

This Week's "Peck's Bad Boy"—His Pa Gets a Bite!

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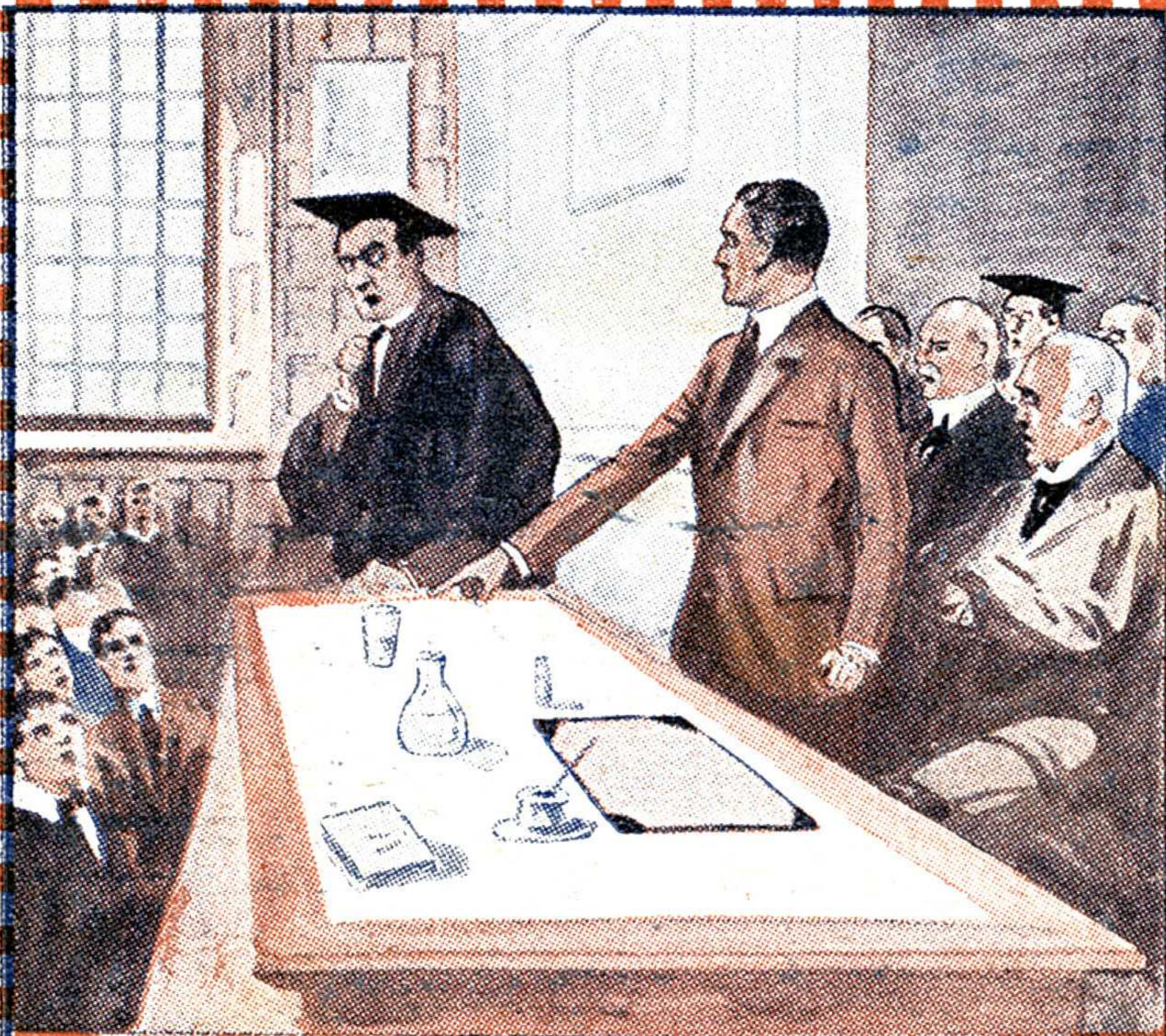
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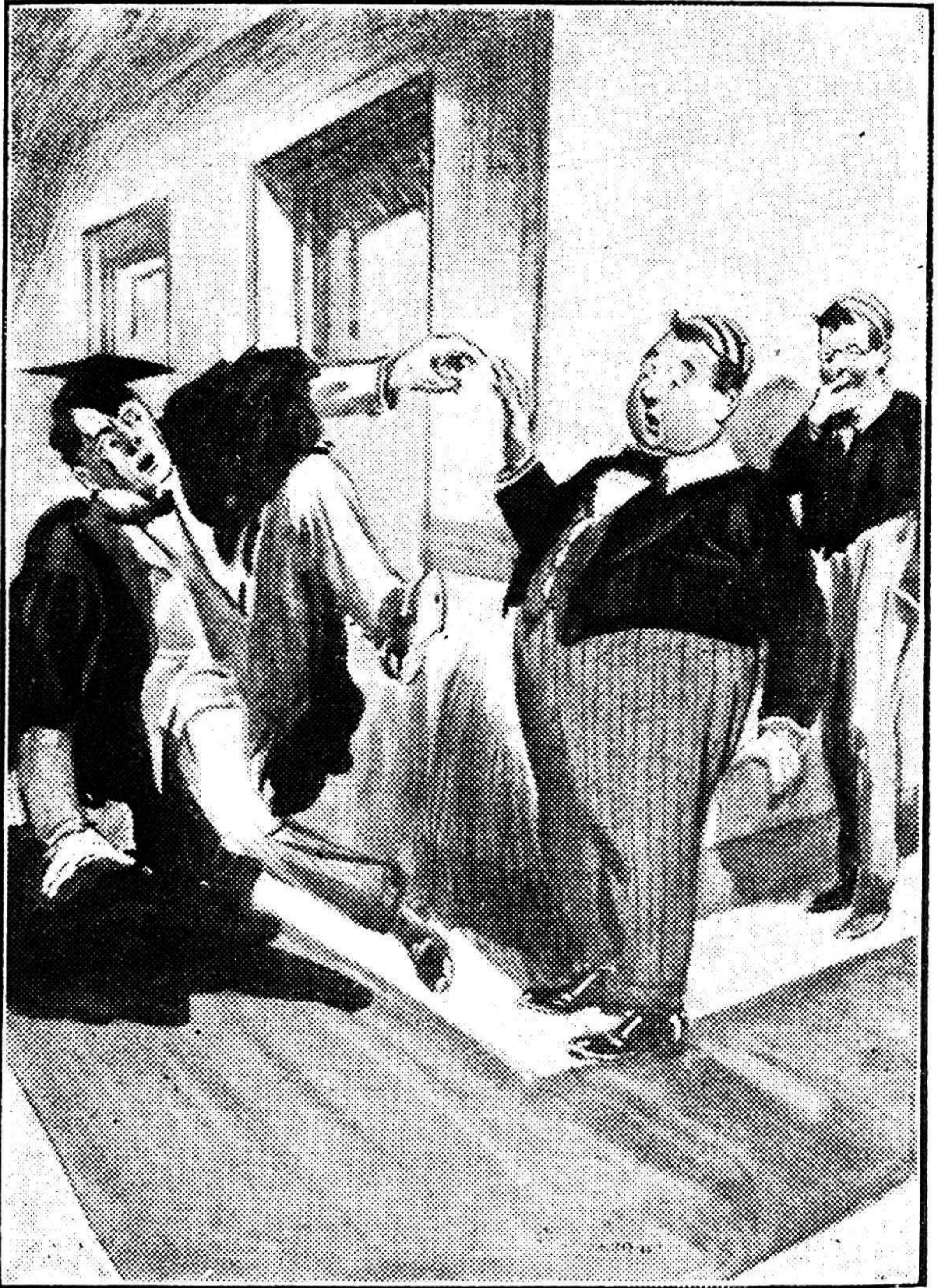
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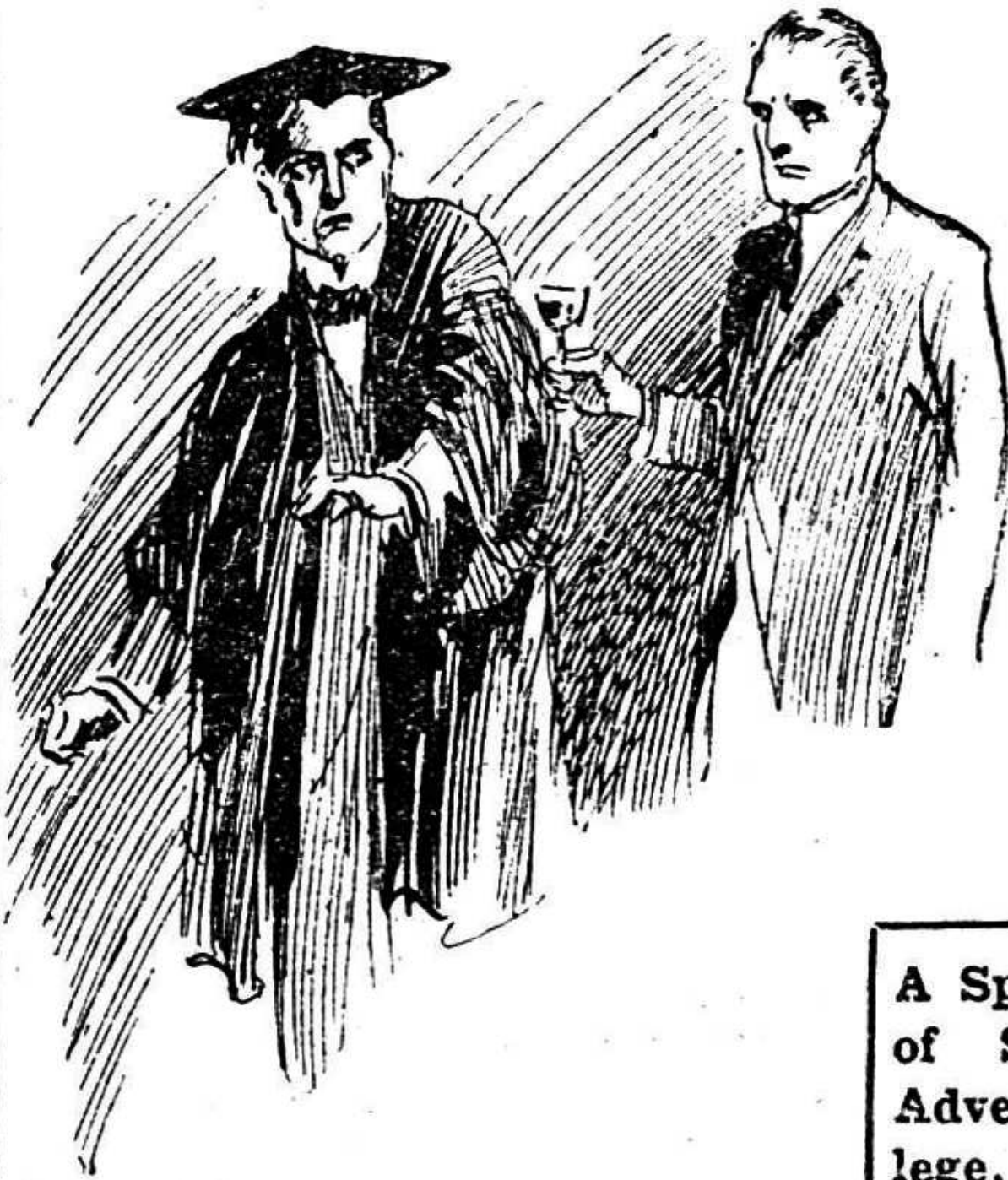


"If this is harmless—drink it!"

The
Downfall of the Snake



Crash! Fatty Little and Mr. Trenton met head on, so to speak. The Head stopped, bounced back, and sat down violently upon the hard floor.



The Downfall of the Snake.

**(THE NARRATIVE
RELATED THROUGH-
OUT BY NIPPER.)**

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 "Staunch to the School," "The Supreme Council," "The Dismissal of Nelson Lee," and many other Stirring Tales.

CHAPTER I. THE NEW HEAD!

FATTY LITTLE gave a yelp of delight. "Hurrah!" he shouted, jumping up and upsetting the table with a mighty crash. "It's coming—I expect it's at the giddy station even now! Great pancakes! And we were wondering what we should have for tea!"

Nicodemus Trotwood picked up his exercise-book, looked at it, and then bestowed a glare upon Fatty that ought to have withered that junior up on the spot. But there was a lot of Fatty, and he needed some withering.

"You—you fat, ugly son of a whale!" said Trotwood politely. "You enlarged edition of Lockhart's Elephants! What the dickens do you mean by shoving the table over? Look at this work of mine! Ruined! Inked all over——"

"Blow your work!" shouted Fatty joyously. "I've got a hamper!"

"Rats to your silly hamper!"



"It's full of tuck!"

"This page is full of ink!" snapped Nicodemus.

"Don't you understand, you ass?" asked Fatty. "It's nearly tea-time, and we're both stony. And now we can go down to the station, grab this hamper, and sit down to a royal spread! Hurrah! Let's buzz off for it!"

Nicodemus Trotwood grunted, but could not fail to see the force of his study mate's argument. It was quite true that times were lean; it was quite true that the cupboard was bare; and it was equally true that a tuck-hamper would come like manna in the wilderness.

"How do you know the hamper's at the station?" asked Trotwood gruffly. "I wish you wouldn't be so jolly active, you fat fat-head! When you move quickly you shift the whole giddy room. Is that a letter from home?"

"Yes."

"It came by the afternoon post, I suppose?"

"Of course," said Fatty Little. "It's from the mater. She says she's sent off a whacking great hamper—chock full of good things. Pies, tarts, jam-puffs, cakes, and goodness knows what else. Come on, my son—we'll buzz down for it."

The two juniors were in Study L, in the Ancient House at St. Frank's. It was nearly dark outside, and tea-time would soon be at hand. The Ancient House was rather quiet and subdued.

In fact, things were not what they had been at the old school, and just now a kind of gloom had settled down upon the juniors. However, Fatty Little and Nicodemus Trotwood were feeling surprisingly bucked.

They hurried out of the study, and ran down the passage towards the lobby. Fatty led the way. And he was just negotiating the corner when something like a disaster took place. When Fatty Little ran it was like a mountain on the move, or an avalanche, or a landslide. Anything that happened to get in the way was bound to go—and go swiftly.

And it happened just now that Mr. Trenton, the Headmaster of St. Frank's, was turning out of the lobby into the Remove passage. He couldn't have arrived at the corner at a better time—providing, of course, that he had been looking for a collision.

Crash!

Fatty Little and Mr. Trenton met head on, so to speak. Fatty Little simply stopped dead and gasped. But the Head stopped, bounced back a yard or two, and sat down violently upon the hard floor. And he made a remark which no self-respecting schoolmaster had a right to make.

"Oh, by gravy!" gasped Fatty. "Sorry, sir! I—I didn't know——"

"You infernal young brat!" shouted the Head, jumping to his feet, red with fury.

"Great bloaters! I didn't see you, sir——"

"Didn't see me!" roared Mr. Trenton.

"How dare you rush about the passages in that manner? You will write me one thousand lines, Little, and I shall require them this evening!"

Fatty fairly panted with dismay.

"But—but it was an accident, sir!" he said frantically. "I'm awfully sorry, sir, and I apologise, you know. I—I didn't know that you were there, sir! A thousand lines——"

"Yes, Little, a thousand lines!" snapped Mr. Trenton. "Unless I have them this evening I shall confine you to gates for a week. Let this be a lesson to you not to rush about the passages like a madman!"

And the Head passed on, his gown sweeping through the air, and dropping a considerable amount of dust behind it. Mr. Trenton's dignity had been upset, and he was probably hurt. It was enough to hurt anybody—except Fatty.

Nicodemus Trotwood shook his head.

"This is only the beginning," he remarked slowly.

"It's the finish—for me!" growled Fatty.

"It'll take me all the evening to write those rotten lines. Oh, the beast! And we thought he was going to be miles better than old Dr. Stafford!"

"I didn't!" said Nick. "This is our beautiful new Head! The cheerful, genial sport! Now that he's in sole command he'll change—in fact, he's changing already. Within a month he'll be unbearable."

The two juniors continued their way out more sedately.

"What about those lines?" asked Fatty miserably. "It's taken my appetite away, you know. I sha'n't be able to eat more than half the hamper to-night now!"

"You can eat the whole of the hamper if you like," said Nicodemus. "Personally, I prefer the contents."

"Oh, don't be funny!" growled Fatty Little. "I shall have to be working on those lines right up till bed-time——"

"Don't worry yourself to a bone," interrupted Trotwood. "I'll give you a hand, my fat beauty, I can imitate your fist all right, and Trenton will never know the difference."

"Oh, good!" said Fatty. "You're a brick, Trotty!"

He was immensely relieved. The pair were out in the Triangle now, and making for the main gateway. There were only a few other fellows about, and there was very little noise.

Perhaps this was because Edward Oswald Handforth was no longer in the school. The famous leader of Study D usually made about twenty times as much noise as anybody else. Consequently, when he was away, the whole school seemed to be wrapped in a kind of eerie silence.

Study D was dark and silent. No longer were there sounds of violence proceeding from its much-tried door. Handforth and Church and McClure had left St. Frank's—apparently for good. And St. Frank's hadn't got used to it yet.

"Things are rotten, you know," said Trotwood, as he and Fatty Little walked briskly down the lane. "Absolutely rotten. The Ancient House doesn't seem the same place. As for the footer—it'll simply go all to pieces."

"Nipper's gone, and Tregellis-West, and Watson, and Handforth & Co., and Pitt and Grey," said Fatty. "Why, all the best foot-

ballers have cleared out. Christine's decent enough, and there are some other good 'uns in the College House. But what about us? Who's going to keep our end up?"

"Goodness knows!"

"How will the team get on without Handy in goal, or Pitt at outside-right?" asked Fatty. "It's—it's a disaster! And, quite apart from footer, it's simply rotten in the Ancient House. We haven't got a skipper—nobody's been elected—and the place seems half dead. And now Trenton's turning out to be a beast!"

"I expected it from the first," said Trotwood. "I never did trust him much. Too oily and smooth for me. But most of the fellows seemed to think that he was a regular ripper, and that St. Frank's would be like a picnic with Trenton as the Head. The chaps are finding out their mistake now."

"There's Mr. Lee, too," went on Fatty. "It's a rotten shame that he went, Trotty. Some of the chaps have been crowing—saying that we didn't want him. But I'm blest if Nipper and Handy and those others ain't right. I almost wish I'd walked out with 'em!"

"Same here," said Trotwood. "They had some pluck, you know! My hat! Didn't Nipper tell Trenton off, eh? And didn't the fellows rattle on about Nipper afterwards! Yet he was right in what he said."

The two juniors became somewhat thoughtful as they continued their walk. So many things had been happening at St. Frank's lately that the chums of Study L had no necessity to talk. Their thoughts were busy enough, for there was plenty of food for them.

The old school had not yet settled down to the new order of things.

It was only a day or two since the great upheaval had occurred. A visit by the School Governors had resulted in the departure of Dr. Malcolm Stafford and Nelson Lee. Both the Headmaster and Lee had been sent away in dire disgrace.

It had been a terrible blow for the Head.

For years he had ruled over the destinies of St. Frank's. For years he had been honoured and respected. And now, all in a flash, his splendid record stood for nothing.

He had been literally kicked out of the school.

And Nelson Lee had been kicked out with him. Mr. Hugh Trenton, hitherto the science master—quite a small position—suddenly blossomed forth into the Headmaster of all St. Frank's.

This was mainly due to the cunning way in which he had wormed his way into the good books of the Governors. They sincerely believed that they had done the right thing. They told themselves that they had performed a public service by ridding the school of Dr. Stafford, and Nelson Lee had gone because of unsupported accusations on the part of Mr. Trenton.

But they were not the only ones to go.

I had positively declined to remain at St. Frank's if the guy'nor went away. And so,

the very same evening that Nelson Lee left, I stated my intention to all and sundry—mentioning my opinion of Mr. Trenton at the same time.

To my surprise and delight, a number of fellows had rallied round. Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West, of course, backed me up from the start. If I went, they went too. That was simply a matter of course.

But Reginald Pitt and Jack Grey and Handforth and Co. had joined us—boldly declaring that they would not return until the Head was re-instated, and Nelson Lee re-instated, and Trenton chucked out.

The whole matter was a plot on the part of Mr. Trenton and his combine of rogues. I knew most of the facts, and it galled me exceedingly because I was unable to state these facts.

Nelson Lee, I knew, could have convinced the Governors that Dr. Stafford was innocent of the charges which had been brought against him. As for the accusations against himself, Lee laughed at them.

He knew what he was doing, and he preferred to wait just a little while. Then he promised St. Frank's a sensation such as the old school had never enjoyed. Nelson Lee was just biding his time.

But Trotwood and Fatty Little did not know of all these facts. They really thought that the departed ones had gone for good. And they were not in their usual spirits as they trudged over the bad ground to the village.

Fatty's thoughts did not remain long on the problems with which the Remove was surrounded. He kept thinking of that tuck-hamper, and he speculated upon the possible contents.

"It's a pity Nipper went away," said Nicodemus regretfully.

"A big cake, I expect," exclaimed Fatty. "One of those lovely ones, with currants and sultanas and raisins, you know."

"Eh?"

"Then there'll be a beef pie," went on Fatty. "The mater always sends a beef pie. She knows I'm keen on anything like that——"

"You gorging ass, I was talking about Nipper?" roared Trotwood.

"Oh, blow Nipper!" said Fatty. "He can wait—he's gone, anyhow. We'll have the beef pie as soon as we get home. And we can finish up with tarts and cakes and sardines——"

"Oh, you're always thinking about grub!" said Nicodemus impatiently. "I'm worrying about the football. Just now you were saying that the best chaps have cleared out."

"So they have."

"I know that!" exclaimed Trotwood gruffly. "But you said something about Christine. He's gone with the rest—you know that as well as I do. Yorke and Talmadge are with him. Twelve of the best chaps out of the Remove cleared out when the Head and Mr. Lee went away. And they've cleared out for good. There's no hope of them coming back, because they'd only be sacked if they showed their faces."

Fatty nodded, glumly.

"Great pancakes!" he said. "Things are in a rotten state! But what are we going to do about that hamper? If we ain't careful some of the chaps will see us bringing it in, and then we shall have to divide up all the tuck!"

"Well, that'll be all right——"

"Oh, will it?" said the fat junior. "I'm not a mean chap, goodness knows, but when a whole crowd of fellows start on a tuck hamper it's finished within ten minutes. They don't get much benefit by a miserable snack like that, and we lose everything! We'll keep this hamper quiet, Trotty."

"Oh, just as you like," said Nick.

"As a matter of fact, he was confidently expecting that the hamper would not be at the station when they arrived. But when they marched into the booking office, and applied at the parcels counter they were informed that a package was there awaiting removal. It proved to be a bulky hamper, addressed to Fatty Little, and the fat boy's eyes gleamed with satisfaction as he surveyed it.

"Good egg!" he exclaimed heartily. "There you are, Trotty—what did I tell you? I knew we hadn't come down for nothing. Grab hold!"

They seized one handle each, and in this way it was comparatively easy for them to carry their burden. It was rather weighty, but Fatty never uttered a grumble. There was tuck inside—and Fatty never minded carrying tuck.

They had hardly got out into the station-yard before Fatty Little proposed a halt.

"What's wrong with having a snack now?" he suggested. "It won't take us two ticks to get this lid up, and we can be having a few tarts——"

"Rats!" interrupted Trotwood. "Don't you be so impatient, you elephant! This hamper's not going to be unfastened until we get to St. Frank's."

"But I'm starving!"

"All right—starve!"

"I shall die on the way home!"

"Good!" said Trotwood callously.

Fatty Little gave it up, and they marched through the village High Street at a brisk walk. Fatty was tremendously impatient. Being unable to sample the contents of the hamper at once, his one desire was to get to St. Frank's with all possible speed.

But, as it happened, their journey to the school was not to be uninterrupted. For they had only just crossed the bridge over the Stowe when four sturdy juniors came within view. They were not St. Frank's boys, as their caps plainly told. They were, as a matter of fact, Hal Brewster & Co., of the River House School. Brewster's companions were Glynn, Ascot, and Kingswood.

"We give thee greeting, O comrades!" said Brewster cheerily. "Hallo! What's the parcel? Any help required?"

"No thanks!" said Fatty Little sharply. "We can manage it all right!"

"No need to bark at me!" said Brewster. "Oh, I think I see a glimmering of daylight! A hamper—a tuck hamper, by George! This

looks interesting, my sons! We've caught the enemy unawares!"

"If you touch this grub I'll—I'll smash you!" roared Fatty Little in alarm. "It's my hamper, and I'm not sharing it with any of you rotters——"

"Pax, you know!" said Trotwood carelessly.

"Pax be blowed!" exclaimed Kingswood. "We're rivals, and it happens that there are four of us against two. Tuck raiding is a recognised institution, and this is where we come out strong. What do you say, Brewster?"

"I'm game!" grinned the River House leader. "As a matter of fact, we're a bit tight for grub just now, and this hamper will be as welcome as corn in Egypt. Grab it, my sons! Sorry, Fatty, but all's fair in love and war?"

"You—you—you——"

Fatty Little fairly gasped with indignation as the hamper was seized by sturdy hands and pulled away. The fat junior was positively scared stiff by this meeting. The thought of losing his precious hamper came as a tremendous shock to him, and his fighting blood was up in a moment. The River House boys had never really seen Fatty Little with his blood up—but they were to be treated to that interesting spectacle now. He danced round madly as the hamper was torn away.

"You—you thieves—you robbers!" he roared. "Don't let 'em take it, Trotty! By bloaters! They've got it! All right—just you wait!"

Fatty Little was not the kind of fellow to waste time. Without pausing a second he rushed forward, and simply hurled himself at the four River House juniors, who were standing in a clump, ready to defend themselves.

They were quite prepared for any exhibition of fisticuffs. They would have given a very good account of themselves. But they were certainly not in readiness for Fatty's novel methods of attack.

For the fat junior relied upon his weight. He didn't trouble to use his fists, but barged into the four River House juniors like a battering ram.

The result was startling.

Brewster and Kingswood and Ascot went flying over backwards, sprawling in the mud. To them it seemed that an express train had run into them. They had no chance whatever.

Before that onslaught they fell like saplings before a steamroller. Glynn just managed to escape by dodging—but only to find himself swiftly attacked by Nicodemus Trotwood.

Fatty Little followed up his advantage.

Before Hal Brewster could rise Fatty was upon him. And Little adopted the extremely simple expedient of sitting upon Brewster's head. The River House Junior leader gave one gurgling gasp, and subsided.

Fatty Little sat there, calm, grim, and determined.

His policy was to deal with Brewster first—and he was doing it. The others could wait. Brewster was in a shocking position. He couldn't cry out for obvious reasons. And struggling was almost impossible, for with such a weight upon him it was as much as he

could do to continue to live. He was expecting to peg out at any moment.

Fatty was of huge proportions, and it was certainly no joke to have his entire weight planted upon one's face. Hal Brewster felt squashed—utterly and absolutely obliterated.

When Fatty thought Brewster had had enough, he calmly got up, hurled himself at Kingswood, and sent Kingswood flying. Then Fatty sat on Kingswood's head. It was extremely easy, and surprisingly simple. Brewster picked himself up dazedly and in a kind of drunken stupor.

He was finished—he had had more than enough to satisfy him. He staggered away, taking practically no interest in his surroundings—dimly conscious of the fact that Fatty Little was certainly not an easy fellow to fight with. Fatty's methods were unorthodox—but they were certainly effective.

Kingswood was allowed to breathe after a few moments, and then Fatty looked round for his next victim. But there wasn't one. The other two River House boys had fled, wisely deciding that the game was not worth the candle. Fatty Little grinned complacently.

"Lucky for them they cleared off!" he said breathlessly. "The awful nerve! Trying to pinch my hamper!"

"Before they attack you again, Fatty, they'll bring an army with them—or wear spiked armour!" chuckled Trotwood. "Thank goodness I'm your pal! If you sat on me like that you'd flatten me out!"

They gazed down the moonlit lane after the retreating River House Juniors. Then, chuckling afresh, they seized the precious hamper and pursued their way to St. Frank's—where, in due course, they sat down to a gorgeous spread. It was all the more appetising because they had been compelled to fight for it.

CHAPTER II.

AT GRAY'S INN ROAD.



NELSON LEE leaned forward in his easy-chair and gave the fire a poke.

"Yes, Nipper, to-night," he said smoothly.

"Good!" I exclaimed. "I have been waiting for it, guv'nor. And it's really going to happen to-night? You actually mean to make a big move in the game?"

"Not merely a big move, Nipper, but the final move," replied Nelson Lee. "To-night, if all goes well, I shall have our enemies beaten. And to-morrow will be Mr. Hugh Trenton's last day at St. Frank's."

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" I said.

We were sitting in Nelson Lee's comfortable consulting room at Gray's Inn Road. It was quite late at night—some little time after eleven o'clock, in fact, and the rumble of London was dying down. Outside, the night was cold but fine. Heavy clouds obscured the sky.

Nelson Lee and I were the only people awake in the household. But there were plenty of

others present—Sir Montie Tregellis-West, for example, and Tommy Watson, and Handforth and Co., and Pitt and Grey and Christine—eleven, to be exact. They were all being accommodated on the spot.

The situation was a somewhat curious one.

We had left St. Frank's because we objected to the authority of Mr. Trenton—the scoundrelly science master who had plotted to drive Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee out of the school.

The guv'nor and the old Head had only left St. Frank's a few days earlier. I had decided to leave the same evening, for I absolutely refused to remain after Nelson Lee had been driven out.

Tommy Watson and Tregallis-West would not hear of remaining without us, and I had been rather surprised and delighted to find that nine other fellows backed us up. They were staunch Loyalists—fellows who were true to Nelson Lee, in spite of the evidence which had been faked up against him.

We had all planted ourselves on the guv'nor at Gray's Inn Road. He couldn't send us back to the school, and he certainly didn't want to make the fellows return to their various homes. And so he had let them remain, knowing well enough that they would be able to return to St. Frank's in a very short time.

And we had been having quite a holiday. We had been to theatres and other shows, and had enjoyed ourselves tremendously. In the meantime, Nelson Lee had been getting his facts together, and tightening his net.

And now, at last, the guv'nor meant to get busy.

"What's the programme, sir?" I asked interestedly.

"Well, it is a comparatively simple one," replied Nelson Lee. "My inquiries have supplied me with the information that Trenton's confederates are to hold a meeting to-night at twelve o'clock. This meeting will take place at the residence of Professor Garth."

"A long way away, sir?"

"No—merely at Putney," said Lee. "We must be present at that meeting, however. Not actually visible, but near by. There is work to be done, and our presence on the spot is essential."

"Do you mean to capture the gang, sir?"

"If possible—yes," said Nelson Lee grimly. "But it is hardly polite to refer to these men as a gang, young 'un. They are distinguished men of letters. Professor Holroyd Garth is an eminent scientist, and, although his views are somewhat extreme, he has a large following among the intellectual classes. Dr. Roger Paxton is a physician with an elite practice in Bayswater. The other man, Chandler, is a journalist of some kind. Trenton himself, as you know, is a man with great scholastic ability. Rascal though he is, he is a learned and clever man."

"It's jolly queer, guv'nor, that people of that kind can't steer clear of crime," I said thoughtfully. "But when they do devote their attention to villainy, they're far more dangerous than the ordinary burglar type."

"They are, Nipper—they certainly are."

agreed Nelson Lee. "For they have the trained brains to facilitate their schemes, and they have the additional advantage of being above suspicion. But I think we shall nab them all to-night—with the single exception of Trenton."

"Why, won't you get him, too?" I asked quickly.

"Not to-night; his downfall will take place to-morrow," said Nelson Lee. "He is at St. Frank's, Nipper, and I have prepared quite a nice little programme for the benefit of the school in general. But it won't do for us to remain talking here. We must be off within ten minutes."

"We can go straight away, if you like," I said.

"No, Nipper—we must adopt slight disguises."

I was quite ready for this, and in a few minutes Nelson Lee had made several remarkable alterations to our appearance. We donned rough overcoats and hats, and by the time we were ready for departure we had no resemblance to our real selves. Nelson Lee had become a rough-looking character with a scrubby beard and a straggling moustache. I was disguised to match him, wearing a choker round my neck, and a tweed cap pulled over one ear. In Wapping or Shadwell we should have attracted no attention whatever, for we looked like true inhabitants of those districts.

"Putney you said, guv'nor?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Then what's the idea of this get up?"

"Merely a fad of my own," smiled Lee.

"We are about to perform rough work, Nipper, and it is better, perhaps, that we should adopt rough appearances. And now come along, or we shall be late."

We soon ventured out, and it was not long before we were on an Underground train bound for Putney. We did not get out at Putney Bridge, but went on across the river and alighted at East Putney. And here we set off at a brisk walk towards the Common, going by way of Putney Hill.

"We shall arrive just after twelve—which will be admirable," said Nelson Lee. "There is no necessity for us to be there before the start, for it is better to let the little meeting settle down."

"How do you know that these men are holding a confab at midnight, sir?"

"While you have been gadding about on pleasure, I have been hard at work," replied Nelson Lee. "Wearing various disguises I have visited Chandler, Paxton, and Garth. They suspect nothing, but I was successful in obtaining the information I required. And this meeting will provide us with the opportunity for which we have been waiting."

I was rather mystified, for I couldn't exactly see what the guv'nor hoped to gain by this visit to Putney. However, it wasn't my business to worry, or to ask questions. I simply had to follow the guv'nor's lead. And I was ready for any excitement that might be afoot.

At length we arrived on the edge of Putney Common. There were all sorts of big houses dotted about there, most of them in total

darkness, for their worthy occupants had long since retired.

As we were nearing one particularly big house Nelson Lee slackened his pace. I regarded the house curiously. It was a large residence, standing entirely within its own grounds—like scores of other houses in this particular district.

"Is that the place, sir?" I asked in a whisper.

"Yes—it is the home of Professor Garth," replied Nelson Lee. "But we'd better not do too much talking, my lad."

As we moved along we saw the burly form of a police-constable approaching on the same pavement. He regarded us somewhat suspiciously as we approached, and took the precaution to flash his lantern in our faces.

"Good-night, mate!" said Nelson Lee cheerily.

"Good-night!" growled the constable.

I didn't look round, but I was perfectly certain that the police-officer had stopped and was looking after us. This wasn't at all welcome, for our mission was hardly one which would be improved by the presence of the policeman.

However, the constable turned down a side road almost at once, and Nelson Lee chuckled.

"I don't think we shall be bothered with him any more, young 'un," he whispered. "H'm! Total darkness—the place looks deserted. What does that suggest, Nipper?"

"It suggests that there's no meeting," I replied. "It seems that the professor has gone to bed like the good citizen he is supposed to be. We've come all this way for nix!"

"I'm afraid your imagination is singularly weak to-night, Nipper," smiled Nelson Lee. "After all, it is hardly likely that these men would hold a criminal meeting—for it is really nothing better—in the front of the house. I happen to know that the men have arranged to gather together in Professor Garth's laboratory."

"I suppose that's at the rear?"

"Very much at the rear. It is a low stone building situated at the bottom of the extensive garden. That is all the better for our purpose, Nipper. Follow me, and we can get in easily."

He proceeded until we were past the professor's house. And then we came to a little private gate, which apparently led into a footpath, with hedges on either side. We scrambled quickly over the gate, and proceeded down the path.

"You seem to know your way about, sir," I said softly.

"This is my third visit!" murmured Lee briefly.

I had no necessity to ask any further questions. But I was surprised to find that the guv'nor had been so busy on the job beforehand. After going down the path some little way Nelson Lee halted, and wormed his way through the bottom of the left-hand hedge.

"Where are we now, sir?" I asked.

"Hush—don't speak unless it is vitally necessary," breathed Nelson Lee, with his mouth close to my ear. We are now within

the professor's garden, and as soon as we have passed round these bushes we shall be within sight of the laboratory. Caution is absolutely necessary."

We crept round the bushes, and then, sure enough, came within sight of a low stone building, surrounded by artistic trees. In the gloom I could only just distinguish that the garden was well planned and beautifully kept. The laboratory had a window facing us, but thick curtains were drawn across it, and only the faintest glimmer of light came out.

We approached with hardly a sound. Then, bidding me remain still, Nelson Lee took a step forward in order to listen for any conver-

breathed Lee. "Yes, the skylight seems rather promising, but I do not think we will risk it. We should necessarily make a certain amount of noise in climbing up——"

"No fear!" I broke in. "There's a big tree growing close against the laboratory. I've only got to climb that, and I'll be on the roof in less than a couple of minutes. Look here, guv'nor, let me go. I'll squint down through the skylight and see what's going on—and it's quite likely that I might be able to hear something, too. What do you say, sir?"

Nelson Lee considered for a moment.

"Can I trust you to make no noise?" he asked at length.



We approached with hardly a sound. Then, bidding me to remain still, Nelson Lee took a step forward.

sation. Then he turned to me, and I could tell that he had been disappointed.

"Well, sir?" I asked softly.

"Both the windows are closed, and only an indistinguishable blur of voices comes out," said Nelson Lee. "We cannot even see what is going on, or overhear a word."

"Then we've come for nothing!" I said blankly.

"Not at all. On the contrary, I rather think that if we have patience for ten minutes we shall be amply rewarded," said the guv'nor. "We cannot do better than remain here."

"Oh, but that's rotten, sir," I protested. "Dash it all, we're not going to chuck the game up so soon—— Why, hallo! What about that skylight in the roof? Do you see it, sir?"

"I don't happen to be quite blind, Nipper,"

"Trust me?" I said indignantly. "Of course you can!"

I didn't wait for any further argument, but slipped off. I was quite keen about this, because I badly wanted to take a hand in the game. I felt that I had been a spectator and a listener too long. Here was a chance for me to do something off my own bat.

I slipped noiselessly through the bushes, and at last came close to the big tree which grew within a yard or two of the stone laboratory. I glanced up, and saw that that tree could be easily climbed.

"Good business!" I told myself.

I grasped one of the lower branches, hauled myself up, and then proceeded to climb steadily and silently. My object was to gain a big branch which overhung the roof of the laboratory.

By edging my way along this I could drop on to the roof without any trouble—and without a sound. The roof was one with a very gentle slope, so I should have no difficulty in keeping my balance. And the skylight was set squarely in the centre of this slope.

Exactly as I planned, I dropped from the branch to the roof—or, to be more exact, I slid. If I had descended comparatively lightly upon the slates I should have been heard from within. I touched the roof like a feather, and then, inch by inch, I wormed my way towards the skylight.

My reward was an acute disappointment.

For when I arrived I found that the glass was frosted! There was not even a crack through which I could peer. I might just as well have been staring at the slates themselves.

And my attempts to overhear the conversation were just as futile. Certainly I could distinguish a low mumble within the little building, but it was quite impossible to distinguish any particular words. I felt thoroughly fed up and disgusted as I stood there balancing myself on the gentle slope.

My only course was to get down again.

As I turned silently in order to reach the overhanging branch, the heel of my boot touched a slippery piece of rubbish which was lying on the roof—probably a few dead leaves which had become sodden. Anyhow, the result was not only startling, but rather appalling.

My foot shot into the air, I lost my balance, staggered backwards, clutching wildly at the air. I knew, even as I did so, that it was utterly impossible for me to regain my equilibrium.

Cra-a-ash!

Falling backwards, I landed fairly and squarely in the very centre of the skylight. It was utterly impossible for me to clutch at anything. I went clean through!

CHAPTER III.

THE EVIDENCE!



PROFESSOR HOLROYD GARTH puffed complacently at a big cigar.

"Well, gentlemen, I think we may congratulate ourselves upon our recent success," he

said. "There is no doubt that we have done extremely well—our biggest triumph being at St. Frank's. Trenton is thoroughly established there now, and we may be quite assured in mind that he will do his work thoroughly and effectively."

"Yes, Trenton is a clever, painstaking man, and he has the good of the Cause at heart," said Dr. Paxton. "Being a schoolmaster, he is particularly suited to the purpose, and can further our cause while performing his scholastic duties. In that way I am not so fortunate—although you may be sure I use every possible opportunity among my patients. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, we shall instil

our doctrines into the minds of the British public."

"But it is the schools that are the most important of all," put in the third man, Chandler. "For in the great public schools of England the young mind receives its education. And if we can only commence our propaganda at school, and thoroughly get our doctrines fixed into the minds of the coming generation, the results of our efforts will be far reaching and abundant. It will be a long process, but that is only to be expected."

"Quite so," said Professor Garth. "It will probably be twenty years before the first fruits of our labour are reaped."

"No, no," said Paxton. "Within twenty years we shall have the whole country at our feet; our successors will reap the benefit of our pioneer efforts. And we, probably, will be quite forgotten."

"H'm! That's only to be expected," said the professor. "Pioneers never gain any credit, Paxton. But we have this cause at heart, and we are doing it simply because we have higher ideals than the average man. And it does not do to be too scrupulous. In my opinion, we should not be going too far if we made a drastic move

"You mean

"It is idle to suppose that we can succeed without bloodshed," said the professor grimly. "A bloodless revolution is impossible; that kind of talk is merely the blather of politicians. And no action would aid our own revolution so much

"You're too far advanced, Garth—years too far advanced!" interrupted Chandler sharply. "This is not the time for any such suggestions. My own feelings are the same as your own, but it would be madness itself to take drastic action at present. We have departed from our original subject, and I think it would be wise if we returned to it. Trenton has done wonders at St. Frank's, and I think we may congratulate ourselves upon our success. Our next move will be in the direction of a famous public school in the Midlands——"

"What on earth——" interrupted Garth quickly.

Crash!

Before the professor could utter another word a form came hurtling through the skylight. Glass splintered down in a cascade of broken pieces. And then the flying form struck the table with a thud.

I had arrived.

Of course, it was I who had come blundering through the skylight—as I have previously mentioned. Professor Garth, Paxton, and Chandler were utterly staggered by the unexpectedness of my arrival.

They were seated in comfortable chairs before the fireplace in the laboratory. Fortunately for me, there was a fairly large table in the centre of the apartment; and, still more fortunately, this table was quite clear of glass ornaments, or test-tubes, or such like. It was covered with green baize.

Both sides of the little building were bordered by benches. And there were shelves containing chemical bottles, retorts, and so forth. It was quite a complete laboratory.

I struck the baize-covered table with such force that all the breath was knocked out of me, and I dimly wondered if more than five bones were broken. I was dazed, bewildered, and filled with agony.

The only wonder is that I escaped serious injury.

"I can't understand it even now, but the fact remains that I afterwards discovered that my only hurts were several large sized bruises, a slightly ricked wrist, and one or two insignificant scratches.

Garth and Paxton jumped to their feet in alarm.

"Good Heavens!" shouted the professor furiously. "What in the name of all that's infernal does this mean?"

"The fellow must be hurt!" said Chandler quickly.

"I'm hurt—the confounded fool!" snapped Paxton. "Look at this!"

A piece of flying glass had caught his wrist, making a nasty gash. It was bleeding freely; but, of course, it was not at all serious. Paxton whipped out his handkerchief, and bound it round his wrist.

"Hold this boy; we can't let him escape!" exclaimed Garth angrily. "The young fool was trying to have a look in the skylight, I suppose! But who can it be, and why should he come here?"

Paxton and the other man made no attempt to answer the question, but seized me, and in a very short time I was hauled from the table, and left sprawling in a chair. Dr. Paxton was soon satisfied.

"Extraordinary!" he exclaimed. "He's hardly hurt at all; just a few scratches and bruises. Hang it all, I caught it worse than he did! I thought he would be half killed after falling through the skylight in that way!"

I was just beginning to come to my wits, and I was wondering what Nelson Lee would do. I was quite helpless, for it would be impossible for me to escape from these three men.

The idea was put quite out of my mind a moment later, for Dr. Paxton bound a scarf round my ankles, and then secured my wrists with a piece of string. While he was doing this, Professor Garth and Chandler went to the door and ventured outside. My heart was in my mouth. Would they see anything of Nelson Lee? I could not help being anxious.

And there was every cause for my fears.

For, less than two minutes later, Garth and Chandler returned—and, between them, they were leading Nelson Lee.

"Oh, guv'nor!" I muttered hopelessly.

"It's all right, matey; you don't need to worry yourself!" said Nelson Lee coarsely. "It's a fair cop!"

I took my cue at once.

"Lummy, we're in for it now!" I said. "It's all right—you needn't look at me like that; I ain't hurt much."

Nelson Lee was greatly relieved to see that my injuries were very slight. I was filled with

wonder, and I couldn't possibly understand the guv'nor's attitude. Why had he let these men capture him?

I knew very well that he could have escaped if he had wanted to. He could escape even now. But he stood meekly there, with a hangdog expression on his face.

Our three captors regarded us grimly.

"Better string this fellow up, too!" exclaimed Garth harshly. "We don't want any violence here. Take my advice my man, and keep as quiet as possible. We won't stand any nonsense!"

"Keep your 'air on, guv'nor; I'm as gentle as a lamb!" said Nelson Lee.

But he was bound with a piece of cord. And when he was sitting in a chair, in this helpless state, Garth faced him. The professor was in a bad temper—which was hardly surprising.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded. "What were you doing prowling about my garden?"

"Oh, just 'avin' a look round," said Nelson Lee calmly. "No 'arm in that, sir. A most charmin' garden, I must say. And this here little buildin' makes a fine place for a privit talk!"

Garth and the others exchanged rapid glances.

"This fellow seems to know too much!" exclaimed Chandler sharply. "Why, good gracious! I—I——"

"What's wrong?" asked Paxton.

"Why, this man is disguised!" shouted Chandler. "Can't you see? That moustache isn't real——"

"Splendid, my dear Mr. Chandler!" said Nelson Lee, in his own voice. "I don't think you would have detected the little deception if you had not disturbed my moustache while you were binding me just now. Well, gentlemen, it seems that the situation is somewhat unusual."

"What in the name of——" began Garth thickly.

He strode forward and ripped the moustache from Nelson Lee's face. Then he gazed fixedly at the detective. A puzzled frown came into his face, as though he half recognised his prisoner.

"I've seen you before, somewhere," he said. "I seem to remember——"

"Let me assist you," said Nelson Lee obligingly. "My name is Lee—Nelson Lee. This young gentleman is Master Nipper——"

"Lee!" shouted Professor Garth fiercely. "What are you doing here? You infernal busybody! What business have you on this property?"

"I must confess that we are trespassing," said Nelson Lee smoothly. "However, I consider that the situation fully warrants our intrusion. Would you care to send for the police, Professor Garth? You will be well within your rights if you do so. The result might be interesting."

Professor Garth turned pale, and he shook visibly.

"You have been interfering with our affairs for long enough!" he exclaimed at length. "We succeeded in getting you turned out of St.

Frank's, and you probably think that you will be able to——"

"Better not say too much," muttered Chandler.

"Really, gentlemen, I think the situation has proceeded far enough," exclaimed Nelson Lee evenly. "We will bring the little drama to a conclusion. You will oblige me by considering yourselves under arrest."

"Under arrest!" shouted Paxton hoarsely.

"These are the words I used."

"You fool!" snarled the doctor. "How do you suppose you can arrest us? And what evidence have you——"

"Don't worry, my friends, I'll do the arresting."

The voice came from the doorway, and Garth and the other two men twisted round with sharp exclamations. They found themselves facing a thick-set, burly individual, who was no less a person than Chief Inspector Lennard of the C.I.D., Scotland Yard. The inspector was looking quite pleasant.

"Quite a neat little trap, eh?" he observed grimly. "You will please understand, gentlemen, that this building is surrounded, and any attempts to escape will be futile. It is my duty to inform you that anything you say will be taken down, and it may be used in evidence against you."

"You're mad—absolutely insane!" shouted the professor. "Who are you? What do you mean by this confounded intrusion? Get out of here before I kick you out! I will call the police——"

"That is quite unnecessary," interrupted Lennard. "The police are here—in strength. I am a Scotland Yard detective officer, and I have here warrants for the arrest of Professor Garth, Mr. Henry Chandler, and Dr. Roger Paxton. I think I am correct in assuming that you are these three gentlemen?"

"Warrants?" said the Professor thickly. "Show me them."

Before doing so the chief inspector gave a sharp call, and a moment later several Scotland Yard men entered the laboratory. Before Garth and his companions could make any attempt to escape they were neatly handcuffed. The three rogues were pale and shaken, for the unexpectedness of this arrest had taken them by surprise.

"I think we may call this little affair a complete success, Lennard," said Nelson Lee. "You might oblige me by cutting these cords. But for the fact that Nipper provided a little sensation, the coup came off according to our prearranged plan."

"Yes, we heard the crash," said the chief inspector. "So that was Nipper doing a stunt of his own, eh? It's a wonder the young beggar wasn't half killed."

"I couldn't help it!" I said indignantly. "I trod on a piece of moss or something, and, before I knew where I was, I arrived in the middle of the table. You bounder, guv'nor. Why didn't you tell me you'd got everything

planned? I thought everything was going wrong."

"My original intention was to make a few investigations before signalling to Lennard to bring his men round," said the guv'nor. "But when you fell through the skylight, I thought it as well to hasten matters. You will now understand why I allowed myself to be captured. I couldn't resist the temptation to give our friends the pleasure of making us prisoners."

"You will answer dearly for this, Mr. Nelson Lee!" snarled Professor Garth. "You don't realise what you are doing. You have no evidence against us, and you will only bring discredit upon yourself for——"

"Really, professor, I do not feel inclined to enter into a discussion just now," said Nelson Lee. "As you will see from the warrant, you will be charged with conspiracy and treason, to say nothing of a few other charges. And I have a shrewd suspicion that this laboratory will contain some interesting evidence."

Professor Garth brought his breath in sharply, and gazed over at one corner, where a small safe stood. Nelson Lee smiled as he noted that glance. And, before the detectives took their prisoners away, Nelson Lee possessed himself of Garth's lunch of keys.

Five minutes later we had the laboratory to ourselves—the guv'nor, Lennard, and myself. The three captives had been taken off in the charge of a detective-sergeant and his men.

"Quite sure you're not hurt, young 'un?" asked Lee concernedly.

"I'm quite sure I am hurt," I replied. "I ache in every giddy limb. I say, guv'nor, I'm awfully sorry, you know. What a clumsy ass I was to fall through that skylight in that way! I ought to be kicked!"

"I think you have been punished quite enough, young man," said the chief inspector. "Now, Lee, I'm not at all convinced that we can produce a large amount of substantial evidence against these men. You've certainly supplied the Yard with enough material to convict them of conspiracy. But, as for treason—well, that's rather an unusual charge."

"Wait for just a few minutes, Lennard," interrupted Lee.

A very brief search of the safe produced documents which convicted Garth and his associates with the blackest of black treachery against the Throne and the Constitution.

The evidence, in fact, was so palpable that Lennard was astounded.

"And these are the kind of men we respect and look up to!" he said bitterly. "There's no telling, Lee, it's impossible to know who are the good and who are the bad. Nobody would have suspected Professor Garth of this kind of infamy. Thanks to you, he'll get his reward."

"And now, Nipper, I think we might as well get back home," said Nelson Lee. "We've performed our mission, and to-morrow——"

"St. Frank's, sir?" I asked eagerly.

"Exactly, Nipper, St. Frank's," replied Nelson Lee smoothly. "I think I can guarantee quite a sensation at the old school."

CHAPTER IV.

NEARING THE CLIMAX!



AN hour later Nelson Lee and I were in the consulting-room at Gray's Inn Road.

We did not go to bed immediately, for we found the fire still alive, and we soon brought

it into a cheerful blaze. We sat down in easy-chairs, and had a little discussion concerning the whole case.

My bruises had been rubbed by the *guy*'nor, and one or two pieces of plaster were patched over the scratches. And, except for sundry aches, I was feeling quite myself.

And I didn't want to go to bed before I had learned a few of the details concerning Professor Garth & Co.

"What's this talk about treason, *guy*'nor?" I asked.

"Well, Nipper, I'm afraid it wouldn't interest you if I went into all the details," replied Nelson Lee. "But it seems that these men are the chiefs of a peculiar little party——"

"A political party?"

"Well, hardly political," replied the *guy*'nor. "So far as I can discover, there are only a few members, and I don't think it will be difficult for the police to round them all up. To put it briefly, these men are acute revolutionaries. They are against every principle of society as we know it to-day. They are opposed to the whole system

"Communists!" I exclaimed.

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Oh, no," he replied. "The Communists are bad enough, I will admit, but Garth and his associates are far, far worse. The Communist system of government—that is, the Soviet system—is altogether too mild for Garth & Co. They are of a far wilder nature."

"Then they must be hot!" I said.

"We have every reason to suspect that they are preparing various outrages—not stopping at murder," went on Nelson Lee. "Indeed, it is quite possible that they would have attempted to murder

Their revolutionary ideas are of the extreme order."

"Good-bye to old England if they ever get into power," I remarked.

"They never could get into power, Nipper, no matter how many adherents they obtained, and no matter what propaganda instituted," said Nelson Lee. "There are men of this type in every state of society. They are wild idealists. In all probability they are sincere in their conviction, and honestly believe that their schemes are all for the good of humanity. But, of course, we cannot allow these half-mad fanatics to have much rope."

"Yes, that's the worst of it, sir—they're mad right enough," I said. "But, at the same time they appear to be perfectly rational. It's impossible to tell they're mad while they're going about their ordinary business. But I want to know where Trenton comes in?"

Nelson Lee nodded.



Trenton, struggling desperately, was brought forward by Nelson Lee and Inspector Lennard, and forced into a chair. (See page 33.)

"Ah, yes, there is our friend, Mr. Hugh Trenton," he said. "Well, Nipper, Trenton is one of the chief men in this movement. He will be arrested to-morrow—but not before I have amused myself with a little experiment. I am determined, in fact, to vindicate Dr. Stafford before the whole school."

"And, incidentally, vindicate yourself, sir?" I said.

"Well, yes, I must admit that that is also my programme," said Nelson Lee. "But my chief aim is to restore Dr. Stafford's honour. And I shall deliberately do it publicly so that the whole world will know the truth. It is owing to the Head that he should have this public vindication."

"Rather, sir," I agreed heartily. "By Jove! There'll be some excitement to-morrow at St. Frank's, I'll bet! But even now I'm still in the dark."

"In what way?"

"About Trenton."

"But I have explained——"

"You haven't told me why he was so jolly keen about getting the Headmastership of St. Frank's," I said. "How on earth can he hope to further the ends of this precious movement by being Head of St. Frank's?"

Nelson Lee looked thoughtful.

"That is just the point, Nipper," he said.

"That is where the cunning of the whole plot

comes in. You must understand that St. Frank's is not the only school where these revolutionaries have been active. But I will deal only with Trenton. His one and only object in getting himself pitchforked into the Headmastership is to be at one of England's greatest public schools so that he can instil his vicious ideas into the boys."

"Well, I'm blessed!" I exclaimed.

"You are beginning to understand, eh?"

"Well, I think so, sir," I said. "Trenton wants to talk to the chaps just as he likes, and to teach them his own doctrines and principles? The idea, of course, is to get these notions firmly fixed into the heads of the fellows while they're still too young to fully understand what they actually mean?"

Nelson Lee nodded approvingly.

"You have quite a keen grasp of the situation, young 'un," he said. "Yes, that is exactly what Trenton had planned. This is really the beginning of a big campaign. There are already three other big schools in England which have received attention from this maniacal society. And they have men installed there. Needless to say, these dangerous criminals will be removed not later than to-morrow."

"Good!" I said. "The awful brutes!"

"The whole thing is an insidious propaganda among the youth of the country," said the gov'nor. "Quite a number of people may laugh at the whole thing and say that it is an absurd scare. They will declare that the boys of Britain are too sensible to listen to such rubbish. But people who talk in that way are quite wrong. When the mind is young, it is liable to get wrong ideas fixed. And such ideas stick, Nipper. The boys grow up with these notions firmly instilled. And, although they may not actually know it, they have a certain secret sympathy with this revolutionary movement. Such an affair is liable to be extremely dangerous. There is nothing so deep-rooted as a secret propaganda of this kind. I am very thankful to say that I have been successful in bringing the whole scheme to a untimely end."

"The country ought to honour you for it, gov'nor," I said.

Nelson Lee laughed.

"I am quite satisfied," he said. "Perhaps you can understand now, Nipper, why it is I delayed final action—why I allowed the juniors to apply their foolish Communist ideas. One of my chief aims was to let them see how absurd such a system really is. In a way I was combating Trenton's own policy by allowing the boys to have their way. I will guarantee that Communism is very much in disfavour at St. Frank's just now."

"Rather, sir," I said. "Tucker's about the only fellow who still raves about it."

"Yes, Nipper, and Tucker is just the kind of boy who would become, in later years, one of these Garth adherents," said the gov'nor, grimly. "I shall keep my eye on Master Tucker, and attempt to show him how foolish it is to nurse such ideas. But we ought to be thinking about bed."

"That's all right, gov'nor!" I exclaimed. "I've just been thinking of something. Don't you think it's probable that Trenton may be missing when we get to St. Frank's to-morrow?"

"Why should he be missing?"

"Well, he'll be warned, and he'll scoot——"

"Mr. Trenton will receive no warning," interrupted the gov'nor grimly. "He will be allowed to imagine that everything is going very smoothly. And he will be taken quite by surprise."

"What about the reports in the morning papers?"

"There will be no reports."

"Oh! So that's the game, eh?" I said. "So the arrest of Garth and those other men will be kept a secret?"

"Yes—until all the other members of the movement are arrested," said Nelson Lee. "I shall bring about Trenton's downfall in my own way—a somewhat novel way, in fact. I am quite set upon this, Nipper, although the Yard officials were somewhat opposed to it when I first made the suggestion."

"Why?"

"Well, they wanted to send some men down and take Trenton quietly," said Lee. "But that wouldn't suit me. My first consideration is for Dr. Stafford. I am determined to vindicate him before all his boys."

"Good!" I exclaimed. "That's the wheeze gov'nor!"

I sat in my chair, thinking of what the morrow would bring. It had been galling enough for Nelson Lee and for Dr. Stafford to be kicked out of the school in disgrace.

But what a triumph they would have now!

How glorious it would be for them to return to the old school, and to have the fellows cheering them as they deserved. And wouldn't the Governors look idiotic when they found how unjust they had been?

I went to bed feeling happier than I had felt for many a day. It seemed that our troubles were just about over, and that very bright days were dawning for St. Frank's, and for the old Head.

In the morning I was up in good time, although I only had a few hours' sleep. I entered the dining-room, to discover Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West, and the other fellows enjoying a hearty breakfast.

"Lazy bounder!" exclaimed Handforth. "Turning out at this time!"

"Rats!" I said. "I didn't go to bed until after four!"

"Begad!" said Sir Montie, mildly. "After four, dear old fellow? What a frightful hour to keep! I'm shocked—I am, really! What on earth were you doin' until four o'clock in the mornin'?"

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

"I was out with the guv'nor," I replied. "I suppose he's still in his room——"

"He's out—went out about ten minutes ago," put in Reginald Pitt. "Now, then, my son, out with it—what's the game? What have you been up to? Tell us all the news!"

"Hasn't the guv'nor said anything?"

"Quite a lot, but nothing definite," put in Bob Christine. "He told us that you would give us the programme for to-day, and then he buzzed off. Squat down to breakfast, and you can jaw while you feed yourself!"

"By George!" exclaimed Handforth, suddenly.

I found him staring at me as though I were some curio.

"What's the matter, fathead?" I asked politely.

"You've been fighting," said Handforth. "It's no good you denying it, my son. You've been fighting! You mustn't forget that I'm pretty keen on detective work myself, and I can see the clues!"

"Meaning these?" I enquired, pointing to one or two strips of plaster.

"Yes."

"Well, you're wrong," I grinned. "Poor old Handy! Your clues have crashed to the ground. You're undone! In other words, you're about as useful in the detective line as a china ornament with glass eyes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth pushed his fist into my face.

"See that?" he roared violently.

"It looks like a leg of mutton!" I observed.

"You—you insulting rotter!" snorted Handforth. "A china ornament with glass eyes! Why, I'll—I'll smash you into pulp——"

"In my own residence?" I asked reprovingly. "Oh, Handy! Where were you dragged up? Which particular gutter were you bred in? Don't you know it's horrible form to hit a fellow in his own quarters?"

"I don't care about horrible form!" roared Handforth. "I know your face will be in a horrible form by the time I've finished with it! You've been fighting—and you can deny it all you like——"

"Oh, gag this ass, for goodness' sake!" said Bob Christine, impatiently. "Handy, we give you five seconds to stop. If you ain't silent by then we'll take you outside and empty some of Mr. Lee's poisons over you—he's got a lovely assortment in the laboratory!"

Handforth glared round.

"I know that Nipper's been fighting!" he said doggedly.

"Hang it all, why argue about it?" asked Pitt. "Nipper ought to know how he got scratched about. What happened, O wise one?" he added, turning to me.

"I fell through a skylight," I replied.

"What!"

"I went out with the guv'nor last night, and we had a bit of excitement," I said. "It might interest you to know that Mr. Trenton's lovely associates are now in the hands of the police——"

"Hurrah!"

"How—how do you know?" asked Tommy Watson excitedly.

"I saw them arrested."

"You—you saw 'em arrested!" snorted Handforth indignantly. "Why wasn't I there?"

"Because you were in bed!" I replied sweetly.

"You—you rotter!" gasped Handforth. "I know what it is—I've known it for weeks! I've known it for months! Professional jealousy! You didn't want to have me with you because——"

"Because you'd have messed up the whole show!" murmured Pitt.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're all jealous—every one of you!" said Handforth bitterly. "Do you think I care? That's how much I care!" he added, snapping his fingers. "I wasn't taken on this arresting stunt because I should have done everything. You see what happens to Nipper? All he can do is to fall through a skylight!"

I grinned.

"I stand subdued!" I said meekly. "As a matter of fact I did make an awful bloomer by falling through that skylight, Handy. I can give you my word I didn't do it for fun. I'm bruised all over!"

"Serves you right!" said Handforth callously.

"Can't you stop arguing?" demanded Christine. "Nipper hasn't told us anything yet—and all you can do is jaw, jaw, jaw, about yourself! Tell us about this adventure, Nipper!"

I did so, and my audience listened with much entertainment. But they were greatly excited by my next announcement.

"We're all going back to St. Frank's to-day," I said calmly. "In other words, there's a first-class programme arranged, and the entertainment will be worth quids. We're going to see Trenton get it in the neck—in public. We're going to see the old Head restored to his rightful place——"

"You're spoofing!"

"Rats!"

"It's too good to be true!"

"Wait and see!" I exclaimed. "I tell you, my sons, that everything is all serene. So you can wag your tails and look pleasant!"

CHAPTER V.

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGALS.



"ROTTER!" said Owen major feelingly.

He was referring in this disrespectful fashion to the headmaster of St. Frank's—to Mr. Hugh Trenton. He had just received a hundred lines, and

Owen major didn't quite see the fun of it.

"All I did was to slide down the banisters!" he said indignantly. "Why, any prefect would have only given me twenty lines for it. Mr. Lee caught me doing it three or four times last term, and he only gave me a wiggling. No lines or canings, or anything."

"It just shows you the difference between Mr. Lee and old Trenton," said Nicodemus Trotwood. "The fact is, most of you fellows are like the proverbial baby. You yell like anything for something, and when you've got it you don't want it!"

"Oh, don't talk rot!" said Hubbard.

The juniors were standing in the lobby in a group. It was morning, and lessons had not yet commenced. The frost had gone and there was every sign of rain in the atmosphere.

"As it happens, I'm not talking rot," said Trotwood calmly. "I'm talking sound common sense. Practically everybody in the school was yelling out against Dr. Stafford and against Mr. Lee. It was Trenton here, and Trenton there. Trenton was everything sublime. But now that he's in sole command a lot of you aren't satisfied. I'm jolly certain I'm not!"

"How were we to know?" growled Hubbard. "Trenton was all right before he became Head."

"Exactly," put in Somerton languidly. "Trenton was all right as a science master. But now he's been exalted to the highest position in the school he's got swelled head. It's just what might have been expected, you know. Why, he even had the nerve to make me change my collar this morning!"

"Nerve!" said Owen major. "It's a good thing somebody noticed it! You must have worn it for about six years. The one you've got on ain't much better."

"I happened to get some mud on it in the Triangle," explained Somerton. "A chap can't help that, I suppose?"

His Grace, the Duke of Somerton was very unlike a duke in appearance—for, as a matter of fact, he was the most untidy junior in the Remove. He didn't care a jot about dress. In fact, he generally went about in a most disreputable condition, and he was always being punished for it.

"The Head's not bad in the main, but he seems to be getting worse," observed Griffith. "I was hoping that he would continue in his free and easy way. Why, when he first came he was absolutely a sport."

"Rather!" agreed Armstrong. "He used to sympathise with us, and chat with us like one of ourselves. But now he's different."

"I regretfully undertake to state that our Headmaster is beautifully ungracious," said Hussi Ranjit Lal Kahn mildly. "Indeed, I must facilitate that statement by additionally depriving it of the remark that Mr. Trenton is——"

"Oh, don't you start, for goodness sake!"

"I apologetically insist upon speechifying my words," said the Indian junior. "I have a right to anticipate my remarks in general, and I observe acutely and distastefully that Mr. Trenton is extraordinarily sociable and exquisitely abhorrent!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why don't you chain a dictionary round your neck?" asked Owen major.

"A dictionary is of no usefulness to me," replied Hussi Kahn. "You must permit me

to instigate that my grammatical articulation is supremely imperfect and quite incorrect."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Hubbard.

"Well, it's no good jawing about the Head," put in Armstrong. "He's any day better than Dr. Stafford. Not better than Dr. Stafford used to be, I'll admit. But we don't get any of those horrible outbursts of violence, do we? Besides, Trenton hasn't settled down yet!"

Very soon afterwards morning lessons commenced. Not only the juniors but the seniors were somewhat disappointed with Mr. Trenton. Whereas he had been formerly genial and chatty, he was now cold and distant. The boys couldn't understand this change of attitude.

But, of course, it was only in keeping with Mr. Trenton's new position. Now and again he would unbend. He would stand chatting amiably with a group of fellows. He would cover all manner of subjects, and the knot would break up declaring Mr. Trenton to be first class. They did not realise that the new Headmaster was just beginning his insidious propaganda.

When morning lessons were over the juniors were pleased to find that no rain had fallen. It was still merely threatening. And they crowded out into the Triangle and occupied themselves in various ways.

And while this went on a big motor-car rolled in through the gateway. Armstrong and Griffith saw it first, since they were near the gate. And they stared at it in astonishment—or, to be more exact, they stared at the occupants. The car rolled on towards the head's doorway.

"Well I'm blessed!" said Armstrong blankly.

"What's up?"

"Didn't you see?"

"Yes."

"They were the Governors!" exclaimed Armstrong. "Sir John Brent and old Stevens and Sir James Henson and Mr. Hale! The four Governors who were down here when Dr. Stafford was kicked out!"

"Yes, but there's nothing to get excited about——"

"Isn't there?" demanded Armstrong. "What have they come here for? Why have they returned so soon? The Governors don't come to St. Frank's in a body once in a giddy year—unless there's something exceptional in the wind. This means some excitement of some kind, I'll bet!"

"Rats!" said Griffith. "I expect they've appointed a new Housemaster for the Ancient House——"

"That wouldn't bring 'em all down here in a bunch," said Armstrong. "I tell you there's something up!"

And Armstrong was not the only fellow who was excited. The news spread quickly, and all manner of conjectures went round as to why the Governors had paid this unexpected visit to the school. All sorts of suggestions were put forward. And then the excitement became really intense.

For a second motor-car had arrived.

And, astoundingly enough, this car contained Dr. Malcolm Stafford and Nelson Lee.

At first it couldn't be believed. But the two figures were recognised by scores of fellows as the car glided across the Triangle. On the instant Nicodemus Trotwood and Fatty Little and one or two others started a cheer.

But it was only taken up by a few. The majority of the fellows remained silent—wondering. The arrival of the Governors had been surprising enough, but this was positively staggering. What could it mean? Why had Nelson Lee and the old Head returned?

Discussions were going on everywhere.

"Something must have happened," declared Trotwood. "Why, it's even possible that Dr. Stafford is coming back."

"Never!" said Griffith. "He was chucked out in disgrace!"

"Then why has he returned now—with Mr. Lee?" asked Nicodemus. "Isn't it a bit queer that they should turn up at the same time as the Governors? I tell you it's something pretty big, my sons."

"It certainly looks like it," admitted Singleton. "By Jove! I'm half-hoping that Mr. Lee is coming back, you know. We can easily afford to forgive him for what he did—"

"We don't want drunken masters!" said Armstrong sourly.

"I don't believe he was drunk," said Trotwood. "Ever since Mr. Lee and the Head went I've been wondering, and I can't help thinking that there was something wrong about it all."

This kind of discussion was a fair sample of the excited talk which went on in every quarter of the school. The fellows awaited events with the greatest possible interest.

And, in the meantime, Sir John Brent and his colleagues were escorted to Mr. Trenton's study. The new Head was awaiting them—calm, collected, but undoubtedly surprised. He had received no intimation that the school Governors were coming down. This visit was utterly unexpected.

"Good-morning, Mr. Trenton: good-morning to you!" said Sir John gravely, as he shook hands.

"Good-morning, Sir John; I fear that I am somewhat unprepared," said Mr. Trenton. "Perhaps you wrote me—"

"No; I thought it unnecessary to inform you of our intended visit," interrupted Sir John Brent. "I may as well tell you at once, Mr. Trenton, that there are certain things which need to be explained."

"Certain things?" repeated the Head.

"I am sorry I cannot be more definite at the moment," said Sir John. "I—er—would prefer to leave the question for a while. You may be quite confident, Mr. Trenton, that I have complete confidence in you."

"Hear, hear!" said Mr. Stevens.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said Mr. Trenton.

"At the same time, it was quite necessary to hold an immediate inquiry," continued the Chairman of the Governors. "Certain facts have come to our knowledge, and it is most essential that they should be entered into without delay. We have come, Mr. Trenton,

because we wish to give you an opportunity of answering on the spot."

"Thank you, Sir John," said Mr. Trenton quietly. "I am quite prepared to answer any questions that may be asked. Am I right in assuming that Dr. Stafford and Mr. Nelson Lee are on the premises?"

Sir John Brent looked rather uncomfortable. "Well—er—yes," he admitted. "Dr. Stafford and Mr. Lee are here. I regret that I cannot tell you any more just now. Mr. Lee himself will be with us in a few minutes. He, I understand, will conduct the inquiry."

Mr. Trenton bowed. A minute or two later he retired, making an excuse. As a matter of fact, he was inwardly alarmed—far more alarmed than he was ready to admit, even to himself.

There was something grim about this sudden invasion.

Just when everything had been going with apparent smoothness, the Governors and Nelson Lee and Dr. Stafford had descended upon the school. What could it mean? What was at the bottom of it?

Mr. Trenton was afraid that all was not right. Yet, he could not see how any particle of the real truth had leaked out. He determined to keep calm, and to brazen things out. It was just as well that he adopted this attitude, for he would never have escaped from St. Frank's, even if he had decided to make the attempt.

Out in the Triangle there was fresh excitement—and this time it was of a somewhat riotous nature.

For who should walk in through the gateway but twelve juniors, headed by Edward Oswald Handforth. The hero of Study D stalked in with his hands in his overcoat pockets, and he looked as though he had suddenly acquired the entire property, and had just strolled in to look over it.

"Great bloaters!" gasped Fatty, as he left Mrs. Hake's tuckshop. "Look! It's—it's Handy!"

"Where?" demanded Trotwood sharply.

"There—just coming in the gates—"

"And Church and McClure—and Pitt and Nipper and Tregellis-West!" roared Somerton. "Oh, my only hat! They've come back, you chaps!"

"Are we dreaming, or can it be really true?" panted Armstrong. "They're all back—the whole giddy crowd! The Head, Mr. Lee, Nipper, and all the other chaps! They've all come in a bunch!"

He raced across the Triangle, and he arrived when the newcomers were entirely surrounded. I had been expecting something of this sort, and I was inwardly delighted.

"I told you we should cause a giddy sensation!" I whispered to Sir Montie.

"Begad! I'm feelin' quite nervous, dear old boy," said Tregellis-West. "I hope they keep calm—I do, really! The Triangle's frightfully muddy, an' it would be too appallin' to be bowled over!"

"Now then, you fatheads, clear off!" exclaimed Handforth authoritatively. "Don't crowd round like bees over a honeypot. We

ain't ghosts. Haven't you seen us before, you prize dummies?"

"What have you come back for?" demanded Hubbard. "Everything was beautifully quiet while you were away, Handy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly soon alter that!" roared Handforth. "You cheeky rotter! Take that!"

Biff!

Hubbard staggered back, howling. The other fellows roared. Handforth hadn't been in the Triangle for more than half a minute, and he had already punched somebody's nose. Personally, I had given him only a few seconds.

"You asses; you'll get sacked!" shouted Armstrong. "After the way you talked to the Head you'll be flogged and expelled."

"What do you mean?" demanded Pitt. "We didn't insult the Head!"

"Why, you called him a scoundrel and a blackguard——"

"Never!" I chimed in. "The Head's as straight as a die—one of the finest old chaps in the country. But I suppose you mean Mr Trenton?"

"Of course I do!" said Armstrong. "He's the Head——"

"Your mistake—he was!" I said. "Before teatime, my sons, the beautiful Mr. Trenton will be a thing of the past. He's obliterated—wiped out! This is where we smile!"

"You're dotty!" said Hubbard.

"Think so?" asked Handforth blandly. "Say that again, my son, and I'll drag you round the Triangle by your giddy nose! We stood up for the Head all along the line—we told you fifty times that Trenton was no class. But what's the good of talking to a set of dummies? What's the good of trying to drive sense into wooden blocks? Chaps with brains didn't need any telling—they could see that Trenton was a rotter!"

"Then how could you see it?" asked Armstrong, dodging behind a crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth tried to reach Armstrong, but failed. We had some difficulty in pressing through the crowd. But we managed to reach the Ancient House at last. And I felt a glow of pleasure as I entered Study C once more.

"Well, it's good to be back," I said, looking round. "A bit dusty, but nothing's been touched."

"I say, Trenton must know we're here," said Watson. "He might send for us, you know, and sack us before the programme started—I mean before Mr. Lee gets busy with his own scheme——"

"You don't need to be afraid of that," I interrupted. "Trenton's got his mind too full to bother about us. I'll bet he's nearly worried to death as it is. There'll be no lessons this afternoon, I'll guarantee. And to-day will be remembered at St. Frank's as a day of sensations for years to come!"

We looked forward eagerly to the coming developments.

For Mr. Hugh Trenton's downfall was at hand!

CHAPTER VI.

QUITE A SENSATION.



NICODEMUS TROTWOOD nodded approvingly.

"Ripping!" he exclaimed. "It seems a bit stiff, Fatty, but it looks like being true. If Trenton wasn't due for

a fall, Nipper and his crowd wouldn't be back. The very fact that they're here proves that something startling is going to happen. That's my opinion."

"Good egg!" said Fatty. "Couldn't be better, Trotty. They'll sure to have a big feed to celebrate the occasion——"

"Oh, you always think about grub!" said Trotwood. "If you had your way, you'd fake up a special occasion for a spread every day in the week. I've never known such a chap for gorging! You're never satisfied."

"Well, dash it all, we couldn't let these chaps return without giving 'em a jolly good bust up," said Fatty. "I vote we have a special spread in the Lecture Hall. We'll make a whip round, and collect all the tin we can——"

"Don't you be so jolly sure!" said Trotwood. "We don't know what's going to happen yet. Handforth says that Trenton is in for a fall—but there's many a slip, my son. It's quite likely that Trenton will bluff it out—he's got nerve enough for anything."

"He'll never beat Mr. Lee!" said Fatty Little.

"What about last time?" asked Trotwood. "H'm! Now I come to think of it, I don't believe Mr. Lee was beaten at all," he added. "It was probably just a ruse on his part. These detectives are up to all sorts of stunts like that you know. He cleared out, apparently in disgrace, and all the time he knew jolly well that he would get Trenton in the finish."

"That's what I say!" declared Fatty.

"You're about right," agreed Nick. "You do have flashes of reason now and again my fat son. Yes, Trenton will have to be pretty wide awake to get the better of Mr. Nelson Lee! And I'll be mightily pleased to see him back again as Housemaster over on this side."

"He's back already!" said Fatty. "But about this grub. Now it wouldn't be a bad idea if we started the feed with sardine sandwiches, and then we could have tinned salmon or bloaters, and veal and ham pie, and then beef patties, and jelly and blanemange, and some anchovy paste, and then Welsh rarebit, and jam tarts——"

"My only hat!" said Trotwood, holding his waistcoat with one hand, and clutching at the wall with the other. "What a ghastly mixture. Jelly and blanemange and anchovy paste! Welsh rarebit and jam tarts! You're making me feel bad, you—you glutton!"

"You don't eat the jelly and blanemange and anchovy paste together, you chump!" said Fatty. "The anchovy paste is a sort of mid-way appetiser. When you're feeling nicely full

(Continued on page 25.)

NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

No. 11.

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

Feb. 4,
1922.



"Stop-er," says pa, "I've caught a whale!"
An amusing incident from this week's PECK'S BAD BOY.



PECK'S BAD BOY

AND HIS "PA".



HIS PA GETS A BITE!

His Pa gets too much Water—The Doctors Disagree—How to Spoil Boys—His Pa goes to Pewaukee in Search of his Son—Anxious to Fish—"Stop-er, I've got a Whale!"—Overboard—His Pa is Saved—Goes to Cut a Switch—A Dollar for his Pants.

"**S**O the doctor thinks your Pa has ruptured a blood-vessel, eh?" says the tram-driver to the bad boy, as the youngster was playing sweet on him to get a free ride.

"Well, they don't know. The doctor at Pewaukee said Pa had dropsy, until he found the water that they wrung out of his pants was lake water, and there was a doctor on board when we put Pa on the train who said from the looks of his face, sort of red and blue, that it was apoplexy, but a horse doctor that was down at the station when we put Pa in the carriage to take him home, said he was off his feed, and had been taking too much water when he was hot, and got foundered. Oh, you can't tell anything about doctors. No two of 'em guesses alike," answered the boy.

"Well, how did your Pa happen to fall out of the boat? Didn't he know the lake was wet?"

"He had a suspicion that it was damp when his back struck the water, I think. I'll tell you how it was. When my chum and I run away to Pewaukee, Ma thought we had gone off to be piruts, and she told Pa it was a duty he owed to society to go and get us to come back and be good.

"She told him if he would treat me as an equal, and laugh and joke with me, I wouldn't be so bad. She said kicking and pounding spoiled more boys than all the Sunday schools. So Pa came out to our camp, about two miles up the lake from Pewaukee, and he was just as good-natured as though we had never had any trouble at all.

"We let him stay all night with us, and gave him a blanket with a red border to sleep on under a tree, 'cause there was not blankets to go round, and in the morning I let him have one of the biscuits I had in my shirt bosom and he wanted to go fishing with us.

"He said he would show us how to fish. So he got a piece of pork rind at a farm-house for bait, and put it on a hook, and we got in an old boat, and my chum rowed and Pa and I trolled. In swinging the boat around Pa's line got under the boat, and came right up near me. I don't know what possessed me, but I took hold of Pa's line and gave it a "yank" and Pa jumped so quick his hat went off in the lake.

"Stop-er," says Pa, "I've got a whale!" It's mean in a man to call his chubby-faced little boy a whale, but the whale yanked again and Pa began to pull him in. I hung on and let the line out a little at a time, just zackly like a fish, and he pulled, and sweat, and the bald spot on his head was getting sunburnt, and the line cut my hand, so I wound it round the oar-lock, and Pa pulled hard enough to tip the boat over.

"He thought he had a forty pound museulunger, and he stood up in the boat and pulled on that oar-lock as hard as he could.

"I ought not to have done it, but I loosened the line from the oar-lock, and when it

slacked up Pa went right out over the side of the boat, and struck on his pants, and



Pa went right out over the side of the boat, and split a hole in the water as big as a washtub.

split a hole in the water as big as a washtub.

"His head went down under water, and his boot heels hung over in the boat.

" 'What you doin' ? Diving after the fish ? ' says I, as Pa's head came up and he blowed out the water.

" I thought Pa belonged to the church but I guess he was talking to the fish. Wall, sir, my chum took hold of Pa's foot and the collar of his coat and held him in the stern of the boat, and I paddled the boat to the shore, and Pa crawled out and shook himself.

" Then Pa took off his pants, and my chum and me took hold of the legs, and Pa took hold of the summer kitchen, and we wrung the water out.

" Pa wasn't so sociable after that, and he went back in the woods with his knife, with nothing on but a linen sheet and a necktie, while his pants were drying on a tree, to cut a switch, and we hollered to him that a party of picnickers from Lake Side were coming ashore right where his pants were, to picnic, and Pa he run into the woods.

" He coaxed us to come in the woods where he was, and he said he would give us a dollar a-piece and not be mad any more if we would bring him his pants.

" We got his pants, and you ought to see how they was wrinkled when he put them on. They looked as though they had been ironed with waffle irons.

" We went to the station and came home on a freight train, and Pa sneezed all the way in the caboose, and I don't think he has ruptured any blood-vessel. Well, I get off here at Mitchell's bank." And the boy pulled the bell and jumped off.

THE EDITOR'S DEN

Editorial Office,

Study C., Ancient House,

St. Frank's.

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.

My dear Readers,—You have heard of our Cadet Corps ? It is only in the initial stage of formation ; but everything must have a beginning, and I think it is high time that St. Frank's should make a start in establishing a corps.

Besides being a good thing for the school generally, there will be lots of fun and excitement in the process of licking some of us into shape. Most of the fellows are as keen as mustard over it, and the funny part of it is that everyone fancies he knows more than anyone else about military training.

I promised you last week a portrait of the Gov'nor. I said that I was going to put it on the cover, but as that will be keeping you in suspense for some weeks I have decided to put the portrait on page 20 of this issue.

There is another splendid new feature forthcoming, details of which I will give you next week.

NIPPER (The Editor).



NELSON LEE.—The hero of many stirring adventures, he is as well known in the detective world as a remarkably astute crime investigator as that of the most deservedly popular Housemaster St. Frank's has ever had. No man could have a stauncher friend, nor no wrong-doer a deadlier enemy than in Nelson Lee. He came to St. Frank's at the same time as Nipper, who was his assistant at Gray's Inn Road, where the two were associated in tracking down some of the most notorious criminals of our time. In the series that has just concluded in this number, Nelson Lee has at last brought an end to an organised conspiracy to remove Dr. Stafford from the Headmastership. It nearly came off, and Nelson Lee, who supported Dr. Stafford, was for once in a way unpopular with a large section of the boys. In fact, the Head and Nelson Lee left St. Frank's in disgrace. Now that the truth is out, everyone welcomes their return to the school, especially Nelson Lee, and we publish his portrait in this issue of the Mag, in honour of the occasion.

SCHOOLBOY HOWLERS



The following humorous stories have been taken from various schools in different parts of the country.—Ed.

The master of a private school had been giving a lesson on grammar—the degrees of adjectives and adverbs—and he noticed that one youth (although naturally smart) was yawning a good deal and evidently

wishing the lesson to be over.

At the conclusion, the master said to this particular scholar:

“Now that the lesson is finished, I suppose you are superlatively happy.”

“Well, sir,” replied the pupil, “*comparatively* so.”

* * *

The Government inspector was paying a visit to a school in a north-country town, and took mental arithmetic for the first subject of examination. The gentleman was just bringing his examination to a close, when a big lad came shuffling in late. On his being asked the reason of his lateness, he explained that he had been to the station with his father, who was a fishmonger, to help carry home some fish.

“All right, my lad,” said the inspector blandly. “Then, as you must know all about fish, you will please do this bit of mental work for me. If you bought, say, a nineteen-pound salmon at threepence a pound, how much would the whole fish be worth?”

“It wouldn’t be worth much at that price, sir,” promptly replied the lad. “Oh, my! Salmon at threepence a parnd!”

* * *

And, speaking of “new” boys, reminds me of a very smart answer a schoolmaster received from one of them.

The lad was standing at the master’s desk, whilst his name, age, residence, etc., were being taken down. This done, the master in a chatty way, asked:

“Well, my lad, and have you lived here all your life?”

“Oh, no,” replied the boy, “not yet, sir!”

* * *

Another teacher got an equally funny sentence from a boy, in illustrating the meaning of the word “Contents.”

The boy wrote—

“The contents of a cow is milk.”

Another boy, in giving a description of “Memory,” said that it was “that which you forget with.”

A girl, too, in writing about the climate of England, said that the reason why the weather was so windy was on account of the many windmills in the country!

In connection with “memory” I am reminded of another story. An elderly Yorkshire schoolmaster, who was rather absent-minded or forgetful, had been away from the place on a six months’ sick leave. On his return to duties, the old gentleman was anxious to know how village matters had been going on during his absence. Accordingly, betwixt lessons, he made enquiries of different scholars as to this and that.

To one scholar, he said:

“Well, my boy, how is your father? He was very ill when I went away.”

“Please, sir,” answered the lad, “he’s dead.”

Later on in the day, the old gentleman, quite forgetting that he had already spoken to the boy, said to him:

“Well, boy, and how is your father?”

“Why,” replied the lad, “He’s still dead, sir!”

* * *

The teacher of a class in a town school noticed some giggling going on amongst certain of the boys, and called upon one of the culprits to tell him the cause.

“Please, sir,” responded the lad, “Turner says he knows of a baby who was fed on elephant’s milk, and gained ten pounds a day!”

“Turner,” said the teacher, sternly, “you should not tell lies.”

“But it’s true!” rejoined the scholar.

“Whose baby was it?”

“The elephant’s, sir,” replied the lad.

THE HAND BEHIND THE BROOM.

MARY JANE ON WORK.

THEM as works 'ardest should get the most money (said Mary Jane emphatically, as she deftly swept a little hillock of dust into her pan). Elbow grease is the thing what counts, in my h'opinion. Work's a queer thing, when you comes to look at it sideways, like. It's a thing what needs anamalizing.

Now, what is work? I ain't the kind to get argufying, but this here question is a himportant one. What is work, after all? It's simply a means to an end, as you might say—the end of the week, or month, accordin' to when you gets your wages. I gets mine by the month, an' precious little, too, when you comes to reckon what I has to do from mornin' till night.

Only last week I was a-talkin' to the grocer's man, an' 'e reckons as I work 'arder than anybody in the whole school. I tells 'im that I never gets any rest, and o' course he's got to come saucy, and sez that there's never any rest for the wicked. His face was still smartin' when 'e come next day.

But, after all, what 'e sez was true enough, although it's me what sez it, as shouldn't. I'm up first in the mornin', an' I'm at it right on through the whole day, without 'ardly time to eat proper.

Two-pound-ten a month is what I gets, which works out at about twelve shillin' a week. An' it wouldn't surprise me not a bit if the 'Eadmaster gets two pounds ten a week. 'E might even get three pound, for all I knows. An' what does he do to earn all that ~~there~~ money?

Mind you, it ain't my place to talk about the 'Ead. I'm just speakin' in a general kind o' way, like, without meanin' no disrespect. But it seems to me that things is all wrong. In my h'opinion them as works 'ardest deserves more than them as don't. It ain't often I've been in the 'Ead's study,

but as true as I'm standin' 'ere, I've never seen 'im doin' as much as a stroke o' work.

'E simply sits at 'is desk, writin', or declines at 'is ease in front of the fire, readin' a paper or a book. An' when the weather's nice 'e'll walk about in 'is garden for p'raps a hour. There 'e'll be, a-smokin' 'is cigar, an' enjoyin' of hisself proper—doin' absolutely nothin'. An' I'm workin' me fingers to the bone all the time, an' gettin' about a quarter of 'is screw.

I s'pose the 'Ead must work sometimes,

else 'e wouldn't be 'ere. But as far as I can see 'e don't never do a thing. The other masters is different, seein' as they've got to look arter the boys. An' their 'ands is pretty full, I'll warrant. Never did I see sech a lot of mischievous young monkeys! I reckon the Form-masters earns their money right enough, an' I s'pose they must get as much as two pound a week. Still, I can't

see as they should get more than me. I works 'arder, bein' up two or three hours earlier every mortal mornin', an' workin' every minit of the day. I don't get no rest.

Then there's Mr. Cuttle, for example. A nice enough gentleman, although 'e always is growsin' about everythink an' carryin' on awful about this, that, an' the other. Nothin' don't seem to please 'im. The only time I saw 'im really 'appy was when 'e was readin' about a earthquake in China, which said that a million people was killed. 'E believed it, too, which was just showin' 'is ignorants. Why, there ain't a million Chinese in the whole world, as anybody knows. I ain't never seen more than three or four in my whole life.

Talkin' about Mr. Cuttle reminds me that 'e don't do much work, an' 'e gets double the wages what I do. Just potters about openin' an' shettin' the gates, an'



(Continued from preceding page)

sweepin' the Triangle, an' lookin' arter the big 'eater in the out-'ouse, an' sech like. 'E don't do no real work, as you might say.

That's what seems wrong to me. It's the same with the tradesmen what brings things up to the school. An easy life they 'as, an' no mistake. Ridin' round in carts all day—an' some of 'em even 'as motor-cars, if you please—enjoyin' of theirselves as if they was dooks or lords!

Then they comes to the door and tells Mrs. Poulter that they're tired out, an' a nice cup o' tea wouldn't come amiss. Stuff an' nonsense, I sez, an' if I was Mrs. Poulter I'd send 'em away about their business.

I knew a gal once what worked in a jam factory. She wasn't there for more than three weeks afore— Oh, drat! If that ain't one o'clock strikin'! There ain't never no rest for me—I can't even 'ave a quiet word when I likes. I've got to go down for dinner now!

ASK ME!

By Cuttle

I was allus a man to be happy,

As them as what knows me can tell.

It was never no use to be snappy

An' look upon life as a sell.

Smilin' I was, as never I knew,

Though the papers was fair in a stew.

Why was they all so glum an' so blue?

Ask me!

We was in the grip of the 'flu!

There was shoutin' and yellin' and cheerin',

There was bustle the whole country thro'.

Last week when the town I was nearin'

I was dazed by the crowds what grew.

Disgusted I was, as never afore,

An' well I might ha' been somethin' more.

What was all this 'ere foolery for?

Ask me!

A Cup-tie was causin' the roar!

There was trouble a-comin', an' quickly;

Hawful things was about to take place.

Down in Bellton they was homeless an' sickly;

The doctor's got many a case.

Gloomy they was, an' cold runs their blood

To be in that there water an' mud.

What caused the folks to run an' to scud?

Ask me!

They was drove away by the flood!

SCHOOLEBOY INTELLIGENCE

By
TIMOTHY TUCKER



(The Editor does not necessarily associate himself with the extreme views expressed by the contributor of this article.)

DOUBTLESS the perusal of my illuminating article, "The Modern Schoolboy," in an earlier number of this journal has lead some unknown admirer of my work to send a cutting from a London newspaper on a question of supreme significance—the mental status of the present day schoolboy as compared with the schoolboy of yesterday.

After having read the article posted to me by this anonymous person, I regret to state that I was intensely aggravated by the unfavourable impression the author had sought to create of the modern schoolboy's intelligence. I assume that the article was sent to me as a challenge to my own intelligence, and, as representing the mouth-piece of our much abused section of the community, I will proceed to answer the challenge.

The writer of the offending article has the impertinence to assert that the contemporary schoolboy is intellectually inferior to his prototype of fifteen years ago. This is a monstrous libel on all the present boys of St. Frank's and calls for immediate action. Perhaps this contemptible and carping critic is ignorant of St. Frank's and the brilliant Editor and talented contributors of this Magazine.

From a social point of view, even since my own association with St. Frank's, we have made considerable advancement. We are no longer serfs and slaves, but Brothers of the Free. It is impossible, my dear readers, that in this enlightened age our intellects would not derive benefit when the shackles of our former social system have been removed. The liberation of the intellect is a vital step towards its development.

I will not deny that the modern schoolboy's intelligence has not undergone a change since fifteen years. Admittedly so! The bandage has been lifted from his eyes and he sees much that was hidden from his elder brother. For instance, he knows, as any schoolmaster will inform our critic, that the Pons Asinorum is nothing but a myth, and that Euclid, the tyrant who never ought to have been born, is as defunct as the Dodo—thanks to the discovery of the Fourth Dimension, the popularly known but little understood Theory of Einstein.

It is to the future, however, that we must look for the complete realization of our ideals in giving the schoolboy a free and unrestrained exercise of his intellect. The schoolboy will then come into his own and he will become a power in the land. But the dawn of his coming depends on our efforts of to-day. If we stand together in this hour of need, to-morrow we shall herald in the Era of the Schoolboy.

OUR LETTER BAG

To the Editor, "NIPPER'S MAGAZINE."

SIR.—May I crave the publicity of your pages in a matter of paramount and urgent necessity? While entering my study after an arduous morning's work I was surprised and annoyed to receive, as I opened my door a number of hard, oblong objects which hit my head, and which proved on examination to be books. Now, sir, nothing but the grossest carelessness can explain the presence of those books above my door. They could not have got into their extraordinary position unaided, as we know that inanimate objects are unable to alter their location without the application of external force. As I see it, then, these volumes had been handled with the most culpable negligence, and the offenders should be dealt with in the severest possible manner.—Yours, etc.,

TIMOTHY TUCKER.

SIR,—I am frightfully sorry to worry you with this letter. I am really. I only wanted to make a suggestion. I know I'm doing it all wrong. But would it be possible to prevent fags and others from running about in the Triangle during the wet weather. The Triangle becomes a perfect quagmire of mud. And it is very annoying to have one's trousers absolutely ruined by these mud splashes.

Something really ought to be done. It should really. Begad!—Yours, etc.,

"FASHIONPLATE."

SIR,—It isn't a bit fair that a prefect should smack your head for something you haven't done, is it? Because that's what Noyes did, the rotter. Yesterday, as I was coming into the College House, he saw me trying to dodge him and took me by the collar. "I want those fifty lines from you," he said, "for that row you kicked up the other day. Where are they?" "I haven't done them," I said, and he smacked my head. Is it fair?—Yours, etc.,

"AN AWFUL FAG."



SIR,—Can nothing be done to see that a boy with a healthy appetite gets enough to eat? Particularly at breakfast it is pitiful to see the famished faces of the boys, some of whom are even thinner than myself. The poor chaps wolf their food in a manner it is terrible to behold. And sometimes the whole plate of sausages is gobbled up before I have had more than three or four.—Your starving correspondent,

"FRIAR TUCK."

Brief Replies

"THREE WOODBINES".—We quite agree with you. It was most unfair of your master to punish you for smoking when all the evidence he had was a slight blueness in the atmosphere. As you say the cigarette ends he found might very well have been left on the floor by anyone. We think you are justly annoyed that your friend whom you allowed to come and play cards with you should have gone off with five bob from each of you. You might find it cheaper to play with counters.

"FAT LOT".—We do not think the pains you say you are suffering are caused from taking too much exercise. Nor do we think it is necessary for you to feed yourself up. In fact we should imagine you are already about as "fed up" as we are—with you!

"WINTERWEIGHT".—We are afraid the articles of clothing you mention would not fetch much at a jumble sale. We advise you to find some kind-hearted tramp who might relieve you of them for half a crown or so.

"MODEST" (Study D).—You say you are always imagining people are talking about you, that you can't keep your hands still in the presence of others, and that you get red in the face when you are addressed by strangers. Ah, Modest, this sad state is caused by an unnatural swelling of the head.

"McChapel".—What you want is a silencer. Fitted to the object you mention it would ensure peace in your study. I am sorry to hear the ceiling is beginning to fall down and all your windows are cracked.

(Continued from page 16.)

you need something to stimulate the appetite, and then you can— Hi! Come here, you ass, Where are you walking off to, Trotty?"

But Nicodemus was feeling quite bad enough, and he walked out of the Remove passage, and into the lobby. It was already time for afternoon lessons, but no bell had rung, and the fellows were wondering what the next move was to be.

Nobody objected.

Missing afternoon lessons was quite satisfactory to all. Anything, in fact, was better than afternoon lessons. And it certainly seemed that events of the day were to be dramatic.

Masters and perfects were wandering about in an uncertain fashion, and it was clear that they did not quite know how to proceed. And the juniors were standing about in groups, talking and arguing.

"We won't stand it!" Fullwood was saying. "Not likely!"

"I should think not!" said Bell. "We won't have Lee an' old Stafford back, if we can help it! The school kicked them out, an' they've got to stay out. We're particular!"

"I vote we hiss old Lee when he comes in sight," said Ralph Fullwood. "What do you chaps say?"

"Of course we shall!" said Gulliver. "That stands to reason!"

"Lee's a drunken beast!" went on Fullwood maliciously. "We all saw him absolutely boozed—"

"Oh, did we?" exclaimed Handforth, pushing through the crowd. "I've just been looking for somebody's nose to punch—and I've found it! You snivelling cad! You insulting worm! Apologise at once, and then I'll punch your face! If you don't apologise I'll spifflicate you!"

Fullwood backed away.

"Who asked you to come back?" he demanded sourly. "It was a jolly good thing for St. Frank's when you were away! All you can do is to boast an' brag an' bully! It was a good day for St. Frank's when you left!"

The fellows stood round watching with interest. They expected to see Fullwood slaughtered on the spot. They wondered whether Handforth would drag his remains round the Triangle. But, strange to say, Handforth merely folded his arms, and nodded. He seemed deadly calm. There was never any knowing how Handforth would act. He was a most erratic fellow.

"Oh!" he said deliberately. "So I'm a bully and a boaster and a braggart?"

"Yes you are," said Fullwood, getting bold. "It's a pity you ever came back! The Remove was all right without you!"

"Good!" said Handforth. "Anything else?"

"Yes, I hope you get kicked out again."

"You do, do you?" roared Handforth at the top of his voice, and becoming violent in a flash. "I'm a bully, am I? All right—take that! And that! And that! And that!"

Biff! Crash! Bang! Biff!

"Ow—yaroooooh!" howled Fullwood wildly. "Guggghh! Yow!"

Handforth's fists shot out like piston-rods. First one, and then the other. Fullwood was not prepared for the onslaught, although he might have known that it was coming. Handforth simply went for him baldheaded.

In less than twenty seconds Fullwood was on the floor groaning. His nose was swelling his left eye would be black within an hour, his underlip was cut, and two teeth were loose.

"I'm a bully, am I?" demanded Handforth breathlessly.

"It looks very much like it," said Chambers of the Fifth, who was looking on. "The way you just treated Fullwood—"

"That wasn't bullying, you fathead—I was giving him a hiding!" snapped Handforth. "And if you're looking for trouble, my son, Ill jolly soon give you some! The Head's coming back in his old place, and so is Mr. Lee, and if any chap here dares to say a word against 'em—"

"Now then—now then!" said Fenton, of the Sixth, appearing on the scene. "What's all the noise about here? Oh, I might have known. You can't be in school an hour, Handforth, before you start making trouble!"

"I've been sticking up for the Head!" retorted Handforth. "I don't mean Trenton. He's a blackguard and a liar, and a scoundrel and a rogue, and a thief, and a burglar, and a conspirator, and a villain, and—and—"

"Anything else?" asked Fenton, interestedly. "Or can't you think of any more?"

"He's about six times as much as I've said," replied Handforth. "I could tell you all sorts of things—"

"But you're not going to," said Fenton. "I haven't got the time to waste listening to your dulcet tones, my lad. Everybody has got to get into Big Hall—at once! No backing out, mind you. Form up, and march in as soon as you can. I've got an idea there's something interesting in the wind."

The juniors didn't need any second telling.

They were as eager as possible to collect in Big Hall. As a rule it was considered a fearful bore to stand to attention in Hall, but this afternoon it was different.

Within twenty minutes the entire school had collected. It was rather an imposing spectacle. All the Forms were there—the fags, the Remove, and the seniors, with prefects on duty in various places. And at the head of each Form stood the Form master.

On the platform at the end there were a number of chairs, and a small table. On the table stood a jug of water, and two glasses.

The chairs were taken by Sir John Brent and his colleagues. So far nothing exciting had taken place. The Governors were talking together, looking serious and grave. And then Nelson Lee entered, closely followed by Dr. Stafford. Their appearance was the signal for a stir.

Fullwood and Co. attempted to hiss, but the effort was quickly smothered. A commotion was only just avoided by the timely action of

Church and McClure—who succeeded in holding Handforth back.

I half expected that a number of fellows would cheer. But there was no sign of this, and I concluded that they were waiting to see what was about to happen.

Close upon the heels of Nelson Lee and the late Head came the present Head, Mr. Hugh Trenton.

He was rather pale, but quite collected and calm.

But, looking closely, I could detect an uneasy glint in Trenton's eyes. He could not have known what was coming, but he undoubtedly suspected that things were not going to be very pleasant for him. And he was probably under the impression that he might be able to bluff things out.

It was Nelson Lee who came to the front of the platform. There was a dead silence as he raised his hand.

"Boys, I have something of the greatest importance to tell you," he said, his voice clearly audible in every corner of the great hall. "You may think it strange that I should return in this fashion, and you probably think it is stranger that I should address you now. I want you to listen carefully, and I may say at the outset that the events I am about to relate will sound highly improbable. Let me assure you that I can produce convincing proofs of every statement."

Nelson Lee paused, and turned to Mr. Trenton.

"During the course of my speech, I shall make many references to Mr. Trenton," he went on. "It is more than likely that Mr. Trenton will take objection. I cannot prevent this—but he will have every opportunity to answer for himself. Now, boys, I want you to listen very attentively."

"Go ahead, sir!" shouted somebody.

"I am taking this action because I consider it my duty to make the whole thing public—absolutely public!" went on Nelson Lee. "You will be somewhat surprised to learn that at the present moment there are two newspaper reporters in an ante-room near by, and they can hear every word that is being uttered. This whole matter shall be published broadcast. During the past few weeks harsh and unjust things have been said against Dr. Malcolm Stafford, and I am determined that your old Headmaster shall be thoroughly vindicated in the eyes of the world."

Nelson Lee paused for a moment, and everybody in the great hall waited intently for him to continue. I could see that Mr. Trenton was sitting quite still with a curl upon his lip. He was inwardly wild with anxiety, but he showed none of this.

"During the past month or so, Dr. Stafford has been subject to unaccountable and extraordinary fits of brutal violence," continued Nelson Lee quietly. "I am not exaggerating when I declare that Dr. Stafford has become,

(Continued on next page.)

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during these occasions, so violent as to be little better than a savage. I am not pretending to minimise the seriousness of this. But I declare positively and absolutely that Dr. Stafford himself was in no way to blame.

"You may assume that I was hinting that the cause of these violent attacks was temporary insanity. That is very far from the truth. The attacks were brought on solely and simply by means of a drug—a potent, terrible drug known as Zaxzol."

I saw Mr. Trenton start at the mention of the word, and he sat forward in his chair, listening more intently than ever, and with his lips drawn into a straight line.

"This drug is the invention of a man you know well," proceeded Nelson Lee. "It is of a very strange character, and unlike any other drug known to science. One small dose has the effect of changing a man's character completely. It deprives him of every manly and kindly feeling. He becomes savage—a brute—a murderous ruffian. I am speaking from personal experience, for I have tested this drug myself."

A murmur went round the hall as Lee paused for a moment.

"Tested it yourself, sir!" exclaimed somebody.

"Yes, I have!" said Nelson Lee. "And although it is not known, I narrowly escaped murdering Nipper at that time. He can tell you how dreadful I became. But I was incapable of controlling myself—for I was gripped hard in the influence of the drug."

"The Headmaster—that is to say, Dr. Stafford—took doses of this drug unwittingly. It was placed in his throat-tablets secretly, and Dr. Stafford thus drugged himself without knowing it. The result was that he went off into the strange fits of violence which you know so well. They were unnatural—they were not in his own nature. These fits were forced upon him—artificially brought about by means of Zaxzol!"

Another murmur went round the hall.

"Oh, it's too thick!" muttered Gulliver.

"Too tall for anythin'!"

"It—it can't be true—it's only a yarn!"

"That's all."

"There never was such a drug."

"Rank piffle."

All sorts of comments went round from mouth to mouth.

"Silence!" shouted the prefects.

"I am quite prepared, boys, for you to discredit what I have been telling you," exclaimed Nelson Lee. "The whole story sounds like a pure invention. I am quite aware of that fact. But it happens to be the truth, and so I am quite confident. Let me finish. I will tell you at once that the man who administered these doses of drug was Mr. Hugh Trenton."

"It's a lie!" shouted Trenton, leaping to his feet.

"It is the truth!" persisted Lee firmly.

"You are lying, you blackguardly cur!" shouted Trenton, white with fury. "Sir John Brent, I call upon you to turn this man out."

"Really, Mr. Trenton, I—I am quite help-

less," said Sir John, weakly. "I admit that the story sounds preposterous, but—but it is within your power to state your own case, and to refute the charge——"

"I do refute it!"

"Kindly allow Mr. Lee to finish," said Sir John. "It will be far better if you keep your temper. If there is no truth in the story, you have nothing to fear, Mr. Trenton. But I quite appreciate your feelings, and I sympathise with you. You may be sure that we shall listen with great care when you make your statement."

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Trenton.

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Trenton!" shouted Hubbard wildly.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Nelson Lee waited with set lips until the commotion subsided.

"I repeat, boys, that Mr. Trenton was the man who administered this drug to Dr. Stafford!" he exclaimed. "You may not believe this——"

"We don't!"

"It's a lie!"

"Very well—I shall leave you to judge whether I am speaking the truth, or whether I am lying!" said Nelson Lee calmly. "That is the very object of this publicity. For I am perfectly satisfied, boys, that your decision will be a just one. Ever since Mr. Trenton came to this school, he had one object in mind—and that object was to drive Dr. Stafford away."

"We don't believe it!"

"I think it will be better if you reserve your statements until the end," said Nelson Lee gently. "Kindly allow me to continue, boys. At first I was greatly puzzled by these violent attacks on the part of Dr. Stafford. But, after careful investigation, I discovered the truth. I found that Mr. Trenton was the culprit. I may add that one night, some weeks ago, an attempt was made to murder me in my bedroom. The man who made that attempt was Mr. Trenton!"

"Do you expect anybody to believe that?" demanded Trenton harshly.

"I do not expect that my bare word will suffice," replied Nelson Lee. "But if happens that you were unwise enough to leave finger-prints behind you. I photographed those finger-prints—and compared them with your own finger-prints the next day, Mr. Trenton. Those finger-prints, I may add, are now in the hands of the police."

"Bluff—absurd bluff!" jeered Mr. Trenton.

"I will do you justice by saying that I am of the opinion that you were under the influence of your own drug at the time," said Nelson Lee. "Whether you took this drug deliberately, I do not know, and perhaps I never shall. Now, boys," he added, "I come to the final scenes before Dr. Stafford left St. Frank's."

The school was restless now, and listened with growing impatience.

"I had practically all my facts complete for the exposure of this conspiracy," said Nelson Lee. "And it so happened that the school Governors, including Sir John Brent, were coming to St. Frank's. You remember the

morning they arrived—it was only a few days ago. I had been taking particular precautions in order to safeguard Dr. Stafford from any possible attack. I felt convinced that he was safe while Sir John and his colleagues were with him. I remained in my own study awaiting a summons to go to Dr. Stafford. While I was there two strangers were brought to me by Tubbs."

"That's right, sir—I remember 'em"—shouted a shrill voice from one of the rear doors. "Queer-looking men they was——"

"I think I can relate the incident, if you please, Tubbs," said Nelson Lee. "I suspected at once that these two men were confederates of Mr. Trenton. It was my opinion that they hoped to get me out of the school on some pretext. But their intention was a much more drastic one, as I soon discovered. These two men fell upon me and attacked me. Before I could offer resistance they flung me to the floor and rendered me insensible."

"Having done this, they forced whiskey down my throat, and poured some of the spirit over my clothing. As a result, it appeared that I had been taking a large quantity of liquor——"

"A likely story!" said Mr. Trenton, sneeringly.

"Tell it to the marines!" shouted Fullwood.

"Silence!"

"Whilst I lay insensible in my own study, Mr. Trenton came in," continued Lee. "He sent for Dr. Stafford, and the very instant that Dr. Stafford arrived, he was sprung upon and attacked by Mr. Trenton. A violent dose of Zaxzol was administered—with the result, as you know, that Dr. Stafford gave a display of savagery and violence which surpassed all his other efforts. Sir John Brent held an inquiry at once, and that same day Dr. Stafford was dismissed in disgrace, and I left the school at the same time—also in disgrace."

"You got what you deserved!" shouted somebody.

"Rather!"

"It's the truth," roared Handforth. "If any of you chaps don't believe it, I'll punch your noses! You rotters! You disbelieving bounders—Mr. Lee has got all these facts together, and he knows——"

"Yah!"

"Shut up!"

"Dry up, Handy!"

"I have stated the simple facts," concluded Nelson Lee, raising his voice slightly. "I am aware that the story sounds improbable, and, indeed, quite impossible. But, as I have said before, it happens to be a statement of fact. I thought it right that you should know all these details!"

"It's a put-up yarn!"

"We don't believe you!"

"Booo—booo!"

"Hissssss!"

Hissing and booing broke out in all parts of the hall, and Nelson Lee stood there calmly listening to it. He had, as a matter of fact, expected something of this kind, and so it came as no surprise to him.

Handforth was nearly out of hand. About six juniors were clinging to him, or goodness

knows what would have happened. He wanted to go charging about knocking the fellows down. But this, of course, would have led to very serious trouble, and the juniors clung to him desperately.

"Lemme go, you rotters!" howled Handforth. "Do you think I'm going to stand here and listen to this hooting? They're mad—all of 'em. They're absolutely dotty! They don't know the truth when they hear it! Three cheers for Mr. Lee!"

"Hurrah!"

I shouted at the top of my voice, and about sixteen or seventeen other fellows echoed me. But the vast majority of the school hooted louder than ever. Even I had hardly expected such a demonstration as this.

"Three cheers for Dr. Stafford!" I yelled, waving my hand.

"Hurrah!"

"Boooh—hooh!"

Again came the thin cheer, and the mighty outburst of derision. And then somebody called for a cheer for Mr. Trenton. And the old hall rocked with the tremendous response.

Mr. Trenton was on his feet, and he smiled complacently as he stood there. There was no mistaking the feelings of the school—and Mr. Trenton was extremely glad that he had remained. He could see that it would be comparatively easy for him to bluff the whole thing out. He would have no difficulty in getting on the right side of the Governors. Sir John Brent and his colleagues were already conferring together. They were all looking angry and impatient.

"Perfectly preposterous!" said Sir James Henson. "The whole story is a rank invention from start to finish. I am amazed, Sir John, that Mr. Lee has had the audacity to bring forth such a concoction of lies!"

"I am not merely amazed, but I am infuriated!" said Sir John Brent, harshly. "Had I known what was coming, I would never have allowed this meeting. We shall be the laughing-stock of the country! There can be no truth whatever in this absurd story. A drug that can change a man's character! Pah! Ridiculous!"

"Absurd!" snorted Mr. Stevens.

And, unanimously, the Governors rejected the "yarn." It certainly seemed altogether too impossible to be credited.

And the school continued cheering for Mr. Trenton, and hissing Nelson Lee and Dr. Stafford. The excitement was at its height.

CHAPTER VII.

PUT TO THE TEST.



DR. STAFFORD was pale and shaken.

There was a look of entreaty in his eyes as he gazed at Nelson Lee. He wanted this scene to be over—he wanted to escape. Instead of the triumph which had been promised, he had received nothing but abject humiliation. His glass of bitterness was filled to the brim.

"It is useless, Mr. Lee," he said huskily. "I feared that this would be the result. Nothing else could have been expected."

"Have patience, Dr. Stafford," said Nelson Lee. "We have not finished yet. I have still my trump card to play—and that, I fancy, will be a card which Mr. Trenton will be unable to beat."

"I hope so, but it seems futile," said Dr. Stafford, with a sigh.

The commotion in the body of the hall continued, in spite of all the efforts of the prefects to stop it. I was glad to see that the gov'nor remained perfectly calm.

I knew the reason—he was quite confident of the result.

For he had not finished yet.

He advanced to the edge of the platform, and raised his hand. This was the signal for a fresh burst of hooting, and it was absolutely impossible for Nelson Lee to speak.

At last he turned away, and went to Sir John Brent.

"Has not this scene proceeded far enough, Mr. Lee?" demanded Sir John angrily. "Would it not be wiser to dismiss the boys?"

"Not yet, Sir John," said Nelson Lee. "You undertook to let me carry this thing right through—and I have by no means concluded. I should like you to address the boys, and appeal to them for fair play."

Sir John shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well," he said. "But the whole thing is quite disgraceful!"

The chairman of the Governors rose, and held up his hand. There was an immediate silence.

"I quite understand, boys, how you feel about this matter," said Sir John pompously.

"Mr. Lee has not quite finished, and he would like to address you once more——"

"We don't want to hear him, sir!"

"We'd like to see him kicked out!"

"That is not the British way!" said Sir John, curtly. "Whatever your opinion may be, however much you may feel in this affair, it is only just and right that you should listen impartially. I appeal for fair play for Mr. Lee—and I may tell you frankly that I find it impossible to credit what he has told us. But fair play is what every man has a right to expect."

The commotion died down at once.

And when Nelson Lee advanced again, there was complete silence. The fellows only needed that one reminder. I looked on, and chuckled inwardly. This was simply lovely. The gov'nor was reserving all his trump cards for the finish—and he would soon plank them on the table one after the other.

"I am not surprised that you have, to use a somewhat vulgar expression, 'given me the bird'!" exclaimed Nelson Lee pleasantly. "But surely, boys, you do not imagine that I have come to St. Frank's with this story, lacking the evidence to support it? I can assure you that my evidence is absolutely final; complete in every detail. I have not told you this tale just for the sake of creating a sensation. I have given it to you because it is the truth, and I have complete proofs of everything I have said."

"Where are they?"

"Why don't you produce them?"

"We don't believe your yarns!"

"I don't ask you to believe them, unsupported by the evidence," said Nelson Lee.

"However, I must confess that I am just a little disappointed that you should all be so ready to set me down as a liar and a scoundrel. I hoped that you would have better faith in me, for I have been at St. Frank's a sufficient time, I think, for you to know me."

"We believe you, sir!" roared Handforth.

"Every word, sir!" shouted Pitt.

"Same here!" declared Trotwood. "I'm on your side, sir!"

"Hear, hear!"

"However, this is not the time for personal feeling," continued Lee. "There are one or two further facts which I must tell you. With Mr. Trenton in this conspiracy there were a number of other men associated. The chief men in the conspiracy were Professor Holroyd Garth, the well-known scientist, Dr. Roger Paxton, a West End physician, and Mr. Henry Chandler, a highly intellectual journalist."

The school began to listen again, but with the same intolerant-impatience. It seemed ridiculous to suppose that such well-known men could be accused of villainy. And yet Nelson Lee had stated the fact publicly.

"Really, Mr. Lee, I must protest!" exclaimed Sir John Brent, rising to his feet. "I cannot allow such statements to be made. You have declared that these gentlemen are associated with Mr. Trenton in a criminal conspiracy. That is nothing more nor less than an outrageous libel!"

"It is the truth, Sir John."

"It is a libel, sir!" shouted Sir John. "I have read many of Professor Garth's works, and I know him to be an intellectual gentleman. For you to traduce his name in this fashion is scandalous——"

"Wait, Sir John!" interrupted Nelson Lee quietly. "You will probably be surprised to learn that Professor Garth, Dr. Paxton, and Mr. Chandler were placed under arrest by Scotland Yard detectives at a late hour last night."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Sir John. "Can this be true?"

"It is perfectly true," said Nelson Lee.

"These three men, eminent as they appear to be, are under arrest, and will be brought before the magistrate on a charge of conspiracy and treason to-morrow morning. Mr. Trenton will enter the dock with them."

Trenton was clutching at his chair for support.

He knew that Lee had been speaking the truth. And at last the realisation of disaster came upon him. His associates were under arrest!

This was a staggering blow, and all his sense of security vanished. He knew that Lee was speaking the truth—otherwise he would not have dared to make such a statement publicly.

Quite a number of fellows noticed Mr. Trenton's changed attitude. He had gone as pale as a sheet, and was trembling visibly. This didn't look as though he were entirely innocent,

and a much-wronged party. And seniors and juniors in all parts of Big Hall began to wonder.

Had they been wrong? Had they treated Nelson Lee unjustly?

The turning point had nearly arrived.

But Trenton pulled himself together, and grimly told himself that his only course was to brazen the matter out. It was impossible for him to do anything else. He had an idea that he would succeed.

"You see, boys, I have not come here just in order to provide you with something to talk about," said Nelson Lee. "I have all my facts complete; and I would never have taken this action unless I desired to publicly vindicate Dr. Stafford—and I must admit it—myself. Professor Garth and the other men I mentioned were arrested upon evidence which I placed into the hands of Scotland Yard. And it is now for Mr. Trenton to openly confess his guilt. It is the only course for him to adopt."

Mr. Trenton laughed harshly.

"An innocent man does not confess!" he exclaimed, with a theatrical wave of his hand. "Boys, listen to me! I tell you earnestly that this whole story is a fabrication from start to finish. It is quite possible that I am friendly with Professor Garth and the two other gentlemen Mr. Lee mentioned. But my association with them was merely of a friendly character. I had no suspicion that they were liable to arrest on any such charge as conspiracy or treason. It is because of my friendship, no doubt, that Mr. Lee has chosen to make this abominable charge. I defy him to produce any proofs of his ridiculous story. I swear to you that I have never harmed Dr. Stafford in the slightest degree—in any way, whatsoever! Mr. Lee cannot prove his story."

"We're with you, sir!" shouted Fullwood.

"Rather!" yelled a number of other fellows.

Sir John Brent stepped forward.

"I really think this matter has gone far enough," he said. "We must do our best to bring it to a conclusion as quickly as possible. I cannot believe Mr. Lee's statements. I do not intend to convey that I am accusing him of falsehood. But I am certainly of the opinion that he is entirely mistaken. His views are misplaced—his suspicions are unjustified. For, after all, they are merely suspicions, and nothing more. What evidence can you produce, Mr. Lee, that Mr. Trenton ever administered a drug to Dr. Stafford?"

"I can produce a great deal of evidence——" began Lee.

"No such drug exists—and never has existed!" interrupted Mr. Trenton angrily. "Zaxzol! Whoever heard the word? There is no drug in the world with that name, or with such properties. It is simply and entirely an invention of Mr. Lee's. He has designed to discredit me, and he thinks he will succeed. But I can face this absurd charge with confidence."

"You need not excite yourself, Mr. Trenton," said Sir John Brent mildly. "Let me tell you, sir, that I do not believe that any such drug does exist. And it is for you to refute this entire statement. I should like you to answer the charge at once."

"I will do so," said Mr. Trenton, turning to the boys.

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, sir!"

"Boys, Sir John Brent has requested me to answer the charges which Mr. Lee has brought forward. Need I say that these charges are trumped up and utterly without foundation?"

"No, sir! We know you're O.K.!"

"Rather!"

"Thank you, boys," said Mr. Trenton. "I will analyse the statements which Mr. Lee has made. To begin with, he declares that I have been conspiring against Dr. Stafford ever since I arrived at the school. How can such a thing be possible? What reason should I have to plot in such a way?"

"To get yourself into his shoes!" yelled Handforth.

"Yes, rather!" shouted Pitt. "That's why you conspired!"

"Yah!"

"Shut up!"

Mr. Trenton waited while the noise subsided.

"That aspect of the matter had not occurred to me," he said at length. "It may appear to my enemies that I attempted to get Dr. Stafford in disgrace so that I should become Headmaster of St. Frank's. But surely such a suggestion is palpably absurd on the face of it? I had not the faintest indication that I should be chosen for the Headmastership. It came as a great and delightful surprise to me, and I took over my duties with the firm resolve to do my best for the school and for my scholars."

"Before Dr. Stafford was dismissed, I held the position of science master; and surely I could not possibly hope to gain the Headmastership? Therefore it would be quite absurd for the charge to be brought that I plotted against the Head with the object of usurping him."

"Of course it would, sir!"

"Again, how would it be possible for me to administer this mythical drug?" went on Trenton. "Mr. Lee has mentioned something about throat tablets. Would it be possible for a drug to be injected into throat tablets without the fact being known to Dr. Stafford? The very suggestion is so ridiculous that I shall not take the trouble to analyse it more thoroughly. And now, let me point out to you how insane the very suggestion of such a drug actually is. Most of you boys have attended chemistry lessons. Quite a number of you are well acquainted with drugs and chemicals. How would it be possible for such a drug to exist? A drug, mind you, which does no actual harm to a man, but which deprives him of part of his nature? How childish and puerile! How impossible!"

"There isn't such a drug, sir!" shouted several boys.

"Quite so, my lads; there is not such a drug!" declared Mr. Trenton. "Your own common sense tells you that. We know drugs that produce insensibility, and drugs which produce a fictitious vitality—such as cocaine; but the possibility of a drug which changes an ordinarily kindly man into a heartless savage is more like the ravings of a sensational novelist."

than actual fact. I ask you to set down this whole story as an ingenious fabrication. I can assure you that I have never caused the slightest harm to Dr. Stafford, and I ask you to——"

Mr. Trenton could get no further.

The old hall rang with cheers and shouts of support. He had swayed the school round to his side again. His speech had had the effect of making the fellows believe in him.

This, of course, was the first they had ever heard of the mysterious Zaxzol. I had known about it for weeks past, and I knew it to be an actual fact. But the rank and file of the fellows knew nothing. And they could not believe that any such drug had ever been invented or discovered.

Mr. Trenton managed to make himself heard again.

"That is my contention," he declared. "This drug is an invention of Mr. Lee's own brain, and does not——"

Mr. Trenton paused, as Nelson Lee withdrew from his pocket a small phial. It was securely corked, and Lee looked at it calmly and thoughtfully. Then he held it up so that all could see.

"Well, Mr. Trenton?" he asked smoothly. "You declare that no such drug as Zaxzol exists? I maintain that it does; and, furthermore, I declare that this phial contains a sufficient quantity of the drug to drive twenty men into a madhouse!"

Mr. Trenton stared at the phial blankly.

"Where did you get that?" he asked, his voice sharp and strained.

"This phial was in your study, Mr. Trenton," said Nelson Lee coldly.

"It's a lie!"

"Pardon me, Mr. Trenton, but Mr. Lee is speaking the truth!" put in Sir John Brent. "At his request, I accompanied him to your study, and I was with Mr. Lee when this little bottle was found locked within your desk."

Mr. Trenton fought for his breath.

"It was planted there!" he shouted hoarsely.

"I think not," said Sir John, looking at Trenton curiously. "Your desk was locked, and I noted that the lock was of a very special pattern. The desk, in fact, could not have been opened without a special key."

"Then how did you find this bottle?" demanded Mr. Trenton.

"Mr. Lee smashed the desk open by force," said Sir John. "I was quite opposed to the plan, but Mr. Lee would not hear of any other. You have nothing whatever to fear, Mr. Trenton. If no such drug as Zaxzol exists, there is no reason why you should be alarmed. I may say that your present conduct is highly significant, and I am beginning to suspect——"

"There is no reason why I should be afraid!" shouted Trenton harshly. "As a matter of fact, that phial contains a mouth-wash. I placed it in there only a day or two ago."

"Indeed!" said Nelson Lee grimly. "Are you sure, Mr. Trenton?"

"Absolutely sure!"

"And you said, only a few moments ago,



Falling backwards, I landed fairly and squarely in the very centre of the skylight. (See page 8.)

that this little bottle was planted in your desk."

"I—I——"

Trenton paused, unable to find words, and the school listened with bated breath. Once again the boys were beginning to doubt, for here, right before them, Trenton had been bowled out in a lie. It was the first direct lie that had been exposed, and there was no getting out of it. Only a few minutes earlier Trenton had declared that the phial had been planted in his desk; now he made out that it contained a mouth-wash that he himself had placed it there.

"What did I tell you?" chanted Handforth. "He's bowled out! He's finished! Just you wait, my sons! Just you——"

"Dry up, ass!"

"I am quite prepared to put the whole matter to a test," said Nelson Lee calmly. "You have declared, Mr. Trenton, that this bottle contains mouth-wash. Do you adhere to that statement?"

"I do!" declared Trenton. "I—I was confused when I stated that the phial must have been planted in my desk. You are trying to trap me, and it is only to be expected that I should make one or two mistakes. Yes, the contents of that phial are perfectly harmless."

"Good!" said Nelson Lee shortly.

He turned to the table and picked up the jug of water. Then he poured out a quantity into each of the two glasses. Taking one of these, he uncorked the phial and steadily placed two drops of a clear liquid into the water.

He held the glass out to Mr. Trenton.

"There you are, Mr. Trenton," he said smoothly. "This is just a little test for you. If I have placed two drops of mouth-wash into this water, it cannot harm you, as you will admit. Drink—you ought to have no fear."

Mr. Trenton turned livid.

"I maintain, however, that this water now contains a sufficient quantity of your own drug to convert you into a savage!" said Nelson Lee. "If I am right, you will probably refuse to drink; but if my story is a fabrication, as you maintain, you will surely have no objection to drinking!"

Mr. Trenton found his voice. He gave a harsh laugh and swept round.

"I will not take part in any such foolery!" he shouted thickly. "This is another trick in order to discredit me! But it won't work, you infernal cur! I'm not drinking!"

"You positively refuse?" asked Nelson Lee. "Remember that the whole question now rests with you, Mr. Trenton. It is within your power to vindicate yourself by the simple act of drinking two drops of mouth-wash!"

"I—I made a mistake!" gasped Trenton. "It—it is not mouth-wash; it is a—a poison, a deadly poison! I have been making some experiments in the laboratory. I was mistaken just now; the bottle with the mouth-wash is slightly larger. It is poison in that glass, and I will not drink at your command!"

A murmur rang through the whole school. This was so palpable a wriggle that even the dullest fellow could not fail to understand. Twice Mr. Trenton had altered his statement regarding the phial, and it was clearly a falsehood to declare that the phial contained poison.

"Will you drink this water?" asked Nelson Lee grimly.

"No, curse you, I won't!" sneered Trenton.

CHAPTER VIII.

NELSON LEE'S TRIUMPH!



EVERYBODY seemed to be talking at once.

Nelson Lee set the glass down on the table and turned to Sir John Brent. Mr. Trenton was clutching at the table, ashen to the lips

and in the last stages of fear.

"I think, Sir John, that the evidence is sufficient!" said Nelson Lee quietly. "You have seen what has taken place, and it must be obvious to you that Mr. Trenton is afraid—"

"I will not be made a fool of!" panted Trenton.

"Come, come, sir!" said Sir John Brent. "This really will not do. I must insist upon a more satisfactory statement. You have declared that the phial contains mouth-wash and poison. Mr. Lee is equally certain it contains this mysterious drug. Surely you can see, Mr. Trenton, that you have but to drink and the matter will be finished?"

"It is poison, I tell you!"

"Really, sir, that story will not do!" said Sir John sharply. "I am amazed; indeed, I am becoming highly suspicious. Your actions, Mr. Trenton, have become more and more curious. You were emphatic in

—your statement that the phial contained mouthwash!"

Trenton said nothing. He was trying to collect his thoughts. He was attempting to find some way out of this hopeless position.

In the meantime, all the fellows were excitedly talking. A wave of changed feeling had passed over the school. Mr. Trenton's attitude—his looks, his words—all told against him.

He looked like a beaten man—a man who knew he was in a corner, and that there was no escape from that corner. Until a few minutes ago, he had been confident, calm, and perfectly at ease; but all that had changed. It was Nelson Lee who was at his ease. Trenton was like a trapped animal.

"Dash it all, I believe Mr. Lee's right, after all!" said Hubbard. "That yarn about drugging the Head must be true. If it was all a fib, Trenton would have swilled that stuff down in no time!"

"He says it's poison!" exclaimed Fullwood.

"Rats!"

"He only changed it to poison when he found he had to drink some," said Reginald Pitt. "In fact, he's floundering, and he doesn't know what to do. That stuff was found in his study, and if he drinks it and goes off into a violent fit, it'll prove as clear as a bell that Mr. Lee's right in everything he's been saying. But Trenton won't dare to drink it."

"Of course he won't!" I exclaimed. "But perhaps the gov'nor will force him to!"

Trenton, as a matter of fact, had just seen a loophole of hope—of salvation. He noticed, with intent gaze, that there were two glasses containing water on the table. They were standing fairly close together, but not so close that any confusion would result.

And Mr. Trenton also took heed of the fact that Nelson Lee was talking with Dr. Stafford, and Sir John Brent was conferring with the other governors.

Quick as a flash, Mr. Trenton reached forward and changed the positions of the two glasses. His body concealed the action from the school. It was so swift an action that it could hardly have been observed.

"Very well," snapped Trenton suddenly. "I will consent to this ridiculous farce! I will drink the water, and prove that the whole story is fabricated from start to finish!"

Nelson Lee turned, and saw Mr. Trenton pick up the glass—apparently the right glass. The new Head held the glass aloft so that all could see.

"See, boys!" he shouted. "I will drink, and you will see the result for yourselves. I am not afraid of this childish test!"

Everybody looked with eagerness, and some wondered if there was some trickery at work. But Mr. Trenton raised the glass to his lips, and, with one gulp, swallowed the contents. He then turned to Nelson Lee with a slight sneer upon his face.

"And when is the effect supposed to be due?" he asked contemptuously.

"Roughly, the first signs will commence in about five minutes from now," replied

Nelson Lee. "The dose is a somewhat strong one, and the first symptoms are not long in making their appearance."

"We shall see!" said Trenton calmly.

"We certainly shall!" agreed Nelson Lee. "You need not think, Mr. Trenton, that I failed to observe your neat little manoeuvre of a moment ago. Oh, yes! I saw you change the two glasses!"

Trenton fired up into a fury.

"You infernal liar!" he shouted. "I did nothing of the sort!"

"I can afford to ignore your insults," said Nelson Lee. "Whilst you were engaged in talking with Sir John Brent I took the precaution to place two drops of Zaxzol in the second glass!"

"Great Heaven!" gasped Trenton huskily.

"It has alarmed you, eh?" said Nelson Lee grimly. "You cannot tell me that that statement is a lie, Mr. Trenton, for Mr. Stevens and Mr. Hale both saw me place the two drops in the second glass. And now we will wait for the first symptoms to appear. It will be rather strange if two drops of mouthwash produce the results I have outlined!"

Mr. Hugh Trenton clenched his fists, and it seemed for a moment as though he were about to hurl himself headlong at Nelson Lee. But then, with a sudden snarl, he turned on his heel and ran with all his speed across the platform. He was fleeing towards the exit door—he was making a bid for liberty!

The school fairly yelled with excitement—for now the truth was obvious. If Trenton were guiltless he would never have attempted to escape. His actions proved that he was a guilty man.

"After him, sir!" roared Handforth desperately.

But Nelson Lee made no move. And the reason for this was quite clear a second later. For, just as Trenton arrived in the doorway it became filled with the burly figure of a stranger—a stranger, that is, to most of the fellows in the school. But I at once recognised it as the form of Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard.

"I don't think so, sir," said the chief inspector curtly.

He made one swift movement, and the next second Trenton staggered back.

The excitement was now almost overwhelming.

"I should have performed this duty earlier, Mr. Trenton, but I delayed action at Mr. Lee's request," said Lennard curtly. "I arrest you on a warrant for conspiracy and treason. I must warn you that anything you say may be used in evidence——"

"It's a lie—a lie!" screamed Trenton wildly. "I'm innocent! Lee has been concocting the whole charge against me. The cur—the skunk—the——"

"Steady!" said Lennard curtly.

For Trenton had made use of one or two oaths—and they sounded strange on the lips of a man who occupied the position of Headmaster at St. Frank's. However, it was becoming fairly clear that Trenton was showing

the first signs of the recently administered drug.

He was brought forward by Nelson Lee and Lennard, and forced into a chair. His hands were manacled, and his ankles were tied securely to the chair legs. This was necessary, for he would probably become terribly violent.

Nelson Lee had thought carefully before resorting to this measure. But he decided that the boys should see Trenton in one of these fits. They had seen the Head on several occasions. Now they would see what effect it would have upon Trenton himself. He would come to no harm.

And, before many minutes had elapsed, Trenton began to show exactly the same symptoms that the boys knew so well in Dr. Stafford. He went off into loud bursts of violent language. His very appearance altered, for he became like a wild animal. And everybody watched, horrified and impressed.

The governors were staggered by what they saw.

And then, before Trenton's violent fit was at its worst, he was wheeled off the platform. chair included, by the Chief Inspector and two of his men. And that, as a matter of fact, was the last that St. Frank's ever saw of the disgraced and degraded science master.

For he was taken straight out to a waiting motor-car—bound up hand and foot. And he was conveyed to London—and ultimately brought up for trial with his villainous associates.

In Big Hall the excitement was tremendous.

Both Nelson Lee and Dr. Stafford were vindicated. The exciting events of the afternoon had proved beyond question that Nelson Lee had been right all along the line. Trenton's actions towards the end had proved him to be a guilty man. And the drug itself was no fable—no myth. It was an actual reality.

"Boys, I think you owe Dr. Stafford an apology," said Nelson Lee, advancing towards the edge of the platform.

"We owe you one, sir!" shouted Armstrong heartily.

"Rather!"

"We're awfully sorry, sir——"

"You were right all the time, sir!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Lee!" roared Chambers of the Fifth.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The cheers which had been given for Mr. Trenton were as nothing compared to the mighty roar which shook the very rafters. I glowed with triumph. The gov'nor's moment had come at last—as I always knew it would come.

"Speech—speech!"

"Tell us how you did it, sir!"

"I would prefer Dr. Stafford to make a speech!" said Nelson Lee.

Dr. Stafford rose to his feet, and came forward.

"You don't know how it pleases me, boys, to find myself amongst you once more," said the old Head, in his deep, clear voice. "I was pained and grieved beyond measure to hear you making such a hostile demonstration against Mr. Nelson Lee. All through he has been

staunch and true to me, and he has worked his hardest to get at the truth, and to effect the arrest of those who plotted against me. He has succeeded at last, and, I hope, he has also succeeded in convincing you that your judgment of me on an earlier occasion was misplaced and unduly harsh——"

"We want you back, sir!"

"You mustn't leave St. Frank's again, sir!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Dr. Stafford!"

"We all apologise, sir!" shouted a Sixth Former.

"Hear, hear!"

"Thank you, boys—I feel that you mean this from your heart!" said the Head, much moved. "I am not sure whether I shall ever be your Headmaster again——"

"One moment, Dr. Stafford, please!" exclaimed Sir John Brent, striding forward. "You will pardon my interrupting in this fashion, but I should like to say just a few words to the boys before you continue."

The Head bowed, and stood aside.

"Boys of St. Frank's, I feel that it is my duty to publicly apologise to Dr. Stafford and to Mr. Nelson Lee!" exclaimed Sir John heartily. "I tender this apology on behalf of my colleagues and myself with the knowledge that it is absolutely necessary. Both Dr. Stafford and Mr. Lee have been maligned and insulted. They have been misjudged in the harshest possible manner."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good for you, sir!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Lee and the Head!"

"Hurrah!"

"I wish to say a few words regarding Mr. Nelson Lee's activity," continued Sir John. "In spite of repeated setbacks, in spite of an entire lack of sympathy from myself, he has persisted in his efforts. I have no hesitation in openly declaring that I was blinded by Mr. Trenton's smooth tongue. That may sound somewhat incongruous, but you will understand what I mean. We now know that Trenton was a scheming, cunning villain, who came to St. Frank's with the deliberate intention of driving Dr. Stafford away. He succeeded in that object, and I was blind enough to allow Dr. Stafford to go. I now ask for Dr. Stafford's pardon, and I shall deem it an honour if he will continue with his duties as Headmaster in this school, and I trust that the whole unfortunate incident will be allowed to——"

Sir John could get no further. The cheering which broke out was thunderous. And when it began to die down Handforth's voice made itself heard.

"What about Mr. Lee?" he bawled. "If Mr. Lee doesn't come back we'll all go on strike!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Sir John smiled.

Needless to say, my apologies to Dr. Stafford are supplemented by my apologies to Mr. Nelson Lee," he said. "We all hope that Mr. Lee will consent to take over the charge of the Ancient House once more. I feel that

there is no better man in the whole kingdom for the position——"

"Hurrah!"

"'Rah, 'rah, 'rah!"

"Good old Mr. Lee!"

"We're longing to have you back, sir!"

"We can't get on without you, sir!"

Everybody was satisfied. And when the fellows at last cleared out of the hall, they were laughing and shouting and cheering still. The afternoon had been a sensational one, indeed.

And it could hardly be realised that the whole trouble was over, and that Mr. Hugh Trenton would never be seen at St. Frank's again. His downfall had been swift and unexpected.

Nelson Lee, of course, had heaps of other evidence to produce—but the school required no more. All the boys had seen quite enough to convince them that justice had been done.

"Well, it's all over!" said Handforth, out in the Triangle. "And now we're going to have a quiet time. I suppose? By George! It's beginning to rain!"

"That doesn't matter!" said Pitt. "Everything in the garden's lovely!"

"Rather!"

But the rain, as it happened, was to play a very important part in the lives of the St. Frank's fellows in the near future.

In Nelson Lee's study I was shaking the guv'nor's hand.

"Great, sir!" I said heartily. "It all went off like a dream. Thank goodness Trenton's gone, and everything worked out O.K."

"Yes, the excitement is over at last," said Nelson Lee. "And now, I suppose, we shall be permitted to get on with the serious work of the term. It is about time, too."

"Yes, sir, we shall have to buck up about the football," I said. "And I was going to ask you about that cadet corps. I've got an idea of starting one pretty soon; I think it would buck the school up, you know."

"It is quite an excellent idea, Nipper, and you have my full permission to go straight ahead with it," said Nelson Lee. "It will also provide the boys with something to occupy their excited minds. After all these sensations they will probably need something out of the common to satisfy them. St. Frank's has no cadet corps, and this will be a good opportunity, I think, to bring such an institution into being."

"It's going to be done, guv'nor," I said promptly.

And that evening the whole Remove was discussing the scheme. Most of the fellows were quite excited about the idea—especially when they knew it had Nelson Lee's approval.

The St. Frank's Cadet Corps was to be a reality—and very shortly, too. But we little realised, at that time, what stirring adventures and mysterious happenings were to follow immediately upon the formation of the Cadet Corps!

We had just been passing through some strenuous times, but the future held something even more dramatic!

THE END.



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. Tom and his chums overhear a villainous scheme of Foster Moore's, the usher. They are caught out of bounds, and Tom gets a dose of "solitary," but Moore does not suspect that his secret is known.

(Now read on.)

CHAPTER XVII.

Burglars.

"BUT what does all this mean?" asked Tom in surprise.

"Our clothes were put by the fire to dry," said Sam. "I guessed they would be, and so I came out to make sure. Finding it was so, I thought I might as well light a lamp and get supper ready. Here it is, very snug and comfortable. We can enjoy ourselves."

"But isn't it risky?" asked Tom, "not that I think much of the risk, but the secret of getting in and out of solitary might get known."

"How?"

"Well! I see you have broken into the meat-safe," said Tom, pointing to a cupboard with wire doors, one of which bore signs of violent treatment.

"Yes, I did that," said Sam, with a chuckle.

"Then eating here," said Tom. "Why not have had supper in the cells?"

"Oh!" said Sam, "I wanted to have it comfortable. Peg away! We can wash the grub down with tea."

He had, as a matter of fact, got the tea in the pot, and a kettle of water on the fire. Tom chuckled, and told Sam he deserved a medal.

They sat by the fire, and ate away with the ravenous appetites engendered by enforced abstinence. Sam made the tea, and they drank

to each other with great gusto, in short, enjoyed themselves tremendously.

"Now I shall sleep," said Tom.

"Yes," returned Tom, "and so shall I. We shall have to hang our things before the fire and skedaddle back in our pyjamas. But before we go we must leave evidence of a visit by burglars, just to account for the state of the meat safe."

Between them they "made hay" of the kitchen, opening all the drawers, and scattering the dusters and odd rubbish about the floor.

Then they visited the pantry and places where Wooden Jerry cleaned his knives and boots.

They mixed his plate powder and blacking together, bent a plated fork as if testing it for silver, and, finally, unfastened and raised the pantry window.

"There," said Sam, "now everything is accounted for! Off with your toggery, throw it down on this chair. The burglars have done that, you know."

They took off their clothes and returned to their places of confinement.

Rolled up once more in his blanket, Tom was soon sound asleep.

The next day Tom and Sam were released in time for breakfast.

Wooden Jerry brought them their dried clothes, and it was clear that he was mentally and physically disturbed.

"Dress yourself and come out," he said to Tom. "It's lucky you ain't roasted alive."

"What's the matter?" asked Tom.

"Everything is the matter," Jerry answered. "Thieves, burglars, murderers—this place was broken into by a whole gang of 'em last night."

Tom affected the utmost astonishment, and Jerry, ready and willing to talk even to a foe on such a thrilling subject, proceeded to treat him to a highly imaginative story.

"Lucky for everybody," he said, "that I heard 'em. Just as they were coming out of the kitchen to murder us all, I heard a footstep, so up I gets and goes at 'em."

"How many were there?" asked Tom, in tones of pretended awe.

"I counted seven," said Jerry, "and there seemed to be more behind 'em. Anyway, when they cleared out afore me it was just like a run of a flock of sheep."

"And why did they run?" asked Tom.

"Why did they?" exclaimed Jerry. "Warn't I arter 'em? But it's a job I'm not going to do again, unless I get a rise. I ain't tacklin' gangs of burglars on my wages!"

Wooden Jerry had spun this precious yarn to Mr. Wrasper, who had sent for the village policeman. That intelligent officer put the "burglary" down to poachers, and he thought he could put his hand on them.

"The only point is, can we prove it?" he said.

The cook was terrified out of her life, but Jane, the housemaid, took the event very composedly. She was even seen to laugh when it was mentioned.

Meeting Tom in the hall after breakfast, she asked him if he had enjoyed his breakfast.

"Oh, yes!" he answered, with a puzzled look.

"I should not have thought you had any appetite for it," said Jane, with a smile.

"Why not?" asked Tom.

"You had such a good LATE supper," Jane replied.

Tom began to feel rather uncomfortable, but a good-humoured laugh from Jane reassured him.

"I heard you," she said, "and came down to see who it was. We once had a boy who walked in his sleep, and I thought we might have got another of the same sort. I peeped through the kitchen keyhole, and saw you and Master Smith enjoying yourselves. It was not my duty to stop you, and I did not. Nor is it my duty to report you, and, of course, I shall not do so."

Jane tripped away, and Tom felt very much relieved.

He had heard of Jane being kind to the boys, and he now saw that she was indeed their friend.

"What a fright she might have given us by opening the door," he thought; "and suppose it had been somebody else! I wonder whether she CAN keep a secret."

He thought it only right that Sam should know what had taken place, and very much perturbed was that youth when he heard about Jane.

"I think we can trust her," he said; "but it's a nuisance having our secret found out."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Blackmail!

UNDETERRED by the painful result of their previous evening's exploit, Tom and Sam Smith again slipped away from the school after tea, with the intention of visiting the garden of Miss Smatterly's school, and on seeing Lottie Fenn and Dolly Siffkins. With them on this occasion went Larry Turrell.

Wishing to first make some purchases at Widow Blake's little confectionery establishment, the three boys made their way to the village.

They found the street absolutely deserted, save for one person. That person was Diggles, the gardener at Miss Smatterley's establishment.

And that Diggles had been imbibing somewhat freely was obvious from his unsteady gait, and the fact that he was snapping his fingers in the air, and soliloquising as he walked.

Tom and his chums were almost at his heels, but he was quite oblivious of their nearness. His soliloquy grew louder in tone, and the boys overheard his words distinctly.

This is what he was saying to himself:

"Diggles, you're too tender-hearted, that's what you are! You let her off too cheap at a fi'-pun note! What's a fi'-pun note for keepin' sich a secret as that? If I was to tell what I knows of her goin's on wi' that schoolmaster feller—my eye, wouldn't there be a bust up! I ought to have got ten pun—yes, twenty pun, afore I promised to keep me mouth shut. Well, ne' mind, I can easy ask her for more in a day or two, and I'll make that Foster Moore bloke spring a few quid too!"

Tom dropped back a few paces with his companions.

"That beery ruffian has been blackmailing Miss Hatty Smatterly!" he whispered angrily. "He must have been playing the spy last night before we came out of the chalet. Look here, you chaps, we've got to stop his scoundrelly game."

"How can we do it?" asked Sam Smith.

"I don't quite know yet. It wants thinking out."

Diggles went staggering on, with the boys now about twenty yards behind him.

Just as he reached the end of the long, straggling village street, the door of a cottage opened, and from it emerged none other than Miss Priscilla Smatterly, the elder of the two sisters.

Recognising her gardener, she stopped suddenly and stared at him in mingled horror and disgust. Then she found her voice.

"Diggles!" she exclaimed sharply.

"At your sarvice, ma'am!" hiccupped the gardener.

"How dare you get into this bestial condition?" demanded Miss Smatterly.

"You mind your own business, old gal!" retorted Diggles.

"Wh—what did you say?" almost screamed the lady. "Have you gone mad that you should address me in that low fashion?"

"Well, you *are* an old gal, ain't you? Anyways, you ain't a young 'un!" And Diggles leered at his mistress impudently.

It was too much for Miss Smatterly.

"I discharge you from my employ!" she cried, angrily. "The wages due to you will be paid to-morrow morning, and I shall then see that you and your belongings are removed from my premises without an hour's delay!"

"All right," guffawed Diggles. "Me and 'ard work have said good-bye for a time! I got best part of a fi'-pun note in me pocket, and there's more fi'-pun notes a-comin' to me in the future! Joseph Diggles can do wi'out you an' your starvation-pay job! Joseph Diggles ain't a gardener now! He's an independent gen'l'man. See?"

He tapped his nose with a grimy finger, and leered again.

"Insolent ruffian!" snapped Miss Smatterly.

"All right, old gal!" grinned Diggles. "Keep yer hair on—beg parding, I mean yer wig!"

The insulting words were speedily avenged. Miss Smatterly was a tall, gaunt, and extremely muscular woman. Moreover, she had plenty of spirit and pluck. That fact she now proceeded to demonstrate by dealing a mighty open-handed smack, first on one side of Diggles's face, and then on the other. Next she seized him by the collar, shook him violently, and finally gave him a shove that sent him sprawling to the ground.

This treatment seemed to have a sobering effect; for after rubbing the back of his head tenderly for a few moments, he rose to his feet, and literally bolted for the friendly shelter of the "Huntsman," as if fearful that his indignant mistress might renew the attack.

As for Miss Priscilla Smatterly, she merely glared at Tom Tartar, Sam Smith, and Larry Turrell, and then stalked off majestically in the direction of Cecilia Academy.

The boys only waited till she was out of earshot before their pent-up mirth exploded.

"My word!" gurgled Sam. "No wonder the girls call her 'the Dragon'! She's hot stuff, and no mistake!"

"Wouldn't have missed it for anything!" chuckled Turrell.

"Nor I!" said Tom. "She absolutely terrified that beer-soaked blackguard! He may have found it easy to blackmail Miss Hatty, but I'm thinking he won't try his games on with Miss Priscilla again in a hurry!"

They made for Widow Blake's tuck-shop, and celebrated the overthrow of Diggles with a big feed of the home-made pastries for which the little establishment was justly famous. So long, indeed, did they linger there that when they emerged into the street dusk was beginning to fall.

"Too late to go to Miss Smatterly's garden now," said Sam Smith. "No chance of seeing Dolly and the others, if we did. Let's get back."

They retraced their steps to Wrasper's School, and the first boy they encountered was Willie Gray, looking pale and excited.

"Hallo, old chap!" greeted Tom. "What's wrong?"

"Haven't you heard?" replied Gray.

"We've heard nothing. What is it? Anything startling?"

"Startling!" repeated Gray, with a shudder. "It's more than startling! It's terrible, ghastly! Sir Claude Freshley has been almost murdered."

Tom reeled as if he had been struck.

"Good heavens!" was all he could gasp out.

"He is not quite dead!" explained Gray. "But they say there is no hope of his living. Mr. Wrasper and Mr. Moore have gone up to the Hall."

"When did it happen—who did it?" asked Tom.

He felt the matter with more than ordinary keenness, for the kind treatment he had met with from the baronet had won his heart.

"Nobody knows who did it," said Willie, "nor exactly when it was done, except that it was done some time this afternoon. He was

found in his chair in the library with a terrific wound on the back of his head. Somebody must have come up quietly behind him."

"Whoever did it must be in the house."

"No; for Sir Claude had locked the door, as he often did when he wants to be alone to study. Lady Freshley went to ask him something about the house, and could not make him hear. So she had the door broken open, and he was found as I have told you."

"Then the murderer got in at the window?" said Sam.

"No; the windows were all found fastened," said Gray. "I heard the police-officer telling Mr. Wrasper all about it. Tom, what is the matter with you?"

"I think I have a clue to it," replied Tom; "not a first-rate one, perhaps, but still a clue. Is the police-officer here?"

"No, he has gone on to the hall with Mr. Wrasper."

"Then I'm off, too," said Tom. "There is no time to be lost. I must risk getting into a row for leaving the school. Don't any of you fellows come; it is better for me to go alone."

And Tom started off, leaving his bewildered friends staring after him.

CHAPTER XIX.

Tom and Cecil Investigate.

TOM kept going at a smart trot all the way to the Hall, his mind busy imagining all sorts of schemes for the discovery and arrest of the murderer, or would-be murderer, as the case might be.

If Sir Claude had indeed been assassinated, Tom felt that he would lose a friend for whom he had a growing attachment, such as a son might feel for a father.

Tom was not a gushing boy. He did not warm up to everybody he met, but, when he liked anyone, the feeling was deep and sincere. He thought of Cecil, too, and mentally put himself in his place.

He passed several knots of people on the way, rustics strangely excited. The ghastly deed had violently stirred the sluggish pool of their lives, and for a time had turned it into a whirlpool of wonder or terror.

He crossed the lock gate, and thought of the attempt upon young Cecil's life, seeing the whole thing in one flash. Then, spurring, he quickly got over the rest of the ground, and, breathless, arrived at the door of the Hall.

It was open, and inside were a number of people, two policemen, some of the men-servants, Mr. Wrasper, and Foster Moore.

They all turned to look at Tom, and Mr. Wrasper uttered an exclamation of anger.

"Tartar," he said, "what brings you here?"

"I heard of the—murder!" panted Tom. "Is it a murder?"

"Sir Claude is not yet dead," said Mr. Wrasper, coldly, "and whether he will live or not it is impossible to say. You had better go back, Tartar. Your coming at such a time is an intrusion."

"But I have something to say," replied Tom, who had now recovered his breath. "I think I can give a good idea of how it was done."

A general stare of surprise followed this bold announcement, and Foster Moore laughed sarcastically.

"Perhaps you have second sight?" he said. "Or maybe *you did it*?"

"Mr. Moore," said Tom, "I think you might, at least, hear me. When I was sleeping here a short time ago I had a room which, I think, is next to the library. I could not sleep at first, and after lying for a time I heard a sharp click, like the release of a spring. Then there was a puff of cold air, and I heard the sound of a man breathing——"

"Well, and then?" said Mr. Wrasper, impatiently.

"That is all," said Tom. "I did not think much of it at the time, and soon fell asleep. But now I am of opinion that there are secret passages in the Hall."

"You need say no more, Tartar," interposed Foster Moore, "nor do anything further to get yourself noticed. I don't believe in the yarns about secret passages, and you will not impose upon me. It's all humbug."

But his opinion was not everybody's. The servants began to whisper among themselves, and the police looked as if they had a gleam of light to help them. Mr. Wrasper, however, stood by the tutor.

"We know you, Tartar," he said, "and your tricks won't do. Go back at once."

Tom was not exactly crestfallen, but he felt as if he had been sat upon; and, after all, there was, apparently, no great connection with the strange experience he had had in the bedroom at the Hall with the crime just committed.

"Cannot the library be examined to see if there are any secret passages?" he asked.

"Will you go back, or will you not?" asked Mr. Wrasper, violently.

At that moment Lady Freshley appeared in the hall, gliding up to the group almost as quietly as a ghost. She looked pale enough to be one.

"I hope you will not make any noise," she said. "Doctor Gurrell says that the life of Sir Claude hangs upon a thread. Ah, Tom—is it you? Come into the drawing-room. Poor Cecil is terribly upset, and will be glad to see you."

It was now Mr. Wrasper's turn to feel a bit sat upon, and he looked as small as a man need be as Tom and Lady Freshley disappeared.

"Tartar has the impudence to push himself in where better people fear to go," he said feebly.

"There is something in what the boy says," said one of the police, "and I shall make a thorough search of the library walls."

"I wish you joy of your task," said Mr. Wrasper, sneeringly.

"It doesn't matter much what is your wish, sir," replied the man, "seeing that you have nothing to do with it."

Mr. Wrasper was about to make an angry

retort when a trim girl—Lady Freshley's maid—appeared.

"My lady wishes for the Hall to be very quiet," she said, "and hopes that all but the police will go away."

As Mr. Wrasper and the tutor were the only persons to whom this request could possibly refer, they felt it incumbent on them to make a move.

Accordingly they put on their hats, and departed.

"Check wins the day," said Foster Moore, as they strode down the avenue.

"Had we not better send Tartar home?" asked Mr. Wrasper.

"On what plea?"

"Unable to do anything with him."

"A nice excuse, that! No, Wrasper, he is not to be sent home, especially as I take an interest in him. I mean to bring him to his knees, yet!"

"How I hate these handsome cubs!" went on Moore. "Right or wrong, they have everyone on their side!"

"Not everyone!" said Mr. Wrasper, with a sly glance at his companion. "You yourself, for instance."

"Oh, I am nobody!" said the tutor, bitterly. "Men like me go through the world despised, or treated with contempt by everybody. We are born to live at variance with the world!"

"That sounds to me like morbid nonsense," said the schoolmaster.

"It's fact!" said Foster Moore.

Leaving them to their profitless discussion, we will go back to the Hall, where, in obedience to the exigencies of the case, almost absolute stillness reigned.

Sir Claude lay on the verge of death.

A dreadful blow had been dealt him, and stretched on his couch, with two watchful doctors beside him, a laboured breathing was the only indication that he lived.

Cecil was stricken with grief, but as with his mother, there was no great outward display of emotion.

The distraction of his soul was shown in the calmness of his face, and the hushed way in which he spoke to Tom, whose coming had indeed proved a boon to him.

NEXT WEEK!

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The WRONG REFEREE

J OHN CROOK, the publican of Little Marley, sat one Sunday afternoon in a big armchair in the bar parlour of the Coach and Horses, smoking a churchwarden, and thinking hard as he gazed into the glowing embers of the fire.

John Crook himself had never seen football played until his son Jack came back from school two years ago; but during the progress of little more than a year a big local club had sprung up in Little Marley, of which Jack Crook was captain.

Having witnessed one or two strenuous games, John Crook became a convert to the looking-on passion. His was always the loudest voice that urged his son's club on to victory, and his purse was ever at the service of the club.

Though upright to the last degree in all business matters, the Marley publican had strange ideas with regard to sport and politics. In either the one or other of these he thought it perfectly legitimate to buy any advantage if it were possible to do so.

"Bribery and corruption was the watchword of the old hustings, Jack," he would sometimes say to his son; "and you don't mean to tell me politicians have grown too scrupulous to employ such methods now. They do it in a decent way, that's all."

The charges brought against a great Manchester football player and his suspension, therefore, had made a tremendous impression upon John Crook.

"Everything ain't fair and above-board in football," he would mutter to himself, as he watched the game; "and if our side plays the fair game, and t'other side don't, we're bound to get licked in the long run."

This view he would repeat to his son Jack on a Sunday, and Jack would burst into a roar of laughter.

"You're incorrigible, dad!" he would say. "As if there is any cheating and arranging of results in the amateur game. We are in for the County Cup, and Marley stands as good a chance of winning it as any other club in the com-

petition; but if we do win, it won't be by buying over the enemy."

Jack's father, however, remained unconvinced. His forehead was puckered with thoughtful lines as the Cup-ties came round. Marley won their games in the first and second rounds, having only one goal scored against them. In the third round they had to meet Kirkby, and it was the stiffest task they had to face. Kirkby were holders of the County Cup. They had won their way through the first and second rounds without having a goal scored against them.

Jack Crook leant lazily back on the couch in the bow window, reading a Sunday newspaper, in which were detailed the big professional games of the day before.

The boy was a fine, upstanding lad of nineteen, a miniature Hercules in his way; a fine leader for the Marley club; a born footballer, who by precept and example, had turned a team of mediocrities into an eleven that would trouble even the famous Kirkby club.

"Jack," said John Crook, suddenly putting his pipe down. "what's the name of the referee who's officiating in the Cup-tie?"

"Mr. Edgar Mason, dad," answered the boy. "He's one of the best referees in his class. We're lucky to have him. I can tell you. He won't be favouring Kirkby anyway."

"Won't be favouring them—eh, laddie!"

"No, father, he's above all that sort of thing. One might call him 'Incorruptible.'"

John Crook wagged his head shrewdly.

In the morning he strolled down to the free library, and here he borrowed a copy of the "Parkhurst Directory." In the embrasure of the window he read through the list of names under the letter "M." A little way down he came upon the following:

"Mason, Edgar, 14, Gilman Street."

He jotted down the name and address, and returned thoughtfully home.

"Hi, Jack," he asked, as he sat down

at dinner, "does your referee live in Parkhurst? Is he in business there?"

"Don't know what he is, dad," answered the boy. "I know he lives in Gilman Street. That is all I can tell you."

It was enough, too. That afternoon John Crook wrote to Mr. Edgar Mason, making an appointment for the following day at three o'clock, and hinting that the interview would result in something to his advantage.

It was a fifteen mile drive to Parkhurst; but John Crook loved to whirl along the road in his light buggy, drawn by one of the finest horses in the county.

At two o'clock the publican was eating a hearty luncheon in the coffee-room of the Boar's Head, at Parkhurst; at three he stood at the door of No. 14, Gilman Street, with the knocker in his hand.

A minute later he was shown into a cosy but ill-furnished room, in which a warm fire blazed. He regarded the fittings of the apartment with keen interest.

"Looks as if the party who lives here ain't burdened with a superfluous amount of the good things' in this world," he murmured.

Then the door opened, and a little, keen, dark-eyed man entered. He was, perhaps, thirty years of age. His face was good-humoured in expression. His head was bald.

He surveyed the visitor out of his alert, brown eyes, and smiled.

"Mr. Crook, I believe?" he said.

"The same, sir."

"Will you please be seated? And now, sir, perhaps you will tell me why you have called, and what you want with me?"

"I dare say," he said at length, plunging desperately into the stream, "that you've come across some rum experiences in the course of your career, Mr. Mason?"

"I have that!" responded the other heartily. "And your letter was one of them."

"And," the publican went on, "you wouldn't go so far as to call your profession a well-paid one?"

"It ain't!" said Mr. Mason emphatically. "Far from it."

"The small fee you get, and the rail-

way fare don't amount to a row of pins," John Crook continued. "I've seen some of you chaps holding the whistle. Off-side against one lot of forwards when they're dangerous—eh? And when they are in a legitimate position, and on-side all right for the other side, when all of them are off—eh? And a nice little cheque to line your pocket with when the game is over. That pays better than fair refereeing, don't it, Mr. Mason?"

And John Crook winked knowingly at his companion.

For a moment Mr. Mason glared angrily at him; then his expression changed, and a genial smile wreathed his lips as he set to rubbing his hands together again.

Mr. Mason actually winked.

"It depends," he said airily. "Tell me what you want me to do."

"Well, then," said John Crook, clearing his throat, "here's the whole story in a nutshell. Kirkby are much stronger than we are. I've set my ambition on our club winning the County Cup, Mr. Mason; and, listen, there's fifteen pounds awaiting you—three five-pound notes—if you'll just favour the weaker side a little bit."

Mr. Mason looked into the fire, and rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"But think of it!" cried John Crook. "Fifteen pounds in the bank!"

"Make it twenty, and cash down," said Edgar Mason, looking up quickly, "and I'm your man!"

The publican fell to arguing, but it was no use. Mr. Mason was obdurate, and fifteen minutes later four five-pound notes were laid upon the sitting-room table, and the two men shook hands.

John Crook returned to Little Marley chuckling at his triumph. His spirits bubbled over that night. Jack could never remember his father being so lively.

The old man gave him a smack on the back that nearly knocked him on to the floor.

"What do you think of your chance for the cup, lad?" he asked.

"Don't know, father," was the thoughtful reply. "I'm afraid we shall be badly beaten."

"Nonsense, lad!" was the laughing

(Continued on page iii of Cover.)

reply. "You'll beat Kirkby, never fear. You're a better team. I'm coming down to see you lick them. Gosh, won't we have a flare-up in the town that night."

"You look up it as a foregone conclusion, then, dad?" cried Jack, astonished.

"It is, laddie—it is!" roared the old man.

On the afternoon of the great cup-fight, Little Marley was en fete.

Kirkby and the club's supporters arrived in waggonettes, having started on their long journey early in the morning. The drive had blown the cobwebs from their brains, and they looked fit to battle for a kingdom when they alighted from their decorated brakes.

At last the teams were in the field; Kirkby sporting plain white, Little Marley blue-and-white-stripes.

Shouting and laughing gleefully, John Crook awaited developments.

Then the referee made his appearance and whistled the teams to the centre.

As he caught sight of the official, the Marley publican's face was a study. The referee in the Harris tweed knickerbocker-suit was tall, slight, and about twenty-eight years of age. He was clean-shaven, and nothing whatever like the Edgar Mason whom John Crook had seen in that little sitting-room in Parkhurst.

"They've got the wrong referee!" he yelled.

"What do you mean?" growled a man from Kirkby. "Wrong referee? Why, everybody in the county knows Edgar Mason!"

The whistle shrieked, and the ball was set in motion. Down the field went the Kirkby forwards with a rush. It was a fast and stirring struggle, in which much fine football was shown. The locals, however, seemed to be suffering from a species of stage-fright, and much miskicking was indulged in, with the result that at the end of fifteen minutes Kirkby scored.

John Crook sat like a man stunned. Not a word did he utter. His joy had vanished. When Kirkby put on a second, and a third, and crossed over at half-time leading by three goals to nil, he groaned aloud.

In the second half there was a local revival. The Marley lads gradually

began to recover their form. Then Jack Crook, at centre-forward, scored, with a thirty-yards drive. Later, Maidment, the Marley right full-back, put on the second goal from a penalty, and fifteen minutes from time, Jack got a third. The game ended in a draw, and then, for the first time, John Crook found his voice, cheering like a madman.

As he was wending his way out of the ground, he suddenly ran across a little, rotund, good-humoured man. His face was familiar. In a moment John Crook had him by the collar.

"You scoundrel!" he cried. "I've a good mind to hand you over to the police! You've been guilty of conspiracy to defraud. You passed yourself off as another man. Give me back my twenty pounds!"

The little man wrenched himself free, and stood grinning at the irate publican.

"Governor," he said, "it wasn't my fault. I can't help having the same name as my friend the referee, or living in the same street. I was born there. Edgar Mason, leather merchant, of Parkhurst, that's me. I got your letter. How was I to know what you wanted 'until I saw you? At first I thought you were mad. Then I thought you'd better have a lesson on the advantages of fair play. You'll get no twenty pounds back from me, unless you want me to tell the whole county that you tried to bribe a referee. You wouldn't come well out of it, mister. You'd better say no more about it. Besides, I can do with the brass!"

John Crook said no more. His secret had better be kept, he decided.

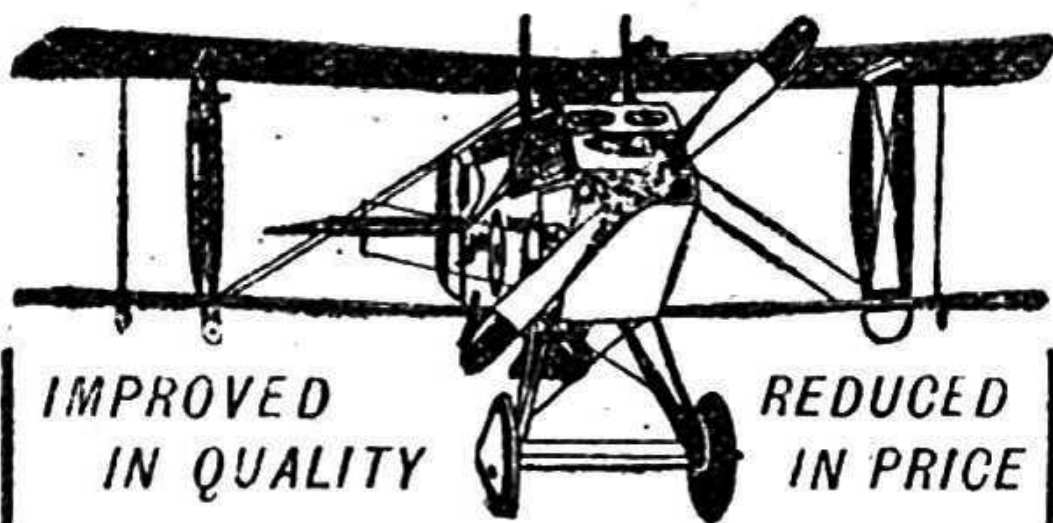
He had his compensation later on, when Little Marley beat Kirkby fairly and squarely on their own ground.

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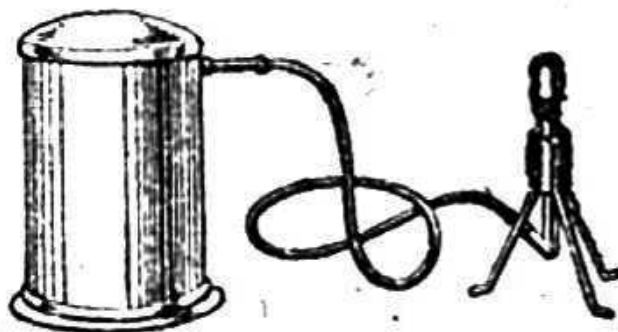
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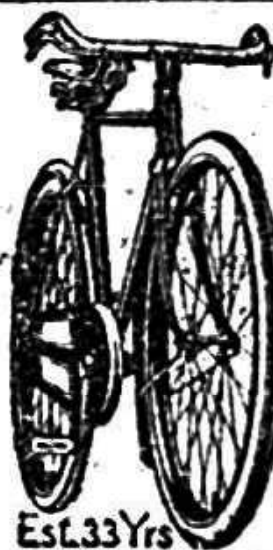
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