact was, Handforth was intensely worried—and when Handforth was worried he was not only irritable, but tremendously quarrelsome.

In his heart he believed that both Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee were the victims of some plot. And yet the appearances were so deadly that even Handforth's loyalty was stretched, and he hardly knew what to believe.

But there was not much time for discussion.

All the fellows were required to attend in Big Hall. And when, at last, the whole school was present, Sir John Brent and the other Governors appeared upon the platform. They were all looking grim and solemn and grave.

"Set of mouldy old owls!" muttered Handforth audibly.

"Silence, there!" commanded a prefect.

Sir John Brent stepped forward, and there was a hush.

Without going into any details, the chairman of the Governors explained that Dr. Malcolm Stafford and Mr. Nelson Lee had resigned their positions. Sir John stated that it was impossible for the two to remain at St. Frank's.

They would leave at the earliest possible moment, and, in future, there would be no further disturbances. Sir John made no reference to the recent rebellion. He ignored it completely. And, finally, he announced that Mr. Trenton had been appointed to the position of Headmaster—as a temporary measure.

Mr. Trenton was present, and he was cheered to the echo.

Many of the fellows—both senior and junior—had never thought the matter out in detail. They simply gazed upon the surface of things, and did not trouble to look beneath.

They only saw Mr. Trenton's better self—or, to be more exact, the pose he had adopted for the especial purpose of getting himself into the good graces of the school. And to hear that he had been made Headmaster was welcome.

Just two hours later Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee departed.

The Head was not feeling himself, and he was pale and shaky—but he had insisted upon leaving at once. Sir John Brent, probably feeling somewhat sorry for the Head, had tried to persuade him to remain until the morrow. But Dr. Stafford felt that he could no longer remain on the school premises after what had taken place. And so he left, accompanied by Nelson Lee.

They had hoped to get out unobserved, and, with this object in view, they left by a side door. But, by great misfortune, Marriott and Merrell, and one or two others spotted them.

And before they had half crossed the Triangle a crowd of juniors were hooting and howling and hissing.

Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee left St. Frank's in awful disgrace. How would it be possible for Nelson Lee to put things right? The blackest hour had come, and it seemed that the position could never be retrieved.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE LOYALISTS!



SIR MONTIE TREGELLIS-WEST sighed deeply.

"Dear old boys, the position is frightful," he said sadly. "It's not only frightful, but shockin'ly appallin'—"

it is, really! I seem to have an idea that all this is a fearful nightmare, an' we shall soon wake up."

"No, it's real enough, Montie!" I exclaimed. "The guv'nor's gone—and the Head's gone."

"And Trenton's left!" snorted Tommy Watson. "That squirming, oily blighter is the Head of St. Frank's! It's—it's too awful for words!"

"And we can do nothin'!" went on Sir Montie. "We've simply got to sit here an' make the best of it. Life won't be worth livin' after this, dear fellows. I really don't know how we shall get through the term!"

Study C was a place of gloom. Tregellis-West and Watson and I were grave and troubled, and pessimism held full sway. Sir Montie was



reclining in an easy chair, Tommy Watson sat on a corner of the table, and I paced impatiently up and down. But, suddenly I paused, and faced my chums.

"We're not going to!" I said grimly.

"Not going to what?"

"Get through to the end of the term!" I replied. "We're going away!"

"Going away?" asked Watson blankly.

"Yes—and to-night, too!" I declared.

"Do you think I'm going to stay here after the gov'nor's been kicked out? Not likely? I'm clearing off to-night—and if you chaps like to come with me, all the better."

Sir Montie adjusted his pince-nez, and sat forward.

"Begad!" he exclaimed. "What a frightfully impulsive chap you are, Nipper? This is a serious step you are thinkin' of, dear old boy——"

"Yes, I know that," I interrupted. "But I'm determined—and you needn't try to persuade me to stay. I'm going right off to London to Gray's Inn Road. The gov'nor's gone there, and I'm following."

"But—but what will be the good of it?" asked Watson. "Dash it all, we can't leave St. Frank's for good——"

"It won't come to that," I said. "The gov'nor will put things right—you can be absolutely sure of that. In less than a week Dr. Stafford will be back again, and Trenton will be hurled out on his neck. But I'm not staying in the school while he's Headmaster—not for a minute!"

"You suggest that we should leave as a kind of protest?" asked Sir Montie thoughtfully.

"Dear old boy, that's a frightfully rippin' idea—but it won't be very effective if only three of us do it. But if we could get about a dozen fellows together it would be different, you know. We'd announce our intentions to everybody, and make a regular show about it. Think of the sensation!"

"Blow the sensation!" I growled. "That's not the point. I simply won't stay in the school while that scoundrel is in charge. If some of the other chaps care to come with us all the better—but I doubt if they'll have the courage."

"We can see, anyway," said Watson, striding towards the door. "I vote we try Handforth & Co. first. Church and McClure may not have the nerve, but Handy will be with us, I'll bet. Come on!"

We passed out, and went next door, to Study D. Sundry sounds of commotion from within informed us that Handforth & Co. were at home.

I opened the door and looked in. Handforth, as usual, was laying down the law.

"Cads—snivelling rotten cads!" he exclaimed vehemently. "That's all they are—the whole miserable crowd! Hooting and hissing the Head and Mr. Lee like that! They hadn't even got the decency to let them leave the school in peace! I'm sick of everything—I don't want to stay here any longer!"

"Well, I'm pretty fed up myself!" said Church. "St. Frank's won't be worth living in now, with Trenton in command."

"And the injustice of it!" said McClure. "The Governors had some excuse, perhaps, for sacking the Head, but to vent their spite on Mr. Lee was absolutely awful. I don't believe that Mr. Lee was drunk—I'll bet a quid to a penny that he was drugged, or something! What the Ancient House will be like without him, I don't dare to think! Life'll be ghastly!"

"Do you think we're going to stand it?" asked Handforth grimly. "You brainless ass! We're going to get up an agitation that'll be heard in every corner of the world! We're going to pitch Trenton out——"

"Can't be done, Handy!" I put in from the door.

"Eh? What's that?" snapped Handforth, turning round. "Oh, it's you, Nipper! What do you mean?"

"I mean that an agitation would be useless," I said. "It would only make a big fuss for nothing, and a general distribution of punishments."

Handforth looked at me freezingly.

"You—you traitor!" he said, with bitter contempt. "You—you backboneless worm! You're content to stay here after Mr. Lee has been kicked out, and you haven't even got enough spirit to get up an agitation!"

"Exactly," I said quietly. "But there's no need to get excited, Handy. I've decided upon something more effective than an agitation. Tommy and Montie and I are clearing out of St. Frank's to-night."

"What!" shouted Handforth.

"As a protest, dear old boy," explained Sir Montie.

Handforth's face lighted up.

"You're going to clear out?" he repeated eagerly. "On the quiet, do you mean?"

"No—openly," I replied. "We're going to let everybody know that we won't remain at St. Frank's under the control of a blackguardly scoundrel like Trenton! We wouldn't demean ourselves—and so we're leaving. And we sha'n't come back until justice has been done!"

Handforth turned to his chums triumphantly.

"There you are! What did I tell you!" he shouted. "Isn't that the very idea I suggested?"

"I don't remember it!" said Church bluntly.

"You—you silly fathead!" snorted Handforth. "Why, not five minutes ago I told you that our best course was to clear out of the school until the Head was restored to his rightful position, and until Mr. Lee came back! I expect these other chaps must have overheard me!"

McClure, for some reason, seemed to feel faint. He clutched at the table for support, and fanned himself. I grinned. It was just like Handforth's unadulterated nerve to claim credit for this idea.

"Yes, we know all about it, old son," I said. "We won't argue about who first thought of the wheeze. The question is, are you chaps willing to support us? Will you leave St. Frank's with us?"

"You bet!" said Handforth promptly.

"Ye-es, but what's going to happen afterwards?" asked Church dubiously. "And



where shall we go? Dash it all, we can't bunk off home, and——"

"You can all come with me; I'll look after you," I interrupted. "We'll be a little party to ourselves—and I'll guarantee that we shan't stay away from St. Frank's for more than two or three days. Mr. Lee will soon have Trenton in the hands of the police."

"All the same, it's a bit risky——" began Church.

"You—you traitors!" bellowed Handforth. "If I go, you'll go too! We're all loyal to Mr. Lee and the Head. Appearances count for nothing. I don't believe what I've seen: there's been some rotten trickery at work!"

"Good for you, Handy!" I said heartily. "You seem to have a certain amount of sense, after all. We'll get a few things together, and we'll be ready to go within half an hour. We can catch the late evening train to London."

I hustled out, and paid a visit to Study E. Reginald Pitt and Jack Grey were talking seriously, and they had been coming to the conclusion that the whole position was positively awful, and that something would have to be done.

"I expected you to be looking a bit more down in the mouth, Nipper," said Pitt. "Your guv'nor has gone, and it doesn't seem likely that he'll come back. It's rotten, and I'm awfully sorry——"

"Thanks all the same, but you needn't be sorry for me," I interrupted. "Mr. Lee may have left St. Frank's in disgrace, but he'll soon come back and make the whole school respect him more than ever. You don't understand, my children. The guv'nor has got a whole plot at his finger-tips, so to speak, but he isn't quite ready to expose the villains. You've only got to wait a bit, and everything will be all serene. That's why I'm not looking very worried."

I was, of course, making the best of things—for in my heart I was utterly miserable. That the guv'nor should leave St. Frank's under a cloud was bad enough. And it made me feel bitter to realise that the majority of the fellows were ready to believe him guilty.

And, although I spoke optimistically, I was not feeling absolutely confident that Nelson Lee would be able to prove his case against Trenton. For the rascally science master had played a trump card, and had by far the best of the game. Whether the guv'nor had another trump card ready to be played I didn't know, and I could only hope that everything would be all right.

At present the very worst had happened, and it was no good trying to deceive myself. Trenton and his fellow conspirators had gained a complete victory. Was this victory to be permanent, or only a flash in the pan?

Nelson Lee had spoken to me very confidently before leaving, and, in spite of my fears, I kept telling myself that everything would be all right. But it was impossible for me to remain at St. Frank's.

I simply couldn't stick it. I couldn't stay there, knowing that Trenton was the headmaster—knowing him to be a black-hearted scoundrel. I was worked up to such a pitch of

anxiety and worry that if I remained I should explode.

"I've been thinking of things," said Pitt slowly. "You know, it's been jolly hard for a chap to make up his mind definitely. Sometimes it seemed that the Head was an absolute rotter, and at other times I've been ready to believe that he wasn't responsible for his actions. Most of the fellows are dead against him—and dead against Mr. Lee, too."

"Are you one of those chaps?" I asked grimly.

"No. It's absolutely impossible that Mr. Lee has done anything wrong," replied Pitt. "And the very fact that he's sticking up for Dr. Stafford proves, to my mind, that the Head's O.K."

"Hear, hear!" said Jack Grey.

"Good!" I exclaimed. "Then you're with us?"

"Absolutely!" replied Pitt heartily. "The Governors are a set of dotty old fogeys, with about an ounce of brains between the lot of them. There's been a ghastly mistake somewhere, and I'm feeling pretty sore about Trenton being made the Head. I think something ought to be done."

"Well, it's no good getting up an agitation," I said. "If we attempted anything of that sort it would be put down at once. But I'm not standing it—neither are these other fellows."

"Then what are you going to do?" asked Grey curiously.

"Clear out!"

"What?"

"Leave St. Frank's—to-night!" I replied.

"Leave St. Frank's!" gasped Pitt. "Why, it couldn't be done——"

"It's going to be done!" interrupted Handforth curtly. "We're all clearing out in a body—as a protest against Trenton's appointment to the Headmastership. We don't return to the school until he's chucked out. Are you chaps with us or not? You'd better answer quickly, because we're in a hurry. Yes or no—and be sharp about it! We can't wait for ever!"

Reginald Pitt and Jack Grey stared.

"Is this ass trying to spoof us?" asked Pitt.

"No," I replied. "We're going."

The chums of Study E looked startled at first, and then excited, and finally they agreed that the idea was not only good, but absolutely terrific. And forthwith they joined our ranks.

There were now eight of us, and this number was soon increased to a round dozen, for De Valerie and Bob Christine and Yorke and Talmadge joined us. Christine and Co., as leaders of the College House juniors, felt it their duty to express their strong disapproval, and this was the best way of doing it.

There was great excitement now in the whole school, for the news had spread like wildfire. Everybody was talking about it. Quite a number of seniors expressed their opinion that they ought to join us—for fellows like Morrow and Fenton were not deceived by Trenton's oily ways. They distrusted him, and were genuinely sorry that the Head and Nelson Lee had gone.

However, this talk came to nothing, for it would be difficult for the seniors to show open



defiance as we were doing. They had their dignity to think of, and also the good name of St. Frank's.

The majority of the juniors jeered at us, and said it was only a threat, and that we should never dare to put it into execution. They were all heartily in favour of Trenton, and were delighted by the fact that he was the new Head.

"You're mad—absolutely off your rockers!" declared Owen major. "Why, it's as clear as daylight that Dr. Stafford and Mr. Lee are a couple of rotters, and we're all jolly glad that they're cleared out!"

"Rather!"

"Good riddance to bad rubbish!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Trenton!" shouted Fullwood.

"Hurrah!"

"He's the man for us!"

"As for that snivellin' bounder of a Lee, St. Frank's is lucky to be rid of him!" went on Fullwood. "We don't want drunken beasts here!"

"No fear!"

Absolutely white with rage, I strode forward. Even as I did so I knew that ninety per cent. of the crowd was of the same opinion as Ralph Leslie Fullwood. For once the cad of the Remove had the sympathy of the throng.

I don't exactly know what would have happened to him if I had got within striking distance. He would certainly have received the

biggest hiding of his life. But I was seized and held back by the yelling juniors.

And just then the fellows on the outskirts of the crowd became silent. We were all in the lobby, and the noise was certainly somewhat big. I looked round, and saw Mr. Trenton approaching.

I clenched my fists and waited.

"Boys—boys!" exclaimed the new Head. "What does this mean? What is all this commotion about?"

"It's Nipper, sir, and these other chaps!" exclaimed Owen major. "They're talking about leaving the school to-night."

"Leaving the school!" repeated Mr. Trenton sharply. "What do you mean?"

"They're going to run away, sir—and they've been sayin' all sorts of rotten things about you!" put in Fullwood. "The silly fools are saying that Dr. Stafford never ought to have been dismissed, and they won't stay at St. Frank's under your command."

Mr. Trenton looked rather grim. The little band of loyalists, headed by myself, had drawn together. The twelve of us stood apart from the rest, and we were looking grim, too.

"What absurdity is this?" demanded Mr. Trenton harshly.

"There's nothing absurd about it!" shouted Handforth, pushing forward. "By George, I've been waiting for an opportunity like this for weeks! I'm going to tell you just what I think about you——"

(Continued on next page.)

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"Silence!" commanded the new Head furiously.

"Silence be blowed!" bellowed Handforth. "You're a cad—a blackguard and a scoundrel! I don't care tuppence about you, and if you lay your dirty paws on me I'll knock you flat!"

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Church faintly. "You—you silly ass!"

Mr. Trenton was white with rage, and he strode forward. Handforth didn't care a bit, and he was quite prepared to attack Mr. Trenton on the spot. But this wasn't exactly what I intended, and I held the leader of Study D back.

"Go steady. Handy!" I said quietly. "There's no need to use violence. We're standing together, but we don't want to put ourselves in the wrong. Just leave it to me, and everything will be all right."

"Handforth, you will go at once to my study!" shouted Mr. Trenton. "I intend to flog you——"

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth. "You're not my headmaster—I don't recognise you for a head——"

"You impudent young rascal!" stormed Mr. Trenton. "You shall pay dearly for this, and every boy will suffer equally. I shall not submit to insubordination, and you had better understand at once——"

"Just a moment, Mr. Trenton," I put in grimly. "What you do with the other fellows is no concern of mine—they've accepted you as their Headmaster, and what happens to them is their funeral. But there are twelve of us here who have decided to leave the school. We have no intention of recognising you as our Head, and our only course is to leave. We don't want any violence, and so we're clearing out quietly. And we shan't return until you've been removed."

"In other words, kicked out on your neck!" shouted Handforth.

"Hear hear!" yelled the other loyalists.

There was a brief silence. The lobby was crowded, and the juniors held their breath, full of excitement and many of them quite scared. To defy the new Headmaster in this way was unprecedented.

Mr. Trenton kept his temper with difficulty. His face was white with rage, but, with an effort he managed to keep himself under control.

"Such foolishness as this will not do you any good, Nipper," he said curtly. "I am fully aware of the fact that you are bitterly opposed to me, and I can see that you have influenced a number of other boys to adopt the same attitude. Under no circumstances can I allow such an offence to pass unpunished. You will follow me to my study at once."

"What's the good of talking like that, you rotter?" demanded Handforth loudly. "Haven't we told you that we don't recognise you? Haven't we told you that we're clearing out? And we're not coming back until Mr. Stafford and Mr. Lee have been reinstated. We don't want a scheming scoundrel for our Head!"

Mr. Trenton fairly lost his temper then. He strode forward, seized Handforth, and whirled him round. It was a sudden action, and the

leader of Study D was hardly prepared for it. But the next moment I dashed in, and pulled Mr. Trenton away.

"Keep your hands off!" I shouted hotly. "You may be head of St. Frank's, and most of the fellows believe in you. But we don't—we know what you are! We know that you're a liar, an imposter, and little better than a murderer! And within a few days you'll be in the hands of the police!"

"You—you infernal young hound!" snarled Mr. Trenton.

"Come on, you chaps!" I went on. "We've had enough of this!"

Handforth badly wanted to punch Mr. Trenton's nose as a final act before leaving. But we dragged him away by force, and walked out into the Triangle in a body. The rest of the fellows recovered themselves after a moment or two, and a perfect storm of hissing followed us out into the night.

Our departure from St. Frank's could hardly be called a triumphant one. But I was resolved that we should make up for this when we came back.

We hadn't finished with Mr. Trenton yet!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FINAL PLANS.



"DEAR old boys—we've done it—we have, really!"

Sir Montie Tregellis-West spoke in solemn tones, and his voice was quite in keeping with our expressions.

For we were a serious looking crowd—the twelve of us all, packed into one compartment of the London train.

It was an express, and, having passed Bannington, would not stop until it reached Victoria. For the first part of the journey we had been very quiet, but Sir Montie's remark broke the silence.

"Oh, we've done it all right!" agreed Handforth. "And a jolly good thing, too! But it's a rotten shame I didn't have the chance of punching Trenton on the nose! I was going to knock him flat, you know—I meant to make his face into a pulp! It was all Nipper's fault——"

"My dear Handy, we should have put ourselves in the wrong if you had done that," I interrupted. "We've left St. Frank's as a protest against Trenton's appointment to the Headmastership. It wouldn't have done us any good if you had smashed him about although I admit he deserves it."

"Deserves it!" snorted Handforth. "He ought to be boiled in oil, and then put through a sausage machine! Chaps like that ain't fit to live! I've seen better things crawling about on a dust heap!"

"We're all ready to admit that, Handy," said Bob Christine. "Trenton's a rotter clean through. But what about our position? How do we stand—that's what I want to get at. We're all going to London, and there's no



possibility of our returning to St. Frank's. Even if we did return we should either be flogged, or sacked on the spot. I haven't got much tin——"

"You don't need to worry about money," I interrupted. "We managed the fares all right, and the guv'nor will see that everything is O.K. We're going straight to Gray's Inn Road."

"Is Mr. Lee there?" asked Reginald Pitt.

"I think so—but even if he isn't it won't make any difference," I said. "I've got a key of my own, and Mrs. Jones will look after us. And the guv'nor's bound to turn up to-morrow. But I expect he's there now, so there's no need to discuss that possibility at all."

"But what about sleeping?" asked Church.

"I should think you'll be willing to rough it for a night or two, won't you?" I asked. "The guv'nor's got two spare bedrooms at Gray's Inn Road, and they'll accommodate half of us, anyway. Then there are couches and lounges—to say nothing of hotels in the neighbourhood. You don't need to worry about accommodation. We've made this move, and we've got to carry through with it. There's no drawing back now."

"My dear chap, we don't want to draw back," said De Valerie. "We're game to go right on with it. At one time I was dead against you all, and in favour of Trenton—but I realise that I was an ass."

"Glad you admit it!" said Handforth. "Trenton's a slimy serpent, and how he managed to work all this is a mystery. If I'd had the case in hand it would have been different. With my detective ability——"

A howl of derision drowned the rest of Handforth's sentence. The fellows were recovering their spirits, and as we drew nearer and nearer to London they became almost light-hearted. A spirit of recklessness took possession of them, and I was rather glad to see this. Long faces are never any good to anybody.

I pointed out to them that there was no need to worry, since Nelson Lee would certainly put everything all right before the week was out. And we had at least saved our self-respect by leaving St. Frank's. It would have been impossible to remain at the school under the command of Mr. Trenton.

We arrived at Victoria in due course, and it was now fairly late. But there were plenty of taxis in the station yard. Two of these were chartered at once, and we were soon bowling away towards Gray's Inn Road.

We arrived, and I noted with satisfaction that lights were gleaming in the window of Nelson Lee's consulting room.

"It's all serene, you fellows," I said cheerfully. "The guv'nor's here."

"Oh my hat!" said Church, in a scared voice.

"What's wrong, you ass?" demanded Handforth.

"He—he'll be frightfully wild, you know," said Church. "He'll nearly have a fit when we all crowd in, and it's quite likely he'll send us all back. That would be awful——"

"Don't you worry," I interrupted. "We shan't be sent back."

I brought out my key, and a moment later I had opened the door, and we were inside. I led the way upstairs at the double, and burst straight into the consulting room, the others crowding after me.

I took in the scene at a glance, and I was somewhat astonished.

The consulting room was blazing with electric-light, and a warm fire glowed in the grate. Two easy chairs were drawn up in front of it, and a haze of cigar smoke hovered over them. Seated in the chairs were Nelson Lee and Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard.

They both rose to their feet as we surged in.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the guv'nor. "What on earth——"

"What's this—the charge of the light brigade?" said the Chief-Inspector. "Upon my soul! Of all the infernal nerve!"

"Hullo, guv'nor—thought we'd find you at home!" I exclaimed. "Come in, you chaps—sling your caps and coats on that couch. Make yourself at home. We'll see about chasing some supper in a few minutes."

Nelson Lee looked stern and grim.

"I'm sure you will pardon me, Nipper, but may I enquire precisely what this means," he asked calmly. "Am I to understand that you have brought St. Frank's up to London with you?"

He cast his gaze over the juniors who were still crowding in, and it certainly seemed to him that there were a lot more than a dozen of us. Perhaps Nelson Lee thought that another twenty or so were coming up the stairs.

"Not the whole of St. Frank's, sir," I replied. "Just twelve of us. We've come to stay."

"Oh, indeed!" said Nelson Lee. "You have brought eleven companions, and you have come to stay?"

"Confounded impertinence!" grunted Lennard gruffly.

"You don't understand, sir," I said. "Just be patient for a minute, and I'll explain everything—and I'll guarantee that you'll agree with me. You can't do anything else. We've left St. Frank's because Trenton's the Head."

"We wouldn't stick him, sir!" said Handforth, grimly. "Not likely! We've got some self-respect, I should hope! And we're jolly well not going to stay at St. Frank's with a blackguard and a murderer and a liar and a scoundrel in command!"

"You seem to have a choice collection of commanders at the school," remarked the Chief-Inspector drily.

"All those remarks apparently refer to one individual—Mr. Trenton," smiled Nelson Lee. "While I am ready to admit, Handforth, that there is a large amount of truth in what you say,

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I require a full explanation of your conduct. Nipper, I imagine, is the ringleader——"

"Of course I am, guv'nor," I interrupted. "I started the thing, and I'm jolly glad I did! You and the Head were chucked out, and the Governors ought to be court-martialled, and shot for it. By the way, how is Dr. Stafford?"

"By no means well, and under the care of a physician—a friend of mine," said Nelson Lee. "He will soon be himself, I hope, and ready for his duties when he takes up the reins again at St. Frank's."

"Hurrah!" shouted Christine. "Then the Head will go back, sir?"

"Certainly, my boy."

"And you, sir?" shouted the fellows.

"I have every hope of returning to St. Frank's within a few days," smiled Nelson Lee. "Strictly speaking, boys, I ought to be very angry with you—but somehow I cannot be. I feel that you have come here because you are loyal to me and to Dr. Stafford."

"Yes, sir!"

"That's it, sir!"

"And we weren't staying at St. Frank's with Trenton in control!" I said grimly. "That's just the long and the short of it, sir. We risked it—we risked whether you would be angry or not. Look here, guv'nor, be a sport, you know," I added earnestly. "We simply couldn't stay at St. Frank's. We know that Trenton is a rotten scheming scoundrel, and——"

"And you apparently thought it would be better, under all the circumstances, to leave the school until justice is done?" asked Nelson Lee.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, boys, I cannot altogether blame you for taking up this attitude," said the guv'nor. "The recent events at St. Frank's were very trying, and Mr. Trenton has gained a temporary success. But you can be quite assured that justice will soon be done. I am now making my final plans with Chief Inspector Lennard, and you can be certain that Mr. Hugh Trenton will soon meet with his just deserts."

"Hurrah!" yelled the juniors excitedly.

"In the meantime, you must allow me to point out that you are interrupting me," went on Nelson Lee, drily. "I am very foolish to be so lenient with you. But I cannot very well punish you, can I? And I can see that it is quite impossible for you to return to St. Frank's just now. The only alternative, therefore, is for you to remain here."

"That's it, guv'nor," I said cheerfully.

"You must allow me to congratulate you, Nipper, upon your strategic move," said Nelson Lee. "The best thing you can do is to take your young friends into the dining-room, and get Mrs. Jones to prepare some food—I don't think she's in bed yet. Now then—hurry off!"

We crowded out, hugging ourselves with delight. The dark cloud had passed, and I could see that a clear sky lay ahead. Everything would soon be all serene, and our return to St. Frank's would be a complete triumph.

The presence of Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard thrilled me. He and Nelson Lee were making plans—plans for the downfall of Trenton and his associates. It would not be long before the great moment arrived.

The climax was at hand!

THE END.

## CONTENTS FOR NEXT WEEK.

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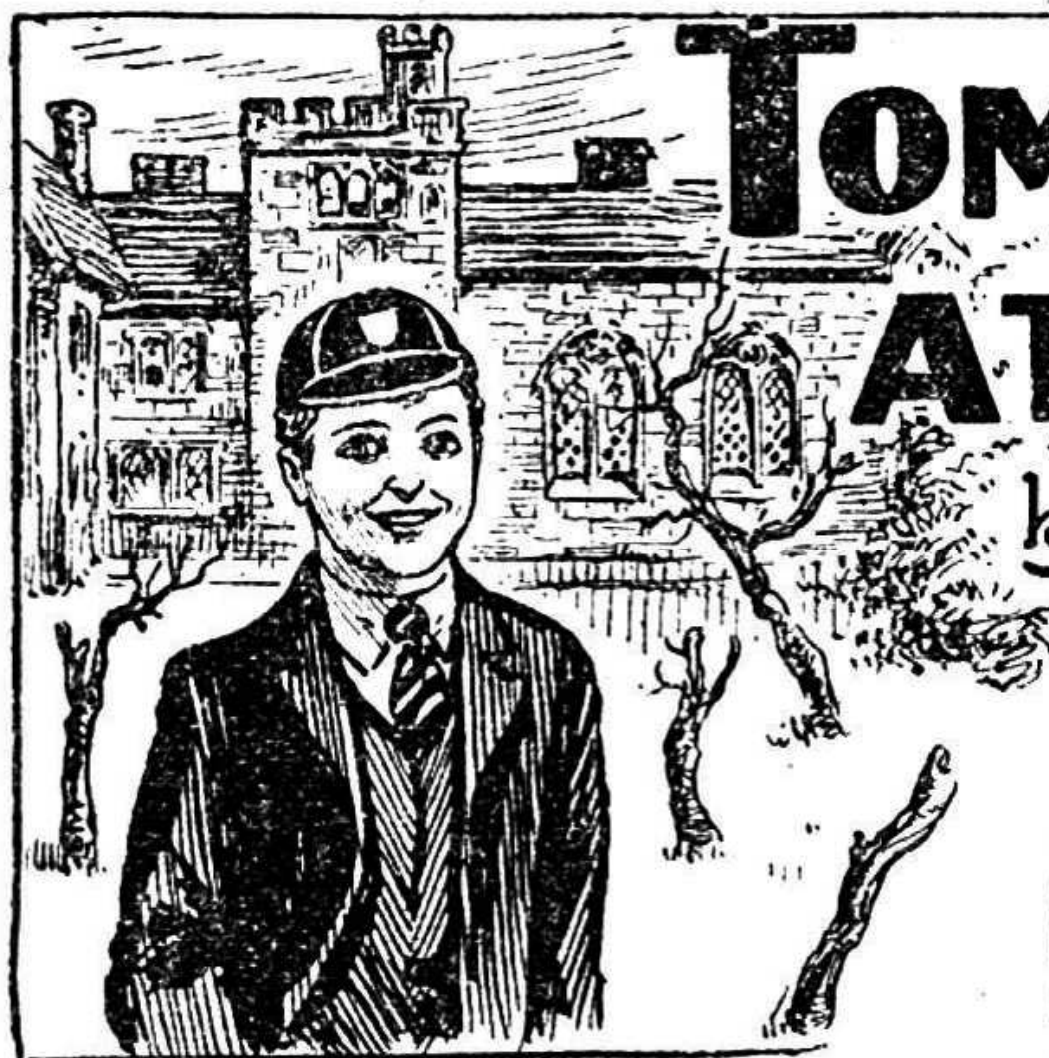
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## TOM TARTAR AT SCHOOL.

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# TOM TARTAR AT SCHOOL

by HARCOURT BURRAGE

(The World's Most Famous  
School Story).

## THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

*Tom Tartar arrives at Mr. Wrasper's school, where discipline is maintained by moral force only. Tom makes several friends and a few enemies. He is initiated into the "Eagles," a party opposed to the "Cuckoos," or the rotters of the school. Wrasper's son, Pubsey, wrongfully accuses Tom of setting upon him and ill-treating him, with the result that Tom is sentenced to solitary confinement.*

(Now read on.)

## CHAPTER XIV.

### The "Eagles" Rout the "Cuckoos."

**T**HAT evening there was a lively scene in the playground.

Pubsey Wrasper, having changed his clothes and performed the necessary ablutions, appeared in company with Jonah Worrey.

The two walked up and down arm-in-arm, talking with apparent jollity, and making a pretence of being in the highest spirits.

But under the thin skin of mirth the real mortification was apparent.

Pubsey had been wounded in his tenderest point—his vanity.

He had always considered himself to be rather a clever fellow, and he also thought that his position as son of the head of the school entitled him to respect.

The quarry boys had that day roused him from his dream.

They did not care a straw for his being the son of a schoolmaster. They would not have cared if he had been the son of a duke. They judged him according to his deeds and words.

So did the boys of the school for the most part. The Cuckoos were not a sym-

pathetic set, and the sense of the ludicrous, on this occasion, entirely knocked what little there was of that sort of thing on the head.

They were just as much disposed to laugh as Sam Smith, or any of his followers.

Sam indeed could not leave Pubsey alone.

Taking the arm of Lawrence Turrell, he strolled up and down in imitation of the other pair, crossing them at intervals with a languishing air that amused the other boys immensely.

Pubsey and Jonah affected to ignore him, but their wrath soon began to rise, and was at length made to bubble over.

"Funny sort of aroma in the air this evening!" remarked Sam to Turrell, as the other pair passed them. "Wonder if something's gone wrong with the drains?"

"Look here, Smith," exclaimed Pubsey, swinging round angrily, "I've had about enough of your confounded cheek!"

"Why, what's the matter now?" asked Sam, with simulated innocence. "I wouldn't dream of saying anything to hurt your feelings. I merely remarked to Turrell that the state of the atmosphere is a trifle—er—niffy! Don't you think so yourself? It's a most eggs-traordinary odour! What on earth can it be?"

Several boys, who were looking on, laughed. Among them happened to be Willie Gray. Jonah Worrey noticed him and made a sudden rush at the youngster. But, somehow, Sam Smith's foot got in his way, and, tripping over it, Jonah pitched forward on his nose.

"I shall report you for that, Smith!" threatened Pubsey Wrasper. "I'll go and tell my father at once!"

"Report away!" said Sam lightly. "And look here, you sneak, here's something else for you to report!"

And, with a sudden movement, he gave Pubsey a push that sent him staggering. He fell over Jonah Worrey, and for a moment they lay on the ground together.

Then they sprang to their feet and went for Sam. Instantly, the battle-cries of "Eagles!" and "Cuckoos!" went up, and in a minute the rival factions were at it hammer and tongs.



At first the two parties were mixed up in wild confusion, but Sam quickly formed his supporters into a body, and then, crying "Charge!" led them against the Cuckoos.

Pubsey Wrasper and Jonah Worrey were instantly bowled over again. This demoralised their adherents, who turned tail and fled towards the gate that led to the football-field. Ere they could reach it, however, Foster Moore appeared on the scene. He looked gloomy and preoccupied as Pubsey Wrasper ran up to him.

"I'm glad you've come, Mr. Moore!" whined Pubsey. "Sam Smith started the row! He hit me in the face when I was looking the other way!"

"Oh, did he?" snapped Moore. "Well, don't bother me with your troubles. I've no time to waste in listening to them. If you've any complaints to make, go and make them to your father!"

And, without another word, Foster Moore strode quickly out of the playground, and disappeared down the high road leading to the village.

The free fight was not resumed. Pubsey and Jonah disappeared indoors, and the others, breaking up into groups, discussed the shindy until the bell rang summoning them to evening preparation.

## CHAPTER XV.

### In the Chalet—Foster Moore's Villainous Scheme.

**T**WENTY-FOUR hours on bread-and-water diet is not such a terrible punishment, after all. Anyway, Tom did not find it so; and when the period was finished, he quickly made up leeway in the matter of nourishment by having two helpings of everything that was going at dinner-time during the next few days.

One little matter continued to worry him, however. He wondered whether Wooden Jerry had carried out his threat of libelling him to the pupils of Miss Smatterly's school. The malicious old serving-man was quite capable of doing it, and if he had—

Tom ground his teeth at the thought. What would Lottie Fenn think of the story? Would she believe Jerry's statement that Tom had snivelled and whined and begged for mercy from Mr. Wrasper and Foster Moore? She might do so, and in that case she would scorn Tom as a miserable coward, and turn up her pretty little nose at him in contempt whenever they chanced to meet. And the worst of it was, Tom would never be able to himself tell her that Wooden Jerry's story was a base slander, a tissue of lies from beginning to end. Tom knew that he simply could not do it. He was too proud to do it. Lottie must either flatly disbelieve the slander, or else must discover from someone other than Tom himself that, far from snivelling and whining and pleading for mercy, Tom had defied Wrasper and Moore, and put up a game struggle against the big usher.

The thought that Lottie should believe him to be a coward was hateful to Tom. Her opinion of him was a matter of some importance. It wasn't a case of calf-love, for Tom wasn't a boy of the "spoony" variety. It was simply a case of a high-spirited youngster wishing to stand well in the eyes of one whom he looked upon as a "chum."

It was in the hope of encountering Lottie or some of her fellow-pupils, and finding out whether Wooden Jerry had or had not carried out his threat, that Tom, after tea on Wednesday, bent his steps in the direction of the Cecilia Academy for Young Ladies. He was accompanied by Sam Smith and Johnny McLara, who were not without hope of seeing something of Dolly Siffkins and Winnie Brown.

Of course, the boys were not supposed to quit the school precincts at this hour; but as on this evening there was no preparation class to attend, they hoped to return long before the supper hour without their absence having been noticed.

Passing the spot in the lane where Tom had knocked Jonah Worrey down for interfering with Lottie Fenn, the three presently reached a back entrance to Miss Smatterly's extensive garden. It was a small door in a high brick wall, and it was now standing open an inch or two.

"Don't see anybody about," said Tom, after pushing the door open a little wider and peeping through.

"Give the Eagle cry, Sam," suggested McLara. "That'll fetch 'em, if they're anywhere within hearing."

Sam gave the Eagle's signal, and the three stood listening.

"No go!" said Tom, in a disappointed tone. "The place seems absolutely deserted."

"'Tisn't often the girls are allowed in the garden at this time of day," remarked Sam Smith.

"I'd like a look round now we are here," said Tom. "What's the garden like?"

"Oh, it's a jolly old place in its way!" replied Sam. "Plenty of bushes and shrubs, besides some ponds and an old fountain."

"Well, here goes!" said Tom; and, pushing open the door, he walked boldly into the garden, followed by his chums.

It was an interesting old place, a perfect maze of bushes, trees, privet, and holly hedges. Under the negligent care of the bibulous Diggles, the garden was not so neat as it might have been; but perhaps this fact rendered the place more picturesque.

Tom had little sense of fear, but he knew it was necessary to be cautious if he wished to see Lottie Fenn—which, of course, was just possible.

So high were the fences and shrubbery that only the chimney-pots of the old school were visible, until a sudden break in the foliage revealed the upper windows.

But this opening brought them no nearer to the house, for it simply led to a circular pond with a path round it and a tumble-down little Swiss chalet in the centre.

There was something very fascinating about



this wooden erection, and as it was accessible by a plank only, narrow enough to give anyone a fair chance of falling, the temptation to visit it was not to be resisted.

Tom led the way, and the other two followed without any accident, although the board was springy and gave them the sensation of dancing on the tight-rope.

The interior of the chalet was divided into two portions of scarcely sufficient dimensions to be called rooms.

In the first there were two easy chairs, but the inner apartment was empty.

The door in the dividing partition was warped, and hung askew upon its hinges. Tom was lifting it a little to put it straight, when Sam suddenly gripped his arm and whispered:

"Listen! Somebody coming!"

Tom stood still, and they all heard footsteps approaching on the gravel walk round the pond.

There were two, one very heavy and the other comparatively light.

"Keep still!" whispered Tom. "I'll try and see who it is!"

In the fore-part of the hut there was a small window in a very grimy state of dust, but sufficiently clear to enable anyone to dimly see who was outside.

Tom, to his amazement, saw Foster Moore, the tutor, walking with a tall lady of about forty years of age.

There was sufficient likeness to Miss Smatterly to give him an idea of who she was.

It was Miss Hatty, the younger sister and part owner of the girls' seminary.

"Foster Moore courting!" muttered Tom. "Elephants will dance a hornpipe next!"

He rejoined his friends, and told them what he had seen.

They were completely staggered, and were just going to the window to have a peep, when the tutor was heard to say:

"Come across the plank, darling! There is no danger. Give me your hand!"

Could that, indeed, be Foster Moore speaking?

The usual rough tones had changed to a voice that was soft and pleasing, almost musical.

But the boys had no time to marvel over the change, having their own safety to think of.

Tom motioned to his friends to get into a corner, and quietly closed the door.

It was not quite close, however, for it was warped, and at the top there was a gap an inch and a half wide.

"Bother it!" thought Tom. "We shall have to listen to other people's business, whether we like it or not, and I hate that sort of thing!"

But, hate it or not, there he was, and there were Sam and Johnny feeling very chilly about the back as they thought of what would happen if Foster Moore discovered them there.

"There, darling!" said the tutor, as he

entered the hut. "You see there was no danger. We are perfectly safe here; nobody is likely to disturb us."

The two were heard to sit down, and the younger Miss Smatterly, generally spoken of as Miss Hatty, softly sighed.

"I am sure I am doing wrong!" she said.

"Oh, no, dearest!" replied Foster Moore. "We are like other lovers, with a desire to be alone. Now let us talk together."

The talk that followed, by its very nature, kept the boys in a state of frozen stillness.

What they expected to hear was a little ordinary lovers' talk, but more serious matter was discussed.

Foster Moore was bent on business.

He told Miss Hatty that he was the real master of the boys' school, having from time to time advanced certain sums to Mr. Wrasper as a mortgage upon the goodwill of it, and the furniture of the house.

"But what has he done with his money?" asked Miss Hatty.

"Gambled it away on the Stock Exchange," replied the tutor.

"That sounds like a lie!" thought Tom.

Then came a further development of the schemes which were in the tutor's mind.

Miss Hatty had some money in her own right, and a share in the school, their united pecuniary value being about five thousand pounds. Not a bad prize for any man, if he is not particular as to the age and plainness of his bride.

That the elder Miss Smatterly would object to the union was a foregone conclusion. She would prevent it at any cost, and it was perfectly clear that Miss Hatty was afraid of her sister.

But these obstacles Foster Moore proposed to get over by a runaway match.

They could, he said, go to London and be married by special licence.

"And after it is over?" asked Miss Hatty.

"Why, then I shall declare myself master of the school," said Foster Moore, "offer Wrasper my present place, and if he doesn't like it, send him packing! You will then be mistress of it!"

Quietly and smoothly, he laid his plans before her, finishing with a declaration of love which Tom was certain he had written and learnt for the occasion.

It was probably the first time Miss Hatty had heard such a tale, and, of course, her mercenary wooer was listened to and believed in.

The pair lingered so long in the hut that darkness was beginning to fall when they rose to leave.

As soon as they had crossed the plank, and their footsteps died away in the distance, the boys came out of their hiding-place.

"Come along," said Sam. "It is as much as we shall do to get back to supper."

"We shall get back in time to go without!" groaned Johnny.

"Here, what's this?" cried Tom, as he opened the outer door. "The plank is gone!"



## CHAPTER XVI.

**Caught!—Tom Gets a Dose of 'Solitary.'**

**I**T was the ghastly truth. Foster Moore, on reaching land, had drawn the plank across after him, and laid it along the path. The retreat of the boys was thus, in a measure, cut off.

"We shall have to walk through it," said Tom.

"We can't," returned Sam. "I've heard that this pond is six or seven feet deep, and even if it were shallow, the filthy mud bottom would bog us."

"In that case, then," said Tom, "there's nothing for it but to swim across. It's barely half a dozen yards wide."

"That's six yards too far for me!" put in Cautious Johnny. "I can't swim a blessed stroke."

"You can swim, I suppose, Sam?"

"Yes, I can just about manage to flounder" was the reply.

"In you go, then! Now, McLara, you come down with me, and get on my back. I'll get you across all right, but you'll have to sit jolly still. If you wriggle about you'll probably get a sousing."

Johnny made a wry face. He did not relish the journey, but he knew it was either that or stopping in the hut alone. For the plank was a heavy one, and it was doubtful whether the boys could have got it into position across the pond without assistance.

So they took to the water, Sam going first, and Tom and Johnny following.

Just as Sam reached the opposite bank, a man sprang into view from behind a clump of shrubs.

It was Diggles, the gardener. In his hand he flourished a pliant ash stick, while the expression on his face, as seen in the twilight, was malicious in the extreme.

"So I've caught you, have I, you young varmints!" he exclaimed. "I'll teach you to trespass on private property! Take that, you imp o' mischief!"

He lumbered forward and aimed a blow at Sam's head. Sam dodged it as well as he could, but received a stinging cut on the shoulder. He was just then climbing out of the pond, and Diggles was about to strike again. Quick at thought, Sam shot out a hand, grabbed the man's leg just above the ankle, and gave a sudden violent tug.

So unexpected was the tug that Diggles lost his balance and fell backwards, his broad back striking the earth with a frightful thud.

He lay there absolutely motionless, all the breath knocked out of him for the time being.

Sam scrambled to his feet, and assisted Tom to land with his burden. Then the three darted off as fast as their sodden garments would permit.

Diggles rose slowly and heavily to his feet, but he did not attempt pursuit. Nor did he

intend to report the boys; for to have done that would have made matters awkward for himself, seeing that he had been spying upon the younger Miss Smatterly and Foster Moore.

"If I goes and reports the varmints," he mused, "the whole business 'ull be blowed upon, while if I says nothin', they won't say nothin' neither. What a burster that young rip give me! It's a mussy I didn't break every bone in me body! But I give 'em a scare, blow me if I didn't! And now I'll go and 'ave a quiet word with Miss Hatty, and see what she'll give me to keep my mouth closed about her goin's on with the schoolmaster bloke."

And he lumbered off towards the house, muttering anathemas on Sam Smith for having brought about his heavy fall.

Meanwhile the boys ran at a good pace, despite their wet clothes.

They had traversed the lane, and were on the high road, when they overtook Foster Moore, walking with his head bent, in deep meditation.

He did not notice them until they had passed by. Then he awoke out of his day-dream, and called after them.

"Who is that? What makes you boys so late?"

"Keep on," whispered Tom; "he doesn't see who we are."

It was, indeed, nearly dark, and the chances were that they would have succeeded in concealing their identity if the tutor had not broken into a run also.

He proved to be swift of foot, and, overtaking McLara in a dozen strides, collared him.

The others would not desert their chum, so they stopped, too.

"You are wet through," said the tutor. "Where have you been?"

"In the water," replied Cautious Johnny.

"That's a fool's answer," said Foster Moore roughly. "What water, where?"

The boys remained silent.

"Will you tell me?" cried the tutor, shaking Johnny savagely.

"I would rather not," said the cautious youth.

"Will none of you speak?" Foster Moore said.

No answer.

In silence they reached the school.

"Come into the house," the tutor went on. "I'll learn where you have been or you shall suffer."

They went with him quietly enough, and he took them into the study where a lamp was burning.

"Stop there," he said, "until I see Mr. Wrasper."

He went out, leaving the door ajar as if by accident. Tom suspected he had a motive in doing so, and motioned to the others to keep quiet.

"We won't tell him," he said, half aloud; "just for the fun of it—eh, Sam—of course, it is of no consequence to anybody but ourselves."



"All right," replied Sam, playing up to Tom's ruse. "I wonder where he's been to-night. Do you think he was prowling about after us?"

There was a slight shuffling noise outside, and Tom smiled. The tutor had been listening at the door, and now he had really gone away. Their ruse had succeeded. They had made Moore think that they knew nothing of his meeting with Miss Hatty.

Tom crossed the room and closed the door.

"Look here, boys," he said. "It will never do for him to find out where we have been. Of course there is Diggles, but we must run the chance of his making a complaint; somehow I have a fancy that he will not do so."

"Would it not be better to let Moore know?" suggested Sam. "We should have a sort of hold on him."

"No," said Tom, "he would give us the lie, and he would work out his own ends in a still more secret fashion. Don't say a word, take what comes, and leave everything to me."

Nothing more could be said just then, for the door opened, and Mr. Wrasper, accompanied by the tutor, appeared.

"Where have you been, boys?" he asked.

"We would rather not say, sir," replied Tom, quietly enough.

"If you do not, you will pass the night in solitary."

"Very well, sir, I am satisfied. I have done wrong, I admit, and must bear my punishment."

"Are you all of the same mind?" asked Mr. Wrasper, with bent brows.

The other two said "Yes," and then the schoolmaster looked at the tutor as if for guidance.

"Smith and Tartar in solitary" Foster Moore said. "McLara I will talk to."

"They will change their clothes first, I suppose?" suggested Mr. Wrasper.

"No need for that," returned Moore. "They will be going to bed at once."

Tom and Sam were accordingly led from the room and locked up in the two cells, one on each side of the hearth in the lumber-room.

Tom, after being in the dark for about a quarter of an hour, was visited by Mr. Wrasper, who was accompanied by Wooden Jerry.

The schoolmaster carried a light, while the serving-man bore a straw mattress and a blanket in his arms.

"There is your bed and your sleeping suit, Tartar," said Mr. Wrasper. "Take off your damp clothing at once."

Tom obeyed, and was glad to roll himself up in the blanket. Then Mr. Wrasper departed, followed by Jerry, who carried away Tom's wet clothes.

Having eaten very little at tea-time, Tom was missing his supper. He felt ravenous, in fact, and the prospect of fasting until the following day was by no means an agreeable one.

It had fallen to his lot to be confined in the cell he had not visited (that in which Willie Gray was recently imprisoned), and Sam had

never shown him where the spring in the panel could be found.

He lay rolled up until he got warm, and then, getting up, had a search for it.

He felt all over the entrance side of his prison, but could find nothing, and feeling chilly, popped into the blanket again.

"I must grin and bear it," he muttered, "but I do wish I'd got something to eat."

Sleep is usually denied to people with an empty stomach.

It will not come without a lot of wooing, and Tom's eyes refused to be locked in slumber.

The time passed dreadfully slow, and he could calculate its passing by the chimes of the old church clock, which could be distinctly heard, thanks to the ventilating hole that opened into the chimney.

Every passing quarter of an hour was recorded until midnight, and Tom was still awake.

That was bad enough, but his misery was augmented by increasing hunger. A crust of dry bread would have been a priceless luxury.

"This is beastly!" groaned Tom. "I'd rather have a good licking any day! Moral force be hanged!"

As he uttered this sentiment half aloud he heard a slight movement on the left.

It was something like the sound a prowling rat or mouse might make.

Tom lay quite still, and listened with all his ears.

In a few seconds the sound was repeated.

A click followed, and he felt a rush of cold air upon his face.

"Tom, are you awake?" came an eager whisper.

It was Sam Smith, and Tom was at first so overcome by his unexpected arrival that he could hardly speak.

"Yes," he said faintly.

"Get up and come out," said Sam. "I can't risk a light just yet."

Tom could see the outline of the small square opening, in every way similar to that of the other solitary cell, and he lost no time in getting through into the lumber-room.

There it was fairly light, for a moon was shining, although not directly on the dirty window panes.

To his great astonishment Sam had a jacket and trousers on, and had some other clothes upon his arm.

"Here's your togs," said Sam, "slip into them. Don't talk just yet."

The pair of socks, trousers and jacket Sam had brought with him were soon donned, and Tom, in a state of bewilderment, was ready to follow his friend.

Sam took him by the arm and led him from the room.

Outside, the stone passage struck rather cold to the feet, but it was soon traversed, and Sam opening a door at the far end, disclosed the kitchen with a fire burning, a lamp lighted on the table, and two plates piled up with bread and meat.

"You may speak softly now," said Sam, "for sound doesn't easily get out of this old kitchen."

(To be continued.)





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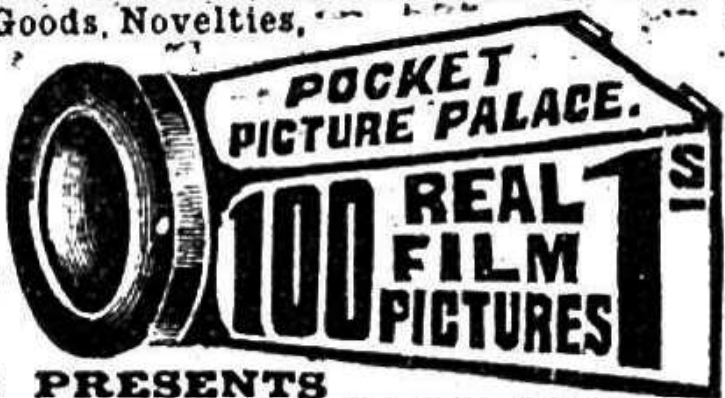
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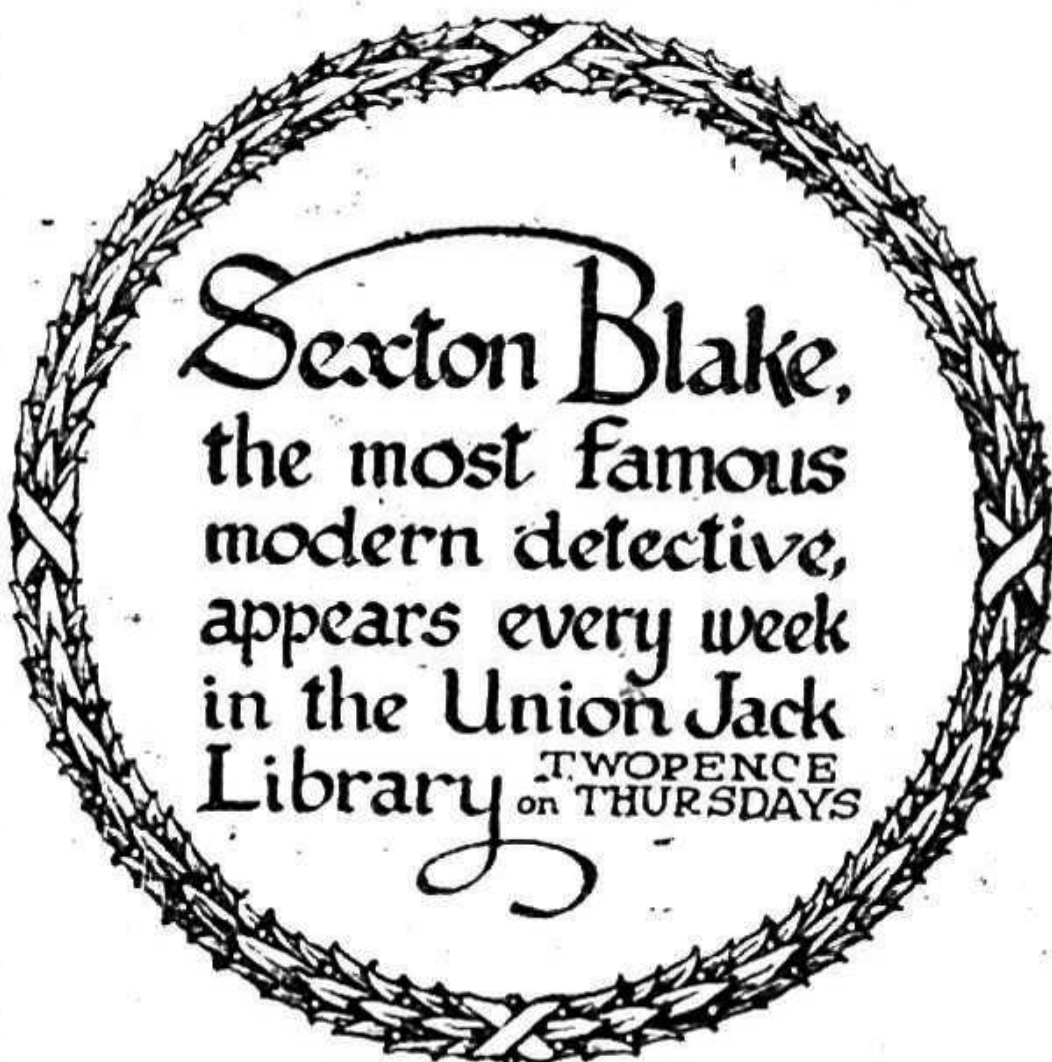
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