

READ OUR GRAND NEW "BARRING-OUT" SERIES!

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"You---you wretched boys!" screamed Miss Trumble, running forward and seizing Handforth by the arm. "Don't dare to disobey me! Put those things down this instant!"

## THE REMOVE AT BAY!

This Week's Thrilling Story of the Great Rebellion at St. Frank's against Women's Rule.





The pumpers commenced to work on the instant, and a second or two later water commenced to shoot out in a tremendous hissing stream.



# THE REMOVE REBEL ARMY!



Another exciting story of the great "Barring-out" movement, which the Remove have started as a

protest against the new feminine rule at St. Frank's. The Juniors have strongly entrenched themselves in the fields adjoining the school, and have successfully resisted two attempts to turn them out by a gang of gipsies employed by Miss Trumble, the new lady Head. But Miss Trumble refuses to acknowledge defeat. She has, in fact, another plan of attack of a far more startling character. What is this new scheme? And will it be successful? These are questions which I must leave Nipper to answer in the story below.

THE EDITOR.

(RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER)

## CHAPTER I. NIGHT DUTY!

"**H**ALT! Who goes there?" The command rang out sharply and clearly on the frosty night air. And a dim form, looming up through the thickly falling snow, immediately came to a standstill.

"Don't be dotty!" it said irritably. "Can't you see it's me?"

"Oh, Handforth!" said Reginald Pitt, with a grin. "That's not the proper way to answer, my son. You ought to say 'Friend,' or something of that sort. How do you like the weather?"

Edward Oswald Handforth, of the Remove Form of St. Frank's, came stumbling along the frozen trench, and halted by Pitt's side. He proceeded to bang his hands, one against the other.

"The weather's not so bad," he growled. "It's all right in the daytime—and it wouldn't be so bad if we were out and about."

But this giddy sentry business is fearful. Thank goodness I'm off duty at twelve o'clock. Only another hour, and then I can get between the blankets!"

"Lucky bounder!" said Pitt. "I'm booked here until half-past one! You'd better get back to your post, sergeant."

"All right, lieutenant!" said Handforth gruffly.

He passed along the trench, and was again lost in the rapidly falling snowflakes. Glancing back, Pitt could see no sign whatever of Fort Resolute, the General Headquarters of the Remove Rebel Army.

The falling snow obliterated everything. Eleven o'clock had just boomed out from the old clock-tower at St. Frank's, which, although invisible, lay only a short distance away, across the meadows. The rebel army was on the alert; strict watches were being kept at every corner of the position.

For vigilance was required more keenly than ever now.

No definite attack was expected, but this



was just the kind of night when one might anticipate a surprise raid. If the enemy meant to make any move, such a move could be made now.

All this sounds very warlike. But, as a matter of fact, the Remove Rebel Army was merely opposed to the forces of Miss Jane Trumble, the Headmistress of St. Frank's College.

To be quite correct, the juniors were holding a barring-out.

Fed up with petticoat rule, they had acted decisively. Leaving the school buildings completely, they had taken up their position in these meadows, and were defying all Miss Trumble's hysterical demands. The Remove calmly declared that they would not budge until all the lady teachers went, and all the masters were reinstated.

That was the position in a nutshell.

Miss Trumble had made one or two attempts to get the boys back; she had even hired a gang of gipsies to attack them. But she was rather sorry for that now, for only harm had come of the affair. The story had created an unpleasant impression when it crept out.

And so for two or three days the rebels had been left absolutely alone. And the Remove had begun to suspect that no further attacks would come. Hourly, they were expecting that Miss Trumble would capitulate.

For, of course, this state of affairs could not continue. People were beginning to talk, paragraphs were being inserted in the newspapers, and before long the whole country would be talking about the farce of Miss Trumble's administration at the big public school.

That was just what the Remove wanted. As soon as there was a scandal about the affair, with plenty of public interest, the Lady Head would be compelled to take some steps.

And, as the Remove would not shift an inch from its position, her only course was to give them their own way.

I was at the head of the rebels, being commander-in-chief of the Cadet Corps. And not a single member of the Remove was neglecting his duty. Even Fullwood and Co. who usually kept quite to themselves—had thrown in their lot with the remainder of the juniors. And Fullwood and Co., strange to relate, were behaving themselves, and undertaking trench duty with the rest.

The rebel stronghold was a powerful one.

Fort Resolute was entirely surrounded by an elaborate, well-built trench system. An attack might come from any quarter, and there were guards on duty who would spot it at once.

And so well arranged were the communication trenches, that relief forces could be rushed up at a moment's notice. There was very little prospect of a surprise attack meeting with success.

All the front line trenches were provided with ammunition—bags filled with soot, and such-like material. We had obtained an

enormous supply of thin paper bags. These were filled up with soot, and placed ready in piles. And in the event of an attack, they were used after the fashion of bombs.

Every fellow, too, was armed with a pea-shooter—an airgun-like affair capable of dispatching peas at a record rate. And while the front line trenches were quiet, there was activity at Fort Resolute.

This, to be quite exact, was a barn.

But it sounds a lot better to call it Fort Resolute. No building could have been better suited to our purpose. It was a stout old structure, with a heavily thatched roof.

Above, there was a dry loft, and this big space was converted into a kind of dormitory for the rebels. We had brought all our beds from the school, and there was plenty of comfort.

The lower part of the barn was used for feeding, and for shelter during wet weather, for, of course, there were always a good few cadets off duty. And Fatty Little had a corner of the barn quite to himself. This corner was filled with oil-stoves, frying-pans, kettles, and the food store.

Outside the barn, just after eleven o'clock had struck, a party of cadets was being formed up. I was at their head, and among the others were Tommy Watson, Church, Singleton, and Levi.

"Now look here, my sons, we've got to keep quiet," I exclaimed, looking round. "We're going on scouting work, and we've got to be like shadows. At the first sign of anything suspicious, you've got to hurry back to Headquarters."

"It's all a lot of unnecessary work, in my opinion," said Tommy Watson. "Just as if Miss Trumble would start any attack on a night like this!"

"If you're going to grumble, you'd better stay behind!" I replied. "You don't seem to understand that this is the very kind of night that is most suitable. We can hardly see twenty yards, and the snow is now coming down in real earnest."

"Oh, all right," said Watson. "You know best."

"I believe I do," I replied. "Mind you, I don't anticipate an attack. I don't believe for a minute there will be one; but we can't be too careful. Prevention is always better than cure."

A form loomed up out of the snow.

"Hallo, what's all this?" said Handforth. "What are you chaps doing? Going somewhere?"

"Scouting work," I replied briefly.

"Oh! Then why wasn't I called up?" demanded the leader of Study D. "Scouting work is my speciality. I'm in this—"

"Don't be an ass, Handy!" I interrupted. "You're on duty in the North-east trench, and you've got to stop there. This sort of thing won't do, you know. You can't neglect your post—"

"Keep your hair on," said Handforth. "Armstrong couldn't sleep—got the jaw-ache—and he wandered down the trench."



So I shoved him on duty, and came to see what was going on here."

I couldn't help grinning.

"All the same, you're not required, old son," I said. "And it seems rather a dirty trick on Armstrong to leave him out in the snow with the jaw-ache. He'll feel compelled to stick there now. The fathead oughtn't to have come out."

"I'll go and relieve him, if you like," said Watson. "If Handforth's keen on this scouting work, he can take my place. I've got a sore foot, and I'd rather stay in the trench."

He went off before I could approve or disapprove. And Handforth looked round with an important air.

"Scouting work, eh?" he said briskly. "Now, look here. You chaps have got to spread out in single formation——"

"I hope you don't mind, Handy, but I've already given all the necessary instructions," I interrupted. "Let me point out that you are only a sergeant—not the commander."

"It's always the same!" said Handforth bitterly. "I can't give a giddy order without being snapped up! All right—go ahead! What section do I take?"

I gave him his instructions, and a few minutes later the scouts were off in various directions.

Although the trenches were well guarded, the night was so black that I thought it as well to take extra precautions. We were to do scouting work round the entire position, the fellows extending out three or four hundred yards from the Fort. Then, working round in circles, they would meet and report to one another.

The night was pitchy black, but the white snow made it possible to see faintly for a short distance ahead. But for the falling flakes, the visibility would have been much better.

As we went on our duty, we were soon covered with whiteness, and we made absolutely no sound as we plodded on over the white carpeted ground. The snowstorm had commenced just after supper, and it seemed to be settled for the night.

Handforth's beat consisted of the lower portion of the playing-fields. He had to work his way across Little Side, and then meet Levi at the corner. After that he would pass on, and have a word with another scout three hundred yards further on, at the rear of the first meadow.

Handforth kept his eyes sharply open. He seemed to be in a world to himself. The snowflakes hemmed him in, and scarcely a sound broke the intense stillness of the night.

Edward Oswald arrived in Little Side, and stood there for a few moments, listening, and gazing into the thickness. Then the flakes thinned somewhat. There came a slight lull in the downfall.

And Handforth suddenly became rigid.

He stared across the playing-fields with a fixed gaze, and with his heart suddenly beating more rapidly. For he was startled to see white figures moving slowly across the grass.

They were crouching low, and moving in a slow, deliberate kind of way. And there were dozens of them!

## CHAPTER II.

### FIGURES IN THE SNOW!

"GREAT SCOTT!" breathed Handforth tensely. "The enemy!"

He thrilled with sudden excitement. An attack was just what he revelled in. Handforth lived for fighting, and he had grumbled bitterly because there had been nothing to do during the last few days. He was intensely glad, too, because he had spotted the enemy first.

He gave one more look, and then turned, and ran noiselessly back towards the Fort. Those figures could mean only one thing. Miss Trumble had obtained help, and was intent upon throwing the rebels out of their position. And, judging by the appearance of the enemy, they meant business. There had been something very sinister about those silent, crouching, slowly advancing figures. Within a few minutes the enemy would make a determined rush. And they would find the rebels fully prepared, and ready to meet the onslaught. Handforth dashed along, and nearly fell headlong into the front line trench in his eagerness.

"Halt! Who goes there?" came a sharp command.

Handforth pulled up, and found the trench just in front of him. Talmadge, of the College House, had challenged him.

"It's all right; don't get excited!" gasped Handforth, as he jumped into the trench. "I've been out on scouting duty. Enemy coming!"

"What!"

"Scores of 'em!" said Handforth breathlessly. "Crowds and crowds of men, creeping across Little Side in close formation. We shall have to buck up if we're going to be ready in time!"

A system of signalling had been instituted, at my suggestion. Instead of shouting, whistling was the order. These whistles were short and distinctive, and in a few moments they were being passed down the lines.

Whistle after whistle sounded. And all the cadets knew that they were required in the front line trenches at a moment's notice. I heard the sounds as I was on my patrol, and I at once hurried back.

I dropped into one of the trenches, and came face to face with Reginald Pitt. He was busily preparing his pea-shooter for work.

"What's the trouble?" I asked quickly.

"Enemy coming in force!" replied Pitt briskly. "At least, so Handforth says. He's



just been on scouting work, and he saw them. He's getting ready in the next trench."

I hurried along, and found Handforth making active preparation.

"What about these men?" I asked. "Where did you see them?"

"Coming from Little Side—crowds of 'em," said Handy. "It's a good thing I was out in that direction, or we might have been surprised. Better buck up, Nipper. The rotters will be here in a tick."

Without delay, more brisk orders were issued. And in less than two minutes the outer defences were fully manned. A messenger had been sent to the Fort with instructions to arouse all the sleepers. In the case of a stiff battle, reinforcements might be required.

And then, ready and intent, we waited.

The minutes passed, and the snow fell steadily. But there seemed to be no sign whatever of the attacking force.

"They're a long time in coming!" growled De Valerie. "I wish they'd show up, and give us something to pot at."

"Oh, they'll be along in a minute," said Handforth, from further down the trench. "They'll come in this direction, too; that's why I chose this spot. I want to be in the thick of the scrap."

"They're pretty cautious, I suppose," remarked Somerton. "They want to creep up close, and then dash up in a body. They'll stand more chance of breaking through like that."

I peered through the falling snow, anxious and worried.

"There seem to be no indications at all!" I growled. "I think it would be better if some of us go out in advance. Then we can shout the warning back at the right moment."

"It's this confounded snow that's causing the trouble," said Pitt.

"Yes—it's almost as bad as a fog."

Handforth was out of the trench by now, staring straight before him, and attempting to pierce the gloom.

"I expect the rotters are afraid!" he grunted. "They ought to have been here long ago. Why not turn the tables? I vote we dash out in a body, and fight the rotters in the open. This trench warfare is all very well, but there's nothing like a good old scrap. Come on!"

But nobody followed him.

"That would be sheer madness," I said sharply. "I should think you ought to have learnt a lesson by this time, Handy. Don't you remember what happened the last time the fellows deserted the trenches? We nearly lost the whole position."

"Yes, but we had a ripping scrap!" said Handforth. "It was worth it for that."

Jumpy and on tenterhooks, the entire Cadet force continued to stare over the trench top in the direction of Little Side. But the night remained quiet, and there was no hint of the enemy approaching. At last

I grew impatient, and gave orders to two or three of the others.

And, without any further waiting, we crept quietly and stealthily across the snow-covered ground in the direction of the playing fields. Handforth came with us.

For about a hundred yards we progressed, going very slowly. But we had the meadow quite to ourselves. Every second we expected to come within sight of the enemy.

But all we could see was the gently falling snowflakes, and now and again a bush or a tree, which would loom up in a shadowy fashion out of the surrounding darkness.

The snow was not coming down so fast, and so we were enabled to see further ahead of us than before. And then, having proceeded further, we came within sight of Little Side itself.

I was in advance of the others, and I halted, staring.

Figures were moving on the playing fields—low, crouching, white-covered figures. There were numbers of them, and they seemed to move like ghosts they were as silent.

Then Handforth joined me, and pointed.

"There you are!" he said tensely. "Can't you see 'em?"

"Yes," I replied.

"We'd better give the warning——"

"No, that's not necessary," I interrupted. "There's nothing to be scared of, Handy. Look again!"

"What do you mean?" he demanded, staring through the snow.

"Sheep!" I remarked calmly.

Handforth seemed to gulp, and then he went limp all over.

"Sheep!" he gasped, in a feeble voice. "But—but——"

"You dotty lunatic!" I exclaimed severely.

"You rouse the whole camp, and get everybody in the trenches, and there's nothing here except a flock of giddy sheep! What's the matter with your eyes?"

Handforth could hardly find any words. He felt horribly foolish, for he had given the alarm, fully believing that the enemy had come. And to suddenly discover that he had been fooled by a flock of sheep was rather too much.

He wasn't convinced, even now. He dashed forward, and found himself among the white-covered figures. They stampeded at once. And Handforth came to a halt. He had seen quite enough.

"You—you dangerous ass!" snorted De Valerie, as Edward Oswald joined us. "You imaginative dummy! Giving the alarm like that! All the chaps are expecting an attack, and——"

"How could I help it?" roared Handforth. "Those sheep oughtn't to be on the playing fields, anyhow! And they look just like men bending double! I couldn't see properly in this darkness——"

"All right, old son," I grinned. "There's



"no harm done, that's the main thing. We'll forgive you this time——"

"Oh, will we?" said Pitt. "Not likely! Grab him!"

Handforth was seized by four juniors. Then, in spite of his roars and threats, he was thrown over, and rolled in the snow until he gasped for breath. By the time the indignant Cadets had done with him, he had nearly vanished. He was coated and caked with snow from head to foot.

"And in future," said Pitt, breathlessly, "the best thing you can do is to stay in bed all night! You're a good man in the daytime, Handy, but night duty don't suit you!"

And we got back to our positions, secretly pleased that the alarm had been a false one. The only fellow who was disappointed was Handforth. Rather unreasonably, he considered that he had been swindled.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE RAIDING PARTY!

FATTY LITTLE seemed disconsolate.

It was breakfast time. Morning was with us, and all was quiet and peaceful on the battle front. The snow had stopped, and there was a comparatively clear sky. Now and again the sun would manage to peep out in a shy reluctant sort of fashion.

And the whole countryside was coated with inches of snow. There was a keen nip in the air which gave us hearty appetites. We had hardly expected such sharp weather so late in the winter. But then, one never does know quite what to expect nowadays.

Only a few fellows were in the trenches.

In the daytime, of course, we could see far in every direction, and it was quite unnecessary to keep the fellows on actual duty. At the first sign of any approaching strangers, we could get to our positions in a few seconds. But until the warning came, the interior of the Fort was catting.

It was all warm and cosy in the barn, what with the warmth from the oil stoves, and the luscious smell of the cooking food—to say nothing of the fragrant scent from the tea urns.

But, in spite of the satisfactory breakfast that Fatty had prepared, he was not looking content. He had made some excellent muffins, all hot and buttered, and these went down beautifully with sardines or salmon. We had a plentiful supply of tinned food.

Fatty had a number of fellows to help him, and he always provided more than enough. Fatty believed that it was a lot better to have too much than too little. He was a great believer in quantity.

"What's the matter, my fat tulip?" inquired Pitt, giving the camp cook a slap on the back. "Didn't you have enough for breakfast, or is it some secret family trouble?"



**Smack! Smack! "Help!" howled Handforth wildly. He wrenched himself away and glared at Miss Trumble.**

"I'm not satisfied!" said Fatty Little gloomily.

"Then have another muffin!"

"I've had plenty to eat—I'm full!"

"What!" gasped Pitt, clutching at two of the other juniors. "Did you hear that? He's had enough! I didn't think it was possible! I always thought Fatty possessed an unlimited capacity!"

"Oh, don't rot!" said Fatty. "I didn't have much, after all—only about ten muffins, and a tin of salmon, and two half-pound packets of ginger-nuts, and a few potatoes, and half a tin of corned beef, and some pineapple chunks, and tinned pears——"

"Is this what you've eaten during the week?" asked Jack Grey.

"Great bloaters! It's what I've had for breakfast!" said Fatty. "Only a snack, of course—I'll soon have another appetite, and then I can have a biting on. But I'm feeling pretty miserable."

"You ought to be feeling sick!" said Pitt severely.

"The fact is, there's something missing!" declared Fatty.

"That's not at all surprising!" I chuckled. "There's plenty of food missing, anyway. We shall have to put you on rations, Fatty."



If you go on like this, you'll get the supplies down weak!"

"There's something missing!" insisted Fatty Little grimly. "Bacon!"

"What?"

"And eggs!" said Fatty sadly.

"Well, we can't have everything!" exclaimed Pitt. "I think we're very lucky to get such a good assortment——"

"That's all very well, but how the batter pudding do you think I can get a decent breakfast ready without any bacon? I can't think how you fellows overlooked the eggs and bacon! It's really the one thing we need. It would do jolly well for dinner, too. There's nothing like a good old chunk of boiled bacon——"

"It's no good talking about impossibilities," interrupted Armstrong. "Let's be thankful we've got plenty of good solid food. We didn't get the bacon because it's in a different storeroom—or, to be exact, in a cellar. And I believe the eggs are kept——"

"By George!" exclaimed Handforth, with his mouth full of muffin. "By George! I've got an idea!"

"About the bacon?" asked Fatty eagerly.

"Yes!"

"Your ideas are off-side, Handy——" began Grey.

"This one is absolutely great!" said Handforth, his eyes gleaming. "I've missed bacon for breakfast, too. And why shouldn't we have it? Eggs, too! I vote we get up a raiding party, walk to the school, and grab just what we want. Who's game? I'll be the leader."

The rebels were rather dubious.

"But will it be safe?" asked Griffith. "Don't forget that it's broad daylight, and that Miss Trumble might have something prepared. Better go without bacon than have a lot of us collared."

"What do you think, Nipper?" asked Pitt. I grinned.

"If Handforth can get a dozen fellows to go with him, I've no objection," I replied. "I think it'll be quite safe. It's very improbable that Miss Trumble has got a squad of men all ready at a moment's notice—and even if she had, the chaps could dodge 'em, and nip straight back here. There'll be plenty of us left behind to deal with any trouble—if it comes."

Handforth's eyes gleamed.

"There you are!" he declared. "Now what have you got to say? Nipper says it's all right! Who's coming with me? The idea is to get about four sides of bacon and a box of eggs!"

"Hurrah!"

"We'll soon get up a party!"

"Well, there's three of us already," said Handforth. "Any more?"

"Three?" repeated Pitt.

"Church and McClure," said Handy, indicating his two chums.

"We didn't say——" began Church feebly.

"Never mind what you didn't say—you're

coming!" said Handforth grimly. "This is my party, and don't forget that I'm the leader! Anybody else? Don't all jump at once!"

"I'm game!" said Willy Handforth strolling forward.

His elder brother glared.

"Oh, are you?" he snapped. "That's very interesting, but I'm not allowing any fags to accompany this party!"

"No, be reasonable, Ted!" exclaimed Willy. "Don't forget, you'll have a trouble to get a dozen fellows together. I've got an idea that some of the chaps distrust you."

"What!"

"Of course, that's easy to understand!" went on Willy. "Any chap who can mistake a flock of sheep for a big party of the enemy might easily mistake a sack of coal for a side of bacon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you cheeky young rotter!" roared Handforth, turning red.

"Oh, don't start!" said Willy impatiently. "I've never known such a chap for flying into a temper! My hat! Here I come and offer myself as a volunteer, and all you can do is to yell at me!"

"In about another minute, I'll punch your silly head!" snorted Handforth.

"Bully!"

Handforth raised his fist, and then lowered it. Although he had been goaded on many occasions, he had never yet struck his younger brother—at least, not forcibly. But Willy came very near to being struck at that moment. But he merely grinned at his brother, and turned away.

"Of course, if you don't want me, there's nothing more to be said," he remarked. "But if you like, I'll lead the party——"

He broke off and dodged, for Handforth was after him. Willy was the only Third-former in the rebel camp. He had been sentenced by Miss Trumble to a week's solitary confinement, and the Remove had rescued him. Since then Willy had been with us.

Handforth had some little difficulty in getting up the party. Nobody cared for him as a leader. They had an idea that things might go wrong—for Handforth had a most peculiar knack of blundering into trouble.

But when Reginald Pitt offered his services, many others came forward. For Pitt would take the lead at once if Handforth made a mess of things. In five minutes time the raiding party were all ready.

It consisted of twelve rebels—including Willy. That cheerful youngster had made up his mind to go, and that was an end of it. Willy was very determined. And Handforth was forced to accept him, simply because it was like talking to a brick wall to order him away.

"Attention!" commanded Handforth, standing in front of the party.

The rebels grinned at one another, and all stood at attention. Handforth inspected them critically.



"Yes, you'll do!" he said curtly. "March! Right turn! Go straight across Little Side and into the Triangle. Now, step it out briskly, my lads!"

And, amid general chuckles, the raiding party started on its expedition. Fatty Little watched it go, smacking his lips. He was thinking of the eggs and bacon that would possibly result.

The party reached Little Side, and then made a bee-line across to the Triangle. It was close upon time for school to begin, and the first bell had already sounded. A number of fags were in the Triangle, and one or two Fifth-formers.

There was a shout of excitement as the rebels appeared.

And the fags came crowding round, yelling and cheering. The Fifth-formers looked on with interest. Chambers was there; and Chambers considered himself to be the great man of the Fifth. This was his own opinion. Nobody else shared it.

"What's the idea of this, my sons?" he asked, as he strolled up. "I thought you were holding out until—I say! Can't you hear me talking to you, you rotters?"

The rebels were marching straight on, and they didn't seem to notice the existence of Chambers. He was left standing there, staring after them. He frowned deeply.

"The young bounders!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "I was half inclined to give them a word of encouragement; but they don't deserve it! They don't seem to know when they're lucky!"

And Chambers stalked into the Ancient House in a huff, for his dignity had been ruffled. At heart, he was in full and complete sympathy with the Remove. But it was a perpetual grievance with Chambers that the Remove never accorded him the respect he deserved.

The raiding party took no notice of anybody. They were keen on their business, and wanted to get it through as quickly as possible. There was no sense in wasting any time. The very essence of the thing was to make the raid, and be away again before anybody could recover their breath.

"Halt!" commanded Handforth loudly.

The party had arrived at the rear of the Ancient House, and come to a smart standstill just against the door of the domestic quarters. The big courtyard was quite empty, except for Tubbs, the page-boy. And Tubbs was standing still, gazing at the rebels with open-mouthed admiration. Tubbs looked upon the Remove with enormous respect.

And just then one of the maidservants opened the kitchen door, and looked out.

"Left turn!" ordered Handforth sharply. "Form into single file! March! Private Church and Private Grey will remain outside on guard!"

The rebel party, with military stride, swept into the doorway, and the actual raid was begun.

## CHAPTER IV.

## SAVING THEIR BACON!

MRS. POULTER, the worthy housewife of the Ancient House, entered the kitchen in a flurry. One of the housemaids had just informed her that the domestic quarters were invaded.

And, to Mrs. Poulter's horror, the information was correct.

The kitchen itself was full.

"Good gracious me!" exclaimed the matron. "Boys—boys! What are you doing? You know very well that you are forbidden to—"

"Silence!" commanded Handforth. "Kindly understand, Mrs. Poulter, that you are our prisoner!"

"What!" said Mrs. Poulter faintly.

"Any attempt at defiance will be met by instant execution!" said Handforth. "Private McClure! Stand by the door, and see that no members of the enemy enter! Private Singleton, hold yourself ready—"

"This—this is absurd!" broke in Mrs. Poulter, red with confusion. "Please, young gentlemen! I am sure you don't mean any real harm! I beg of you to leave the kitchen at once—"

"It's all right, Mrs. Poulter—no need to worry," put in Pitt cheerfully. "We've just come to fetch a few things. You can't be blamed, of course; we're on a raiding expedition."

"Lawk-a-day!" gasped Mrs. Poulter.

"All you've got to do is to stand by, and say nothing," went on Pitt. "In fact, I advise you to discreetly retire, Mrs. Poulter. We sha'n't be long, particularly if you don't hinder us."

"But—but the mistress will be furious!" said Mrs. Poulter fearfully.

"You bet she will!" grinned Pitt. "But that's her concern."

Handforth glared at him.

"Who's in command of this party?" he demanded. "If you do any more jawing, Private Pitt, I'll report you to the Commanding Officer when we get back to camp. Keep quiet, or I'll punch your giddy nose!"

"Please, young gentlemen!" protested Mrs. Poulter. "I'm sure you only mean this as a joke. We're all ever so sorry down in the kitchen about you; we think it's a regular shame—"

"Sorry, Mrs. Poulter, but we can't stop to listen!" broke in Handforth. "If you're with us, good enough! If you're not with us, we shall place you under arrest! We've come here for a box of eggs and four sides of bacon! Stand aside, or we shall be compelled to use force!"

While Handforth was wasting time in talking, Pitt was getting busy, ably assisted by several other members of the party. They hurried to the cellar door, opened it, and then dived down. They knew exactly where the bacon was kept. There were not many



places containing footstuffs that the Remove didn't know about.

"Great!" said Pitt cheerfully, as he looked round the inner cellar. "Look here—seven whole sides and a half! I reckon if we take four it'll be quite enough. Grab hold!"

The sides of bacon were hanging in a row from a big beam. Singleton hoisted one on his shoulders, and mounted the cellar steps. And behind him came Pitt and two others, also carrying bacon. Handforth was just thinking about doing something. He looked round in astonishment.

"Hallo! Who told you to go down the cellar?" he demanded, frowning. "I don't believe in privates acting without my orders!"

"We haven't got all day!" said Pitt briefly.

Handforth nodded, realising that time was precious.

"Four sides?" he asked. "Good! That's the ticket! Sorry, Mrs. Poulter, but we've got to take these; we've run short."

"Oh, but master Handforth, it isn't right!" protested the matron. "I'm sure I don't know what Miss Trumble will say—"

"I'm sure I don't care what she says!" interrupted Handy. "Now, about the eggs. Where do you keep the eggs?"

"In that cupboard, sir!" put in one of the housemaids eagerly. "Two boxes there is, which ain't been unpacked."

"Private Singleton and Private Pitt! Go and fetch one box of eggs!" commanded Handforth sharply. "And look alive!"

The two juniors, grinning, went to the cupboard—which was already open. The domestic staff—particularly the lower servants—were heart and soul with the Remove. They detested Miss Trumble, and looked upon the Remove as heroes. And they were willing to do anything to help. Mrs. Poulter was sympathetic, too, but it wasn't policy to reveal it.

The box of eggs was brought out—one of those long cases, which had probably started on its original journey from Holland or Denmark. They were cooking eggs, but the juniors were satisfied.

"We're quite safe in taking these eggs," said Pitt. "If they're good, we can eat 'em; if they're bad, we can use 'em as ammunition!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All ready?" said Handforth, looking round. "Right! Seize the booty, my lads, and march! And don't waste any time!"

The four sides of bacon were picked up, and the case of eggs was hoisted on to four shoulders, in something after the fashion of a coffin. And the raiders were just about to march triumphantly out, when the kitchen door burst open, and Miss Trumble appeared.

The Headmistress of St. Frank's, big, bony, and forbidding—was frowning with anger.

# Young Britain 2<sup>d</sup>

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She advanced into the kitchen, and when she spoke her voice was rather terrible.

"Stop!" she commanded. "Stop at once!"

Handforth gave her one look, and sniffed.

"Sorry, ma'am, but we're in a hurry!" he said curtly. "Quick march!"

"You—you wretched boys!" screamed Miss Trumble, running forward, and seizing Handforth by the arm. "Don't dare to disobey me! Put those things down this instant!"

"Leggo!" gasped Handforth. "You know jolly well I can't punch your nose, and you're taking advantage of me! Hi! Rescue, you chaps!"

"I'll teach you!" panted Miss Trumble fiercely.

Smack! Smack!

To Handforth's utter horror, Miss Trumble soundly boxed his ears. It was the most humiliating experience he had ever had, and he went as red as a beetroot.

It did not improve his temper to observe that Willy was looking on with keen enjoyment. The other rebels had halted, and were grinning. They didn't seem to realise the ghastly nature of the affair. Strangely enough, the maidservants had mysteriously vanished. Mrs. Poulter was looking on, horrified.

"Now!" gasped Miss Trumble. "Perhaps you will obey me! You wicked, wicked child! I have always refrained from violence, but you have driven me to it! I will not be disobeyed!"

Smack! Smack!

"Help!" howled Handforth wildly.

He wrenched himself away, and glared at Miss Trumble.

"Great pip!" he ejaculated. "It's a pity you ain't a man! I'd jolly well wipe you up! As it is, all I can do is to clear out! Get on the march, you fatheads! Buzz off!"

The other members of the raiding party, having received these unmilitary orders, marched out. And Miss Trumble screamed at them in vain. She nearly sobbed with anger.

And it certainly was galling from her point of view.

These wretched juniors had come here, openly and boldly, and they had seized a big supply of food, which naturally rendered their position at Fort Resolute much more secure.

And if they could do it once, they could do it again! It would be absolutely impossible to quell them. The Headmistress stood at the kitchen door, fairly quivering, as she watched the raiding party march off round the angle of the building.

Soon afterwards a rousing cheer went up from the stronghold. The party had been sighted, and Fatty Little fairly danced with joy when he saw that the spoils were being brought in.

"Hurrah!"

"Here they come!"

"Easy!" grinned Handforth, as the party arrived. "We can do just as we jolly well like! And we'll stick here for ten years before we give in! Miss Trumble ought to be boiled in oil!"

"Yes, your ears must be smarting a bit, Ted," said Willy. "She gave you some awful swipes, didn't she?"

Handforth went crimson.

"Shut up, you young rotter!" he hissed. "I don't want everybody to know——"

"Oh, don't be silly," said Willy. "It's a scream! Just you wait! The whole crowd will be yelling soon!"

And Willy was right. When the story got about, the rebel encampment resounded with hearty laughter. The idea of Handforth's ears being boxed by Miss Trumble struck the juniors as being distinctly funny.

But Handforth didn't see the joke at all.

## CHAPTER V.

### MISS TRUMBLE TAKES ACTION.

MISS JANE TRUMBLE sat in her study, frowning darkly.

She drummed her fingers upon the desk in front of her. Her eyes were filled with anger, and it was almost as much as she could do to keep her seat. This latest exploit of the rebels had brought home the truth.

She was helpless!

It was no good denying the fact—she was utterly helpless! Day by day the position was getting worse. In spite of all her efforts, it was impossible for her to put an end to this tragic farce.

And she was at a total loss.

After a while she rose from her chair and paced up and down the study. To be truthful, Miss Trumble was worried to a point of distraction. Never in her life had she been so anxious.

For this whole business was becoming a scandal.

She had come to St. Frank's with the object of proving to the whole world how a big public school should be run. And this—this was the result! St. Frank's was in a state of chaos, with the Remove Form rebelling against all authority, and barring-out in an ancient barn!

Miss Trumble attempted to delude herself, but it was impossible. She had made a failure of the whole business. From the very start it had been more or less of a farce. Not for one moment had she gained that sympathy with her boys which was an essential necessity for the perfect conduct of a big school.

From the first moment she had been an outsider. She was still an outsider. The boys did not want her. And if she had had common sense, Miss Trumble would have realised the impossibility of her task, and would have given it up.

But she was not going to be beaten—never!



She had set her mind on quelling these high-spirited young reprobates—and she would not be satisfied until they were back in the school, with their wicked spirits broken.

Miss Trumble didn't know what a big job she had taken on.

In the meantime, what was to be done? She had already attempted to get the boys out by the aid of a crowd of gipsies. But she had failed—and one or two newspapers had made scathing comments regarding the matter.

Miss Trumble had read those comments with dismay and distress. She had hoped that the matter would be kept secret. But no. Already the general public was beginning to take an active interest in St. Frank's.

And, what was far more important, the school governors were beginning to wake up. True, she was the chairman—but she did not have absolute power. The other governors had a good deal to say regarding the conduct of the school. But they only said these things at a general meeting.

At all other times the governors were like a set of fossils. It took a tremendous lot to arouse them out of their sloth-like lethargy. But they were being aroused now.

Indeed, Miss Trumble had already received two or three telegrams, urging her to put things right at the school at once. One or two telegrams requested full information concerning the position.

And Miss Trumble had ignored them all—because she was hoping against hope that she would be able to defeat the rebels at any moment. But she had no plan—and couldn't think of one.

It was quite out of the question to talk to the boys. They ignored her. It was also useless to adopt forceful measures—since the rebels had prepared for this emergency.

Finally, Miss Trumble came to a decision.

She sent for Miss Babbidge and Miss Rice—the Housemistresses of the Ancient House and the College House, respectively. These ladies were modelled on something of the same style as their Chief, and they were by no means beautiful to gaze upon.

"I have sent for you, Miss Babbidge—and for you, Miss Rice—because I think it is just as well that we should hold a consultation!" exclaimed Miss Trumble. "I presume you have heard of the latest exploit of these wicked young boys?"

"It is perfectly dreadful, Miss Trumble," said Miss Babbidge. "I understand they have stolen some bacon and some eggs—"

"That is perhaps an unnecessarily harsh

word, Miss Babbidge," interrupted the Headmistress. "These boys are wilful—but it is hardly correct to accuse them of stealing. After all, they have paid their fees, and are entitled to food. But think of it! To come here and to seize just what they fancy! That is what angers me to a point of hysteria!"

"It is certainly a terrible position," said Miss Rice gravely.

"We must think of some solution—"

"Would it not be better to meet the boys?" asked Miss Rice.

"To meet them?"

"I mean, under the circumstances, surely it would be a relief to everybody if these boys were brought back. They have demanded the return of all the masters—"

"And that is impossible!" snapped Miss Trumble.

"Quite so—I heartily agree," Miss Rice hastened to continue. "At the same time, would it not be possible to meet the boys half way? I suggest that some of the masters are restored—to be exact, the Form-masters. The boys have mainly to do with—"

"It is quite, quite out of the question!" broke in Miss Trumble. "I see your point, Miss Rice. You think that the boys might come back if I told them that their own class teachers would be restored? But such an arrangement could not succeed."

"I am inclined to agree with Miss Rice," said Miss Babbidge. "In any event, quite apart from the masters, there are other points to consider."

"Other points?"

"Precisely!" said Miss Babbidge. "For example, I believe that all the boys would soon forget the masters if life at the school was normal in other respects. Please don't imagine that I am attempting to dictate, Miss Trumble."

"Not at all!" said the Headmistress. "Your views interest me greatly. Please continue."

"There is the question of football," said Miss Babbidge. "As you know, we have attempted to teach the boys netball—but it was quite a fiasco. Do you not think it would be as well to make these rebels a certain proposition? Offer them inducements to return."

Miss Trumble set her lips.

"I shall not weaken!" she said acidly.

"In that case, Miss Trumble, it is quite useless to talk," put in Miss Rice. "But I certainly agree with Miss Babbidge. It is most undignified to use force with these boys, but if we can induce them to return—"

"And how, pray?" asked the Headmistress tartly.

"Well, I think it would be quite easy," said Miss Babbidge. "Restore football, let them use their studies again, allow them to sit up at night until nine-thirty—as formerly—and, in short, bring all the old rules and regulations into full force. If that was done, I do not think they would complain any

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more. And they would come quietly back, and the school would settle down to its normal life within a week."

Miss Trumble shook her head obstinately.

"I will never surrender!" she declared.

"Oh, you may say that it will not be a surrender—but the boys will take it as such. It is quite impossible!"

"It is equally impossible to employ men to throw these boys out of their stronghold!" said Miss Babbidge tartly. "And, supposing for a moment that they are ejected? What then?"

"Heaven only knows!" said Miss Rice, lifting her hands. "Undoubtedly, the boys would not come back. They would probably find some other place to shelter in. And then the position would be doubly as bad. Really, Miss Trumble, it is necessary to meet these boys half way."

"Never—never—NEVER!" shouted Miss Trumble, her voice rising. "I will not listen to another word! I thought that you might be able to help me—but I was mistaken! Please leave me alone, ladies!"

The two Housemistresses passed out, by no means impressed by Miss Trumble's exhibition of petulance. She would not see reason. Although it was pointed out to her clearly, she refused to listen.

And, left alone, she continued to pace up and down.

As a matter of fact, Miss Babbidge's words had put an idea into her head—although Miss Babbidge had not even mentioned the subject. It was quite impossible to employ men to throw the boys out. That was what the Housemistress had said.

It was impossible—she knew it. She had tried it once, and it had been a failure. Quite apart from that, such a thing was altogether degrading. The boys were on school property, and, in a way, had a right there.

But what if somebody else turned them off?

What if those meadows changed ownership? In that case, the Remove would be trespassing, and any steps that were taken to shift them would not reflect upon the school.

It was a brainwave, and the more Miss Trumble thought about it, the more she loved the idea. If only those meadows were bought by an outsider, that outsider would have the full responsibility for throwing the boys off. Perhaps Miss Trumble could make a secret arrangement—

Her thoughts suddenly took another turn. She had seen a letter in Dr. Stafford's old file! Quickly, she went to a cupboard, took out a great file of papers, and commenced to turn them over feverishly.

At last she gave a little exclamation of satisfaction. She had found the letter she had had been seeking. And, after a moment's thought, she touched the bell. Tubbs soon appeared.

"Order one of the grooms to be here



**But, somehow or other, Archie twisted the shovel in the wrong way. Instead of depositing the mud outside the trench, he deposited it upon himself.**

within five minutes," said Miss Trumble curtly.

"Yes'm," said Tubbs, bolting.

Miss Trumble quickly wrote a letter, and by the time the groom arrived, the letter was sealed up, and addressed. Miss Trumble handed it to the man, and her eyes were gleaming.

"Take this note at once to Mr. Jeremiah Holt, at the farm near the village," she ordered. "Do not delay a moment. The matter is most important, and you must hurry."

The groom touched his cap, and went off.

And Miss Trumble sat down, with that gleam still in her eyes. If she could only sell those meadows—if she could only work it so that the boys were trespassing upon a stranger's property! Any steps that were taken to remove them would then be out of the hands of the school authorities.

It seemed that hours elapsed. Miss Trumble was very impatient. But, as a matter of fact, hardly one hour had elapsed before Mr. Holt himself arrived. The big, bullying farmer, was a very unpopular character in the district—and particularly unpopular at St. Frank's.



He sat in Miss Trumble's study, wondering why he had been sent for.

"I requested you to come, Mr. Holt, because I think there is a little business that we can transact," said Miss Trumble, who had her plans all cut and dried. "Some months ago, you communicated with Dr. Stafford."

"About them meadows behind the school, you'll be meanin', lady?" asked Farmer Holt.

"Exactly," said Miss Trumble. "I think you were rather anxious to buy them, were you not?"

"Well, at the time I was," said the farmer. "You see, them meadows come right agin my own property, an' they might be useful to me—particularly the barn. But Dr. Stafford told me that the school authorities wouldn't agree to a sale—not even a lease."

Miss Trumble beamed.

"I am pleased to inform you, Mr. Holt, that the school authorities are now quite agreeable to a sale," she exclaimed. "If you still require the meadows, I have no doubt whatever that we can come to some amicable arrangement."

Holt looked at the floor, with a cunning expression in his eyes.

"Well, I ain't so keen now—" he began.

"Nevertheless, we will discuss the matter, and I am sure that we shall come to terms," said Miss Trumble gently. "Come, come! There is another small matter which I wish to talk to you about."

And, two minutes later, the Headmistress of St. Frank's and Farmer Holt were engaged in close conversation.

In fact, it seemed very much as though a plot was being hatched!

## CHAPTER VI.

### ARCHIE WAKES UP!

**A**RCHIE GLENTHORNE strolled languidly to the door of the loft, and gazed out upon the snow-covered scene. It was just about the middle of the morning, when everything was quiet and peaceful.

"Snow, and all that kind of stuff!" observed Archie. "I mean to say, the jolly old earth is looking somewhat pale. Absolutely! The fact is, Phipps, the weather's somewhat ghastly!"

Phipps, Archie's valet, looked mildly surprised.

"Indeed, sir?" he said. "I was under the impression that this kind of weather was most attractive. The majority of the young gentlemen, I know, have a great liking for ice and snow."

"Oh, absolutely!" agreed Archie. "At the same time, old lad, it makes a chappie cling to the jolly old fireside. You grasp what I mean? It seems so bally chilly and frosty without, so to speak! And there the

dear chappies are, dashing about like one o'clock."

A note of admiration crept into Archie's voice as he gazed down into the trenches. This door of the loft was set high up in the building. A step outside meant a considerable fall. But the door was provided with a glass top, and Archie was not exposed to the wintry air.

Of course, it wasn't a usual loft door, but the juniors did not worry about this. It suited them much better as it was. Archie could see the trenches, and the cadets walking up and down, clearing away snow, making alterations here and there, and performing numerous other duties which were continually cropping up.

As for Archie himself, he had only just arisen.

He would soon trickle down to breakfast, although the hour was eleven-thirty. The luscious smell of eggs and bacon came up from the lower floor of the barn, and Archie felt hungry. He was fully dressed, and looked as elegant as ever in a superbly cut lounge suit.

Being a rebel made very little difference to Archie.

In the first place, he had Phipps to attend to his every want. And up in a corner of the loft there was a kind of recess, and Phipps had faked this up into a cosy private room, with a screen in front, a gorgeous rug upon the floor, and with a patent oil-stove giving a grateful warmth and a cheery glow.

Tapestries hung round the rough walls, disguising them in a very effective manner, and there was a soft, luxurious lounge upon which Archie could sprawl in perfect comfort. There was an easy chair, a neat little table, and numerous other exhibitions of luxury. Archie had had all these things sent in from Bannington.

So, for him, the rebellion meant practically no change.

As a matter of fact, he enjoyed this life far more than the life at the school itself. He was not obliged to bother with lessons. And, according to Archie, lessons were a frightful bore. He was able to get up when he liked. Eleven o'clock was his favourite time.

And he could dose on the lounge to his heart's content. Life for Archie was one continual round of luxury. And the other fellows allowed him to have all this, because they knew very well that Archie was different. He was such a genial, generous fellow that they couldn't very well object.

Besides, he was so helpless. He was useless for any ordinary work, and by letting him have his own way he was safe enough, and did not bother. As far as the rebels were concerned, Archie was nothing. Many of the juniors almost forgot that he was with them.

And now, as Archie stood looking down upon the trenches, he felt rather self-conscious. He gazed down at his own suit. Then he looked out again upon the trenches,



with the thick snow, and the cadets plodding up and down, keen upon their work, and always on the alert.

"I mean to say, it seems dashed wrong," said Archie absently.

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"Slacking, and all that!"

"I don't quite understand, sir."

"Dash it all, Phipps!" protested Archie, turning and screwing his monocle into his eye. "Kindly allow the old grey matter to get into action! In other words, get the brain going! Slacking, don't you know? I mean to say, don't you think it's a bit ghastly?"

"Slacking is certainly a deplorable habit, sir," said Phipps.

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "A slacker, don't you know, is one of those poisonous chappies who don't deserve to live on the bally old earth! And here we are in the thick of a rebellion, Phipps!"

"Quite so, sir."

"Here we are, thrust into the centre of the good old turmoil," proceeded Archie, warming to his subject. "In other words, laddie, the battle rages, and all that kind of rot! Amid the thunder of the cannon and the whistle of the shells—Gadzooks! I'm dashed if I'm not getting poetical, Phipps! But there you are! That's the idea! You grasp?"

"In a way, sir."

"Well, that's dashed unsatisfactory," said Archie, frowning. "In a way, what? What I mean to say, old fruit, is that all the lads of the village are dashing about here and there, and they're whizzing up and down, doing all sorts of frightfully decent things. I mean, they're digging trenches, and resisting the jolly old attacks like heroes!"

"The young gentleman are certainly doing excellently, sir."

"Absolutely," agreed Archie, nodding. "In fact, absolutely twice! You've got it, Phipps. You've hit the old thing on the head. There they are, bless their hearts, dashing about even now! And I'm stuck up here, having just arisen from the old couch."

"I rather fancy that breakfast is waiting, sir," hinted Phipps.

"What-ho!" observed Archie. "Good old breakfast! It calmly awaits for the young master to slither down and find it a good home—what? Never fear, Phipps; it shall be attended to. But about the other subject. The tissues are fully restored."

"I am glad to hear that, sir."

"I mean to say, I'm feeling frightfully braced," went on Archie. "The fact is, Phipps, I've discovered a dashed huge store of energy that needs releasing. I'm positively bursting with the good old sinews of life! Do you grasp the trend?"

"I take it, sir, that you are feeling energetic."

"That, dear old lad, is absolutely the word," said Archie. "Energetic, don't you know. And the whole thing's absolutely

wrong! Gaze out here, Phipps. All the chappies waltzing about, and working like anything, and I'm doing nothing! It won't do!"

"Breakfast, sir—"

"Breakfast can wait, Phipps," said Archie firmly. "Kindly buzz down, and bring the young master a uniform."

"A which, sir?" asked Phipps, horrified.

"It appears, laddie, that deafness is running in the family!" said Archie. "A uniform, you know; one of those priceless things with breeches, and jackets with flaps over the pockets, brass buttons, and all the rest of it. Fade away, Phipps, and find one!"

"Do I understand, sir, that you intend to wear this uniform?"

"Absolutely!"

Phipps looked rather alarmed.

"But please let me point out, Master Archie, that it is quite unnecessary," he said. "Master Nipper does not expect you to become a cadet, and, indeed, I have an idea that you are not required. Begging your pardon, sir, but I should suggest that you remain passive."

Archie shook his head.

"Sorry, old bean, but I cannot allow this argument to proceed," he said firmly. "Dash it all, it's a bit thick when a chap's valet starts reeling forth a few yards of dictation! I mean to say, it's not the thing! The old mind is made up."

"Very well, sir," said Phipps quietly.

"So just shoot down the hole, and get the uniform," said Archie. "I am well aware of the fact that my services are not clamoured after. At the same time, laddie, I shall be dashed useful when it comes to fighting. I mean, when I really get going, I bally well go! Like steam, and all that rot!"

Phipps was not at all pleased, but it was quite clear to him that Archie had made up his mind. So Phipps went to a corner of the loft and produced a uniform. It was not necessary for him to go below, as Archie had believed. The uniform was a new one, for the cadets had some spares left.

"What-ho!" said Archie. "That, as it were, is the stuff!"

"I am afraid you will find it most uncomfortable, sir—"

"Comfort, old bird, is not everything in the world," interrupted Archie. "There comes a time when a cove has to gather himself together and hurl the old carcass into the battle of life. So here goes—absolutely! From now on, Phipps, I'm going to do a fearful lot of work!"

Phipps stood ready, and a moment later he was assisting his young master to disrobe. But Archie suddenly pulled up.

"Gadzooks!" he exclaimed. "Desist, Phipps! The other chappies don't have valets to rally round—what? Absolutely not! I shall proceed to do the old toilet unaided!"

"Begging your pardon, sir, but I should



suggest that you leave that until later," said Phipps gently. "For the first time I should certainly advise you to have my assistance."

"You absolutely think so?" asked Archie dubiously.

"I do, sir."

"Oh, well! Perhaps, as it were!" said Archie. "I mean to say, just once, Phipps. Shall I allow it? Or don't you think it would be better for me to blossom out single-handed?"

"Just this once, sir," advised Phipps.

Archie gave way on the point. Consequently, he was attired in the uniform in about fifteen minutes. If he had been left to himself he would have been in a hopeless muddle at the end of an hour.

By a lucky chance, the cadet uniform fitted him splendidly. It was just his size, and there was no doubt that Archie looked much more business-like in it. He rather fancied himself, too.

"Now, about the old cap?" he observed. "I gather that the head has a covering—what? Oh, and by Jove! The stripes, Phipps! Dash it all, the bally old jacket is devoid of stripes!"

"Quite so, sir!" said Phipps gravely. "If you are joining the cadets, you must join as a private."

Archie looked rather dismayed.

"But I mean to say, don't you think that's frightfully frightful?" he asked. "All the chappies I know become officers. I was thinking about a general, Phipps, or possibly a lieutenant-colonel—"

"No, sir, you must start from the ranks."

"Oh, well, you know best," said Archie. "But I must say that it seems most shockingly poisonous. However, here we are! Absolutely! All ready, and positively bursting to get busy."

Archie was very pleased with himself, and he passed across the loft, and made his way down the ladder to the ground-floor. There were only a few juniors in the barn at the moment.

Most of the cadets were either on duty, or else manufacturing snowballs. Pitt had suggested that as the snow was lying about we might as well have a good supply of ammunition of that description. Snowballs are very useful articles in a fight.

"What-ho!" said Archie, as he gazed round. "I mean to say—"

"Great bloaters!" gasped Fatty Little, as he stared at Archie. "Who the dickens told you to get dressed-up in that rig-out?"

"Dash it all, don't I look rather priceless?" asked Archie.

"You look stunning!" grinned Fatty. "But I don't suppose the other chaps will think so. You'll only be getting in the way, my son. This is a serious business, you know."

Archie was looking rather dismayed when I walked in with Bob Christine. We both gazed at Archie, and grinned.

"Good!" said Glenthorne, saluting with the wrong hand. "Here we are, dear old commander-in-chief! Kindly give a few dozen orders, and I'll dash about on the old job! The fact is, I've joined up! Archie has rallied to the good old colours!"

"But, my dear ass, you're not required!" I grinned. "You were quite safe as you were. I don't think you'll be able to do anything—"

"Pray refrain from being a frightful ass!" interrupted Archie stiffly. "No offence, old lad, but all hands to the pump! I mean to say, the more the merrier—what? The old mind is made up—positively firm. And I'm going to do a frightful lot of dashing about."

"Yes, that's about all you will do!" I chuckled. "What on earth put the idea into your head?"

"It suddenly came to me," said Archie. "I suppose everybody has a feeling like that at times. You know, all at once. The old tissues were sort of flooded; a kind of warm sensation buzzed all over the old carcase. I realised, don't you know, that I was several kinds of a bally shirker. All the chappies hard at it, and Archie doing nothing."

"And what do you propose?" I inquired solemnly.

"Well, I've got a kind of feeling that I might be dashed useful," said Archie. "It's simply ghastly lounging about with the idea that I'm one of those conscientious objector blighters. So, how about it? String out the orders, and I'm your man. Drilling—what? Anything you like!"

I could hardly keep a straight face. Archie's heart was good, but I certainly preferred him in his elegance. As a cadet, he was liable to be something of a problem. But I couldn't very well offend him after he had offered his services.

"Well, I'll tell you what," I said. "You can go out into the trenches, and help with the manufacture of snowballs. Report yourself to Sergeant Handforth, and take orders from him. Archie saluted.

"Absolutely!" he said. "Quick march, and all that kind of rot!"

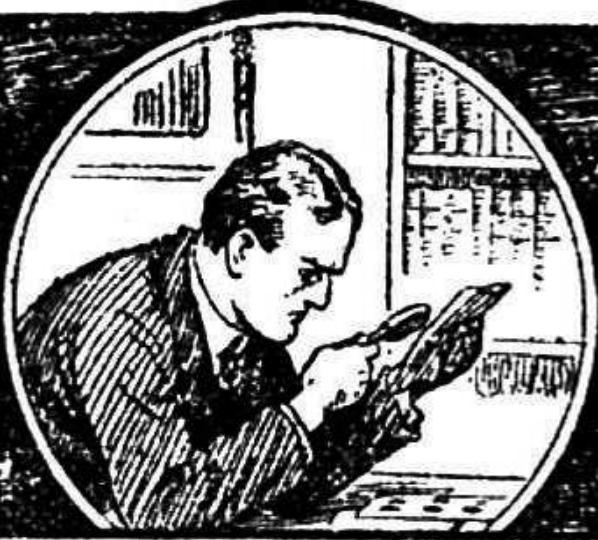
He strode briskly out of the barn, and Bob Christine and I grinned. We had an idea that Archie would find active service a little harder than he had bargained for!

(Continued on page 15.)

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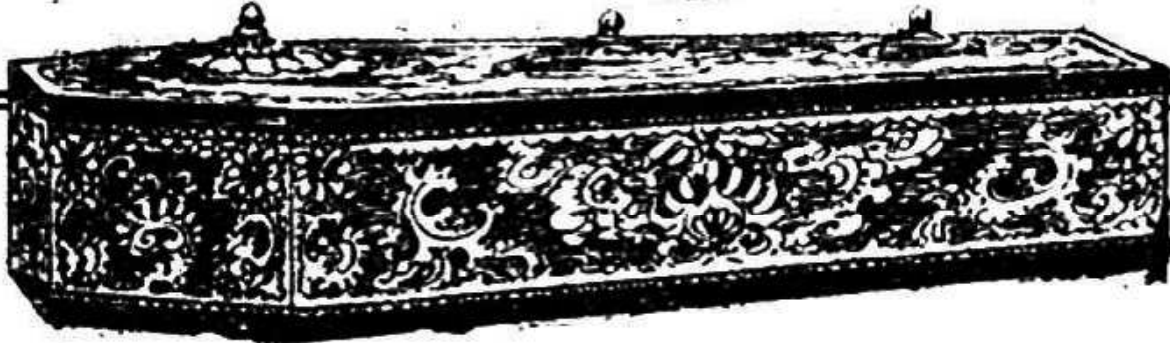


CONTAINS TWO OF THE VERY BEST COMPLETE DETECTIVE STORIES.

# OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION

No. 13. PRESENTED WITH "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY." March 3, 1923

## THE CASE OF THE LACQUERED COFFIN



Being the adventures of **MERVYN HUME**,  
the wizard sleuth of "The Daily Wire."

IT was not for nothing that Mervyn Hume, the brilliant young newspaper sleuth, was known in Fleet Street as "The Man Who Never Lost a Case." For there was little of any importance that went on in the mysterious underworld of the great metropolis that he did not take a hand in, either in association with Scotland Yard or on his own.

But things had been rather quiet in the "Daily Wire" offices the past day or two. Hume had therefore decided to spend the afternoon in his chambers in Lincoln's Inn with a copy of Professor Klienart's treatise on "Poisons in Relation to Crime" to while away the time.

He reached for his hat and was about to depart when he was arrested by the sharp whirr of his telephone bell. Turning, he picked the instrument up and answered it. A rather thin and high-pitched voice came faintly over the wire, speaking English in a quick, clipped manner.

Hume had no difficulty in recognising it as belonging to Wu Chin, an elderly Chinaman who in the past had given him some valuable information in connection with a band of his compatriots who, having got into trouble in China, had come to this country, where they

had engaged in the pernicious opium traffic.

Wu Chin in the ordinary way was a man with excellent control over himself, even for an Oriental. But now, even over the telephone, Hume could detect a note in his voice which told that the speaker was labouring under some great emotional strain.

"Velly bad business happen," came the voice of the old Chinaman, having been assured that he was speaking to Mervyn Hume himself. "I wantee tellee you all about it, and savee you lot of trouble, but my house being watchee by plenty velly bad Chinaman."

"Evely time I goee out they makee follow me. This morning I receive a note say they make to kill me. I——"

The sentence was never finished. For at that moment there sounded a shrill cry over the wire, followed by a faint tinkle of falling glass, a dull thud, and then—silence!

"My hat!" exclaimed Hume in alarm. "What's happened, Wu Chin? Hallo, are you there? Hallo, hallo!" Hume called frantically into the receiver, but only the faint hum of the wire rewarded his efforts.

What tragedy lay behind that wild shriek he did not know. But wasting no further time in futile shouting, he slammed the



receiver back into its rest, dashed pell mell from his room into the outer office, and into Fleet Street.

Hailing a passing taxi he instructed the driver to make for Earl's Square, Kensington, where Wu Chin's house was situated, for all he was worth. And the driver, stimulated by the promise of double fare if he went fast enough, accelerated his engine until the water in the radiator almost reached boiling point.

In a remarkably short space of time Mervyn Hume found himself whizzing along the Kensington High Street with the Chinaman's house only a few minutes away.

"What the thump can have happened?" Hume asked himself for the hundredth time as the cab swung off the main road into a side turning leading to the square. "It sounded to me as though someone was being murdered. My heavens. I hope nothing has happened to poor old Wu Chin. Hallo, here we are!"

The cab pulled up with a jerk outside a big, yellow-painted house, and, jumping out, Hume thrust a pound note towards the driver, told him to keep the change, and dived up the half dozen or so steps that raised the entrance from the pavement.

A sharp tattoo on the door was followed by a faint shuffling of slipper-clad feet from within. There was the sound of bolts being withdrawn, the clank of a chain, and the wizened, yellow face of an ancient Chinaman peered round the portal at the caller.

"It's all right, Sam," said Hume, recognising Wu Chin's aged manservant. "Let me in at once. I want to know what's happened to your master. I was speaking to him on the telephone when something must have happened——"

The eyes of the expressionless yellow face flicked for an instant and the ancient servant undid the chain which still fastened the door. "You and velly honouable master in him study," he said, standing aside to allow the visitor to pass. "Velly bad thing happen——"

But Mervyn Hume was not listening. A few strides along the large and rather gloomy hall brought him to Wu Chin's study, which he entered without ado. He found the aged Chinaman reclining on a couch at the far end of the room. He was quite motionless, but the flicking of his eyelids told the crime investigator that he was alive.

"Velly glad you comee, Mistel Hume," said Wu Chin in a thin voice. "Wu Chin velly old man now, and heart him velly weak. No strong can stand shock."

"Well, what happened while you were talking to me?" asked Hume, having ascertained that Wu Chin was not injured, but only suffering from shock. "I heard a cry and the sound of falling glass and——"

"Yellow Six try to kill Wu Chin."

"The Yellow Six?"

"Allee samee Yellow Six. They shoot through window at Wu Chin while speakee

at telephone. Break glass, break big Canton vase, but no hit my dishonouable self. Yellow Six allee samee sendee note say they killee me. Yellow Six allee samee watch house and follol me——"

"But who the thump are the Yellow Six?" interrupted Hume curiously. "Their title sounds melodramatic enough, but why should they want to kill you?" And in his quaint and halting English Wu Chin proceeded to enlighten Hume on the identity of his would-be assassins, and the reason of their hatred of him.

Now Wu Chin, in spite of his clipped English, which he only dropped into in moments of intense emotion, was a Chinaman of the more enlightened type. And although he had been born before the days when his countrymen looked upon Western ideas and methods in the light they do to-day, he had contrived to obtain something in the way of a Western education.

And in common with the Chinese Government, being a man with the welfare of his race at heart, he had seen the wisdom of suppressing the opium habit.

More especially had he worked to that end in this country, realising what many of his less enlightened countrymen did not, that the habit was not regarded over here with the tolerance that it was in China.

This had caused Wu Chin to run foul of the gang controlling the opium traffic, who had found it convenient to leave their native land in rather a hurry. Wu Chin had learned of their activities and the harm it was doing to other of their compatriots who had settled over here, and were, for the most part, law-abiding citizens.

This information he had passed on to Mervyn Hume, who, in conjunction with Scotland Yard, had been instrumental in intercepting large quantities of the pernicious drug. The organisation of the traffickers had been temporarily broken up, and they themselves put to flight.

And the heads of the traffic were no other than the Yellow Six!

How long they had called themselves by this somewhat sinister sobriquet does not matter. The fact remains that their control of the opium traffic had been destroyed, and many of their agents imprisoned. And, like all their race, they possessed long memories. They had not forgotten that their downfall had been due principally to Wu Chin—and they had sworn that his life should be the penalty for it.

Hence the warning Wu Chin had already received, and the attempt on his life while speaking on the telephone.

This much Wu Chin explained to Mervyn Hume as he sat on one of the luxurious settees with which the room was furnished, puffing thoughtfully at a cigarette.

"Well, it's a pretty serious business," commented Hume, when the Chinaman had finished. "It seems to me this country is not a safe place for you. You must be got away. But with this gang of scoundrels



watching the place so closely I don't see how it is to be done. I may think of an idea later, but——"

Crack! Crack! Crack!

"Down! Down!"

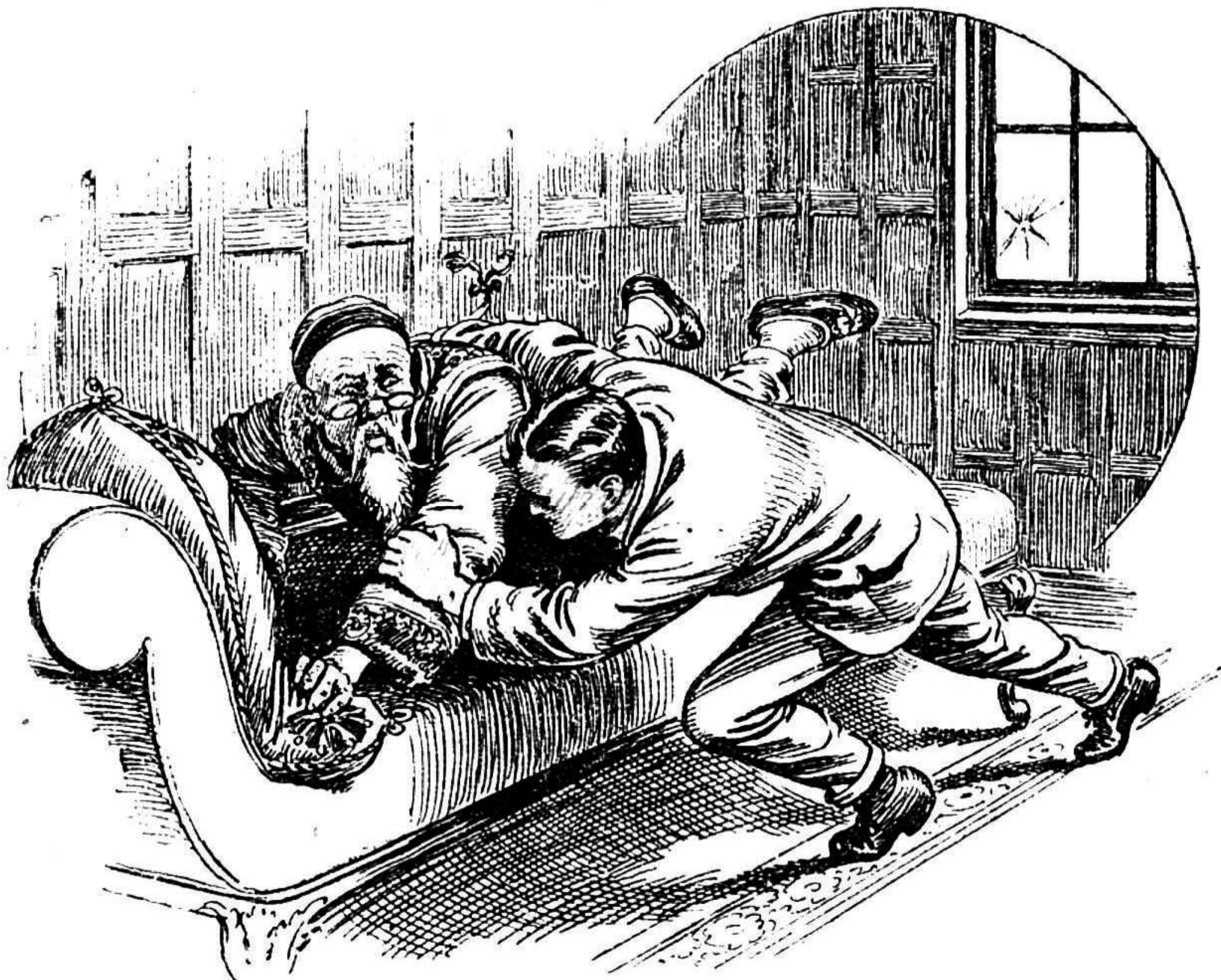
It was Hume who spoke. For even as the first shot rang out he had ducked, dragging Wu Chin with him. Not a moment too soon, for a faint plop, plop, plop a few inches from where the Chinaman's head had been the fraction of a second before told where the lead had buried itself in the wood of the panelling of the room.

move. He then dragged Wu Chin out of line with the window, into the shelter of a jutting part of the wall.

The two men surveyed each other in silence for some moments, the elderly Chinaman trembling visibly from the shock he had received.

"The Yellow Six, Mistel Hume," whispered Wu Chin at length. "Allee samee makee kill me."

Hume nodded grimly. "This is getting a bit too thick," he said. "Wu Chin, I think this is a case for the police. You must



**"Down! down!" It was Hume who spoke. For even as the first shot rang out he had ducked, dragging Wu Chin with him. And not a moment too soon, for the bullet passed immediately over the Chinaman's head.**

A tense silence followed. The attack had been sharp and sudden. But more through luck than anything else it had failed. The shots had come from through the window which faced on to some private gardens at the back of the house, and it was obvious that, such being the case, the would-be assassins must have been watching the two men as they sat talking.

Hume and the Chinaman remained in a crouching position for some moments until the crime investigator judged it safe to

have protection. I will notify Scotland Yard and get them to send some detectives——"

But to Hume's surprise Wu Chin shook his head vigorously. "Policemans no makee any difference," he said. "Yellow Six killee me allee samee. They Chinaman, I Chinaman too. Me know, Mistel Hume."

Mervyn Hume did not argue. He knew that once a Chinaman made up his mind that no amount of talk would alter it. And perhaps, after all, Wu Chin was right. For



who can fathom the mysterious workings of the complex Oriental mind?

"I think you are safe for the time being," said Mervyn Hume at length, "and if you won't inform the police I must see if I can help you in some way. I must have time to think."

Hume lighted another cigarette, and as he watched the rings of smoke curl lazily up to the ceiling he suddenly stiffened and turned abruptly towards Wu Chin, his eyes gleaming.

He whispered long and earnestly to the old Chinaman for about ten minutes, at the end of which he rose preparatory to departing. "Whatever you do keep away from the windows," he said in conclusion. "Don't leave the house and don't let yourself be seen. Leave the rest to me."

And with that the great newspaper sleuth bid the old Chinaman good-bye, left the house, and returned to the offices of the "Daily Wire," where, for the next half-hour or so, he sat in his private room writing steadily. This done, he gave his handiwork to a "copy boy," and left for his chambers in Lincoln's Inn feeling very pleased with himself and the world in general.

The first counter-move against the Yellow Six had already been made.

The following morning a story appeared in the "Daily Wire," which was read with considerable regret by Chin's many friends in London. But if regret was the general note occasioned by the story, there were at least six people in the metropolis to whom it appeared to bring considerable satisfaction. And the story in question read:

#### "Death of Mr. Wu Chin.

"Aged Friend of British Government Dies of Shock.

"Mysterious Attempt on His Life.

"The 'Daily Wire' regrets to announce the death of Mr. Wu Chin, which occurred late last night in his home at Earl's Square, Kensington.

"Mr. Wu Chin, who was for many years a member of the Chinese Diplomatic Service, is best known in this country for his work in connection with the suppression of the opium traffic.

"In this direction he received considerable assistance from his Government, which resulted a short time ago in the master minds behind the traffic being run to earth. Unfortunately, however, they escaped capture, and are still at large.

"The 'Daily Wire' understands that three shots were fired through the window of Mr. Wu Chin's study yesterday afternoon, which, fortunately, did not hit him. Later in the day he succumbed from shock, however.

"His medical attendant states that he was already suffering from a weak heart, and this, coupled with his great age, accelerated his death.

"Mr. Wu Chin, who embraced the Christian religion some time ago, will be buried at the London cemetery on Thursday in a lacquered coffin which he brought with him from China, and which, according to Chinese custom, he has kept in his house ever since.

"So far there is no clue to his assailants."

This news, as might be expected, came as a shock to most people, and was the one topic of conversation wherever Anglo-Chinese society met. It was copied in other papers from the "Wire," with added details of Wu Chin's life and history.

But by the time the day of the funeral arrived, other and more important things had banished the affair from the minds of all but those who knew the old Chinaman.

On the morning preceding the funeral, Mervyn Hume stayed in his chambers, and bade the old Chinaman good-bye, left the cortege to leave the yellow-painted house in Earl's Square. He himself, having been a close friend of the Chinaman for some time past, had made the funeral arrangements, with the help of Sam, Wu Chin's ancient yellow servant.

By the time the lacquered coffin containing the remains of the old Chinaman was brought from the house, a small crowd had collected, who gazed curiously at it as it entered the closed and black-painted hearse that was to convey it to the cemetery.

These people were for the most part white, but it was not surprising that among them should be a number of Chinese. Mervyn Hume scanned their faces in one quick, rapier-like glance, his eyes resting for a fraction of a second on one whose curiosity and interest seemed to be more marked than the remainder.

And, curious to relate, no sooner had he entered the carriage that was to follow the hearse, than this particular Chinaman seemed to lose all interest, and to slink softly but swiftly away, as though he had suddenly remembered an appointment.

This much was not lost on the great newspaper sleuth, however. But had he been able to follow that yellow-skinned individual and listen to his subsequent conversation, he would have discovered that he was no other than one of the Yellow Six, who had been sent out to report to the rest of his fellows that the funeral of Wu Chin had indeed taken place, and was an accomplished fact.

But although Mervyn Hume did not see or hear this much, he guessed it.

He guessed, too, that in all probability one of the would-be assassins would be at the cemetery to witness the interment of the man they had made two such determined attempts to kill. And here again he was right.

Mervyn Hume soon dismissed the incident from his mind, and, the gloomy business over, he returned to his office to write a short paragraph on the afternoon's proceedings.



It was one of those periods that do occur from time to time, when the crime investigators of the great daily papers have to go out and hunt paragraphs of petty robberies, for the sake of something better to do.

But it was the policy of the "Wire" to leave these sort of affairs to their contemporaries, contenting themselves with the remarkable "scoops" of far more important crimes that Mervyn Hume supplied them with from time to time.

Thus it was that Hume did not turn up at the office for a day or two, but stayed at his chambers, where he would have received just as well any information of fresh crimes.

But on the fourth day of his absence, Harvey Frost, the news editor of the "Wire," and one of Hume's closest friends, thought he would like a general article on "Scientific Crimes."

So, calling in that remarkable red-headed youth whose baptismal name was William Whitehead, but who was otherwise known as Nunky, he bade him go to Hume's chambers and acquaint the crime investigator with his requirement.

Nunky, who was one of the great newspaper sleuths most fervid admirers, was about to start on his errand, when Frost called his back.

"By the way, you might return Mr. Hume his door-key," he said. "He lent it to me last week to call and collect a book he borrowed, and I forgot to return it. Don't use it to break in and raid his larder if he's not there," he concluded, as the red-headed youth departed.

"It 'ud be 'ard luck on Mr. 'Ume if I did," retorted Nunky, closing the office-door just in time to miss a book that was aimed at him with more force than accuracy. And with that he was gone.

Arrived at Hume's chambers, he rang the bell, but receiving no response, he concluded that the crime investigator must be asleep. Now Nunky's admiration for Hume amounted almost to affection, such is hero worship, and, not wishing to disturb him if, indeed, he should be sleeping, he entered the chambers with the key Frost had given him, with the intention of either waiting until Hume should awake, or leaving a written message.

Inside the hall Nunky paused to listen, but all was silent.

"Mr. 'Ume must be asleep after all," he murmured. "Still, it ain't the first time I've bin in 'ere. He's most likely in his study. I'll shove me 'ead in and 'ave a look."

He made his way to the far end of the hall to where the apartment in question opened off, and stopped outside listening. He heard no sound, however, so, gently turning the handle of the door, he opened it and peered inside.

The next moment he jumped back in alarmed astonishment, at the same time as a chair scraped the floor within.

A sharp exclamation cut across the room. "Whitehead!"

"Mr. 'Ume!" stuttered the boy. "I—I didn't k-know—I thought you were alone, sir," he blinked fearfully, first at Mervyn Hume, and then at a small, wizened figure by his side, leaning half-way across some papers they had both been reading. "T-the c-chink!" he gasped. "Look at 'im! He's dead! He was buried last week—"

"Quiet, you young idiot!" commanded Mervyn Hume in a stern voice. "Come in and shut that door behind you. Mr. Wu Chin is not dead. He's very much alive."

"But I read all about 'is death—" commenced the red-headed youth, his eyes almost starting out of his head, as he regarded the ancient Oriental who sat motionless before him.

"Quiet!" snapped Hume again. "Now you know, I'll tell you all about it. I suppose I shall have to." He turned to the Chinaman. "The cat seems to be out of the bag with a vengeance," he exclaimed angrily. "We'll have to tell the boy to keep his mouth closed."

Hume turned to the quaking office-boy. "Come and sit down," he said, "but shut the door first."

Nunky did as he was bid.

"Now," resumed Hume. "I should be interested to learn by what manner of means you have turned up in this fashion. Kindly explain."

Nunky, one eye still cast apprehensively in the direction of the old Chinaman, at once plunged into an explanation, and described how the key of Hume's chambers had come into his possession.

"I see," said Hume, when he had finished. "You are evidently not to blame, although I will admit it is rather awkward. Now listen closely to what I am going to tell you, and afterwards keep your mouth shut about it. Since you know so much, you may as well know the rest. Besides, you might come in useful."

"Now, that story you read in the 'Wire' was a fake. Don't interrupt and ask questions, there's a good chap. As I say, it was a fake, but it was faked with a purpose. And that purpose was to get Mr. Wu Chin here away from his house without the fact being observed."

More than that, it was to give certain people the impression that he was dead, in the hope that the unwelcome attentions they had been paying him recently would be dropped.

"Well, if he died he had to have a funeral. Is that clear?"

Nunky nodded.

"Very well, then. He had the funeral. But when the coffin which was supposed to contain his remains came from the house, it contained, not a dead man, but a live one."

"Now, certain interested people—in point of fact, the people who had pre-



viously made several attempts on the life of Mr. Wu Chin, saw that coffin enter the hearse, exactly as I intended they should.

"They also followed the hearse—which, you remember, was a closed one—to the cemetery to see it interred—"

"But it was interred, Mr. 'Ume,'" interrupted Nunky, puzzled.

"I told you not to interrupt," snapped Hume. "However, as I was saying, they saw a lacquered coffin interred right enough, but it was not the one in which Mr. Wu Chin had been smuggled from the house!

"There were two coffins concerned, and one—a replica of the other—was already secreted in the closed hearse, filled with lead. The one that was brought out at the cemetery was not the one that was brought out of the house.

"And the only people aware of this are Mr. Wu Chin himself, his old servant, Sam, the undertaker—who is a man I know—myself, and you. The lead-filled coffin was lowered into the grave and the hearse then returned to the undertaker's premises.

"Arrived there, Mr. Wu Chin, who had had a very uncomfortable couple of hours or so, was released from the remaining coffin, and in the disguise of one of the undertaker's men was smuggled to my chambers here that night, where he has been ever since.

"The people for whose benefit all this was done are a party of Chinamen who at one time controlled the opium traffic, known as the Yellow Six. The Yellow Six had sworn to kill Mr. Wu Chin on account of the fact that he had been largely instrumental in exposing them, and to a great extent in breaking up the opium traffic, in consequence.

"Now you see why it was necessary to use that faked story in the 'Wire.' It succeeded in hookwinking the Yellow Six into the belief that their enemy was dead, and the mock funeral to a certain extent proved this, as well as it enabled me to get Mr. Wu Chin away from his house, which had been watched day and night for some time, until I can make other arrangements for him.

"That is the story, Nunky, and if a word passes your lips—then look out for trouble. For, I tell you, the very life of Mr. Wu Chin depends entirely on this matter being kept secret."

At the conclusion of this amazing recital the red-headed office-boy blinked in open-mouthed astonishment, first at the great newspaper sleuth, and then at the old Chinaman, the notice of whose death had appeared in almost every London paper.

"There's only one point about all that, Mr. 'Ume,'" broke in the keen-witted cockney boy at length, "and that is this: If you bury a coffin which is supposed to contain a dead man, when it don't, there's always a chance that someone will discover the fraud.

"The evidence is always there to be dug up by anybody who is sufficiently interested. Mr. 'Ume, w'y didn't you arrange for a cremation instead of a burial? If you had done that, there would have been not a bit of evidence left that might by some chance come to light and give the whole show away."

Wu Chin regarded the office-boy with renewed interest.

"Velley good talkee talkee," he said in his thin, high pitched voice, speaking for the first time. "What you tinkee, Mistel Hume?"

Mervyn Hume chuckled to himself.

"You are certainly talking sense, Nunky," he admitted, "but at the same time I had thought of that. The reason I arranged for a burial instead of a cremation I will explain to you to-night. Now, ask no questions, but wait. We shall see what we shall see."

And with that somewhat cryptic remark, the great crime reporter rose from his chair and busied himself preparing tea.

Exactly what was behind Hume's curious behaviour Nunky could not fathom. And neither, for that matter, could the old Chinaman. But, with all the philosophy of his race, he made no attempt to. Instead, he curled his thin frame up in the big arm-chair he occupied, and waited patiently for the night to come.

The soft mantle of night was already descending on the metropolis as three figures, attired in rough tweed coats and corduroy trousers, made their way slowly up that great artery leading to the London Cemetery.

And only a few paces behind followed three other similarly clad figures, one of which was a boy, however. But, in spite of their rough clothing, a close observer would have recognised the sharply-scissored features of the taller of the three as those of Mervyn Hume, the great crime investigator of the "Daily Wire."

His companions, needless to say, were Detective-inspector Marsham, of the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard, and William Whitehead, the red-headed office-boy of the "Wire," more commonly known as Nunky.

Hume, Marsham, and Nunky followed the three figures in front, giving the impression that the whole were a party of men recently finished work on some building, and on their way home.

"Some of my best men there, Mr. Hume," jerked Marsham, nodding at the three men in front. "And I can tell you they are a pretty tough handful to tackle."

Hume nodded, but made no reply.

The little party eventually reached the big gates of the cemetery, and entered. Hume nodded to the old gate-keeper who lived in the lodge near-by, and when the party were all in, he closed and locked the gates, just as he had been accustomed to do for the past twenty years.

The roughly-clad figures faded away in the gloom, all meeting at a point near where



Wu Chin was supposed to have been buried some time before. Hume gave a few muttered instructions, and quietly—uncannily it seemed in that place of the dead—they vanished to various points where they were out of sight, but where they still themselves commanded a view of a newly-made grave.

And so the time slowly passed. One, two, three hours, the hidden, watching men making no sound.

Boom, boom!

The hour of midnight chimed softly from a neighbouring clock, and hardly had the last mournful stroke died away than six slim figures, moving with an almost catlike tread, wound their way from the direction of one of the big walls that skirted the side of the cemetery.

All unaware that their every movement was watched, they advanced towards the newly-turned grave.

"Velly soon see now if ole Wu Chin him dead and buried or not," came a high-pitched whisper.

Nunky, who was crouching in some tall grass near Mervyn Hume, nudged the great newspaper sleuth.

"The Yellow Six!" he muttered.

He was right. The Yellow Six were seeking confirmation that their enemy was really dead, or whether they had been tricked.

"We open grave and see now," came the same thin voice, and silently the six yellow fiends produced tools from the folds of their clothes to aid them in their fiendish work.

But even as the first yellow man stooped to disturb the soft earth covering the supposed grave, there came a sudden shout from the surrounding tall grass, followed by a rush of feet.

Next moment, before they could realise what was happening, the six Chinamen were surrounded by the men from Scotland Yard. The fight which followed was short and sharp, and several minutes after its commencement came a series of sharp clicks as six pairs of handcuffs snapped on to six pairs of wrists.

Detective-inspector Marsham muttered a charge, there came the blast of a police whistle, and when the party arrived at the cemetery gates which were already opened again, a big touring car glided silently to the curb.

The six yellow prisoners were hustled into this, and just ten minutes after they had been captured they were safely incarcerated in a police-station cell, and left for the night.

"A jolly good capture," said Hume the next morning, as he glanced at the story he had written on the affair overnight for his paper. "And now, Mr. Wu Chin, I will clear up one or two points I can see are still puzzling you.

"I guessed that the story of your supposed demise might not be believed by the Yellow Six, and that they would probably go along to the cemetery to confirm their suspicions.

This is exactly what they did do. We were able to arrest them for that, and, incidentally, when they were searched at the police-station later, evidence was found upon them proving beyond all doubt their recent control of the opium traffic.

"They will be lucky if they get off with less than ten years each. That means you are safe for at least that time; and, another thing, even now they don't know whether you are dead or alive. I think it extremely unlikely you will ever be troubled by the Yellow Six again."

Hume turned to Nunky with a smile.

"You were asking why I did not destroy evidence of a mock funeral by a cremation," he said. "It is only due to the fact that the Yellow Six suspected my scheme, and went along to the cemetery to convince themselves whether they were right or not, that we managed to capture them at all.

"We have done what the police have failed to do for many months past. And, needless to say, had the empty coffin supposed to contain Wu Chin been cremated, there would have been no bait to lure them from their hiding-place, and no charge on which to hold them until the collection of evidence by the police in connection with their opium activities had been completed."

Nunky regarded the great newspaper sleuth with amazement.

"Mr. 'Ume," he said, "you are a marvel, and no mistake."

"No mistakee at all," added Wu Chin.

But Mervyn Hume merely smiled.

THE END.

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MERVYN HUME :**

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# THE BLACK MASK

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Detective Story of  
Nelson Lee and  
Nipper.**

## I.

AT "THE LABURNAMS."

**W**HEN the last train from Baker Street arrived at Chorley Wood, shortly after one o'clock on a dry and frosty night in November, there descended from it with several other passengers, a tall and handsome gentleman of fifty, with a ruddy complexion and a fair moustache.

He carried a kit-bag, and was warmly clothed in a heavy overcoat trimmed with fur. The gentleman was Mr. Douglas Matheson. He held a responsible position at the Foreign Office, in Whitehall, and he had just returned from Constantinople, where he had been sent on a diplomatic errand.

Turning to the left, he walked for three or four hundred yards, turned to the right, and presently stopped in front of his country residence, a rather modest place that bore the name of "The Laburnams." The house was in total darkness, for Mr. Matheson was not expected.

He let himself in with his latchkey, and, having shut the door, he groped to an electric-switch on the wall, and flashed on the electric light. He was glad to be at home again, after an absence of a couple of months. He put his bag on a bench, and pulled off his overcoat; and he was hanging it on a stand, when a board creaked to a stealthy footstep, and Carey, the old butler, appeared on the landing above the hall, scantily attired, with a revolver in his hand.

"Oh, sir, is that you?" he exclaimed in a tone of relief, as he thrust the weapon into his pocket, and hastened to the bottom of the stairs. "You gave me quite a fright!"

"You thought I was a burglar, I suppose," Douglas Matheson replied with a smile.

"I did sir," said the butler. "I heard a suspicious noise as I was lying awake, so I got into my trousers and slippers, and took my revolver from under the pillow, and came quietly down to investigate. I never dreamed of seeing you."

"I ought to have sent a telegram, Carey."

"It's a pity you didn't, sir, for there's nobody at home."

"Nobody at home?"

"Meaning Miss Brent and her French maid, sir. They are in London. Miss Brent had an invitation from her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Draycott, to go to the theatre with them to-night to see a new play. She went up to town in the morning, and Mademoiselle Diane went with her. They are returning to-morrow."

"Did they go in the car, Carey?"

"No, sir, by train."

"And where are they spending the night?" Mr. Matheson inquired. "With the Draycotts?"

"No, sir, at your house in Coburg Square," William Carey answered. "So Miss Brent told me."

"I wish I had known that. I should have gone there. By the way, did Miss Brent take her jewels with her?"

"Yes, sir, she did. She meant to wear them at the theatre."

"That was very foolish of her. Very foolish."

Olive Brent, a charming girl of twenty-two, was Mr. Matheson's ward, and she had been living with him for the past eight years. He had entrusted to her, to be used on special occasions, the jewels which had belonged to his dead wife, and were worth something like twelve thousand pounds, and that the girl and her maid should be sleeping to-night at his town house at Kensington alone, with the valuable jewels in their possession, caused him some uneasiness.

Douglas Matheson hesitated for a moment. "It was very foolish of her," he repeated. "I had better run up to London. I will have to take the car, as the last train has gone hours ago. You might get me something to eat, Carey, as quickly as you can," he added. "Something cold will do. And then I'll be off."

## II.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF OLIVE BRENT.

At an early hour the next morning, before daybreak, Douglas Matheson got out of his



car in the Gray's Inn Road, in front of the dwelling in which were Nelson Lee's chambers. Early though it was, a light shone at the windows above. Mr. Matheson rapped loudly, and, having been admitted to the house by Nipper, he hurried by him without a word, rapidly ascended the stairs, and burst into the consulting-room.

The famous detective had risen at six o'clock with the intention of motoring down to Suffolk, where he had leased some acres of rough shooting, and he was standing by the fireplace in dressing-gown and slippers, drinking a cup of hot coffee, when the door was flung open. He stared in bewilderment at the visitor, with whom he was intimately acquainted, for during the past four years his services had frequently been employed by the Foreign Office.

"Hallo, Matheson!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were in Constantinople! When did you get back?"

"Only—only a few hours ago!" Douglas Matheson panted breathlessly. "Late last night!"

"And what's wrong with you, man? Your eyes are nearly popping out of your head! What has brought you here at this hour?"

"I've had a shock, Lee, and it has upset me! You know my ward, Olive Brent, the daughter of an old friend of mine? I was appointed her guardian, and I have control over her until she reaches the age of twenty-five.

"I sent her and the servants to my country place at Chorley Wood when I went abroad. She returned to London yesterday, accompanied by her French maid. And now it appears that she has run off, and has taken with her my dead wife's jewels, which are worth a small fortune.

"Olive had no right to take them! They were only lent to her. It amounts to a deliberate theft! I haven't been able to get any information from the maid. She was asleep, and I couldn't rouse her.

"It is a most amazing affair! I can scarcely believe it! Olive is an independent sort of a girl, with a will of her own. But I had full trust in her, and it almost incredible that she should have——"

Mr. Matheson paused abruptly, and dropped into a chair which the detective pushed towards him. He rose from it the next instant, and stepped to a cabinet, on the top of which were a decanter of brandy and some glasses. He poured out a small measure of the strong spirit and drank it at a gulp.

"I needed that, Lee," he said, with a word of apology. "I have been under a severe strain, and it has shaken my nerves. I am more concerned about Olive than I am about the missing jewels, though I prize them highly for sentimental reasons."

The excited gentleman was in a calmer state of mind now. Having taken off his

hat and overcoat, and handed them to Nipper, he sat down again, and at Nelson Lee's bidding he clearly told his story. He spoke first of his arrival at "The Laburnams" on the previous night, and of what he had learned from the butler.

"I was worried about the jewels," he continued. "I was vaguely afraid that they might be stolen by burglars, so, instead of waiting until morning, I got my car out, and drove up to town as fast as I could, meaning to spend the rest of the night at my residence in Coburg Square, Kensington.

"The house was in darkness, as was to have been expected at that hour. I rapped loudly and rang the bell, keeping it up for some minutes, but nobody came to the door. I had no latchkey. I had left mine with one of the servants before I went to Constantinople.

"At length it occurred to me that Olive might have changed her mind, and was staying with her maid at the Draycotts. I drove to their place—they live at Knightsbridge—and my rapping brought Mr. Draycott to a window of his bedchamber.

"He told me, to my surprise and uneasiness, that after the theatre Olive had returned in a cab with him and his wife as far as their home, and had gone on alone in the cab to Coburg Square, where she had left her maid.

"I drove back to my residence, and when I had rapped and rung again, with no more success than before, I walked round to the rear of the dwelling, with the intention of trying to break in.

"There was no need for me to do so, however, for the kitchen door was not locked. I ascended the stairs to Olive's bedchamber, and found the door partly open. I called to her, and got no reply. I stepped inside, and turned on the electric light, and——"

Mr. Matheson paused for a moment.

"There was no one there," he resumed. "The bed had been slept in, but Olive had disappeared. The things she had worn at the theatre were lying on the floor—an evening frock of pink silk, a pair of pink slippers, and a wrap of black satin.

"A cupboard in which she was in the habit of keeping the jewels when she was in London was unlocked, and the key was in the door. The jewels, which were in a case of green leather, were gone.

"I hurried to the maid's chamber, half a dozen yards away, and rapped. There was no answer, so I opened the door and went in. A night-light was burning on the dressing-table, and the French maid, Diane Merode, was asleep in bed.

"She was breathing heavily, and her face was deeply flushed. I couldn't rouse her, hard as I tried. She slept on like a log, though I tugged at her repeatedly. I thoroughly searched the house from top to bottom, to make sure that Olive had gone.

"And then I came on in my car to see you, and get your assistance. You cannot



wonder that I arrived in a state of agitation. Olive must have drugged the maid, by some means, before she went off with the jewels.

"But why did she go? What was her motive? I can't imagine, Mr. Lee. She had a luxurious home, and as much money as she wanted. She was always happy and contented, in cheerful spirits, as far as could judge. It is difficult, impossible, for me to believe that she was tempted to steal the jewels. It is extraordinary."

Nipper and his master had been listening with close attention to the narrative. Nelson Lee nodded absently. Under the circumstances, from what he had heard, it seemed to him that, in spite of Douglas Matheson's expression to the contrary, the valuable jewels might have tempted the girl. But only for a moment. He also was not inclined to regard that theory as credible or plausible. No; he felt that he must seek for another motive.

"Was Miss Brent in love with anybody?" he asked.

Mr. Matheson gave a slight start. "I believe not," he replied. "But there is somebody who was in love with her. Desperately in love."

"Indeed! And who is the person?"

"A young man of the name of Lester Halford. He has chambers in Georgian Mansions, Kensington High Street. For at least a year he has been devoted in his attentions to my ward, and on several occasions she has accompanied him to the theatre."

"Olive will have control of twenty thousand pounds, left to her by her father, when she reaches the age of twenty-five; but it was probably not her money that young Halford was after, as he has more than a thousand a year of his own. It struck me that he was really passionately fond of her."

"Be that as it may, however, when he asked my permission to marry Olive, provided she would have him, I refused, because he had the reputation of being reckless and extravagant."

"When was that?"

"It was shortly before I went abroad, Lee."

"It is to be presumed that the young man has been seeing Miss Brent during your absence?"

"Yes; I daresay he has been."

"Did the girl care for him, Matheson? Did she return his affections?"

"She did not. She told me once or twice, when I questioned her, that she liked Lester Halford as her friend, and only that. She may not have spoken the truth, though. Women are deceivers. One cannot read their minds. I shouldn't wonder if——"

Douglas Matheson stopped abruptly, and struck his knee with his hand. There was an angry glitter in his eyes.

"It's as clear as daylight now!" he cried. "I have been blind! Olive eloped in

the night with young Halford! They have gone somewhere to be married, probably out of town! It was arranged beforehand between them, and the scoundrel persuaded her to take the jewels with her! I am certain of it. That is the explanation of the mystery! There can't be any doubt!"

"I imagine you are right," said Nelson Lee. "Yet I am not so sure. If Miss Brent had arranged to run off with the man Halford in the night, why did she go to bed on her return from the theatre?"

"To get some rest," Mr. Matheson suggested.

"That is likely, I will admit."

"Or to deceive the maid, Lee. She could not have confided her intentions to Mademoiselle Merode, else she would not have drugged her."

"Ah, that is a more plausible theory! Did Miss Brent take any spare clothes with her?"

"I can't say at present if she did or not. I suppose she wore the clothes she came up to town in."

"Did she bring a bag with her from the country?" Nelson Lee continued.

"Yes; I noticed it on a chair in her bed-chamber," Douglas Matheson answered. "It was empty."

"It is queer that she didn't put the jewel-case into her bag."

"Yes, it is rather queer. She must have carried it in her hand, though it would easily have gone in the bag."

"What of the kitchen door? How did it come to be unlocked?"

"Olive went out that way, Lee, of course. She did not want anybody to see her leaving by the front door at that hour of the night."

Nelson Lee reflected for a moment. "I had meant to motor down to Suffolk, where I have some shooting," he said, "but I will put that off for another day. This affair has aroused my interest, Matheson. I will go to Coburg Square with you, and hear what the French maid has to say. I will be ready shortly, as soon as I have put my clothes on. You need not come with us, Nipper," he added. "You had better go back to bed."

### III.

#### THE DRUGGED MAID.

Coburg Square, situated in the most aristocratic part of the Royal Borough of Kensington, was a secluded, old-fashioned place, almost the same as it had been a hundred years ago. And the residence of Douglas Matheson—Number 39—was a detached dwelling of the Georgian period, standing in a fairly large garden.

The day was breaking, and the sky was aglow with pale colour, when Nelson Lee and Mr. Matheson arrived there in the latter's car; and as they stepped from it, a constable, who was passing with his cape tucked under his arm, stopped on the pave-



ment to light a pipe. He was known to Lee, who at once spoke to him.

"Good morning, Parker," he said. "Just going off duty, are you?"

Constable Parker looked in surprise at the detective, and, recognising him, he touched the rim of his helmet.

"Yes, sir; I've just finished," he replied.

"You have been on duty in this neighbourhood, perhaps," said Lee.

"Yes, in and around this square."

"Since when, Parker."

and stopped opposite to me, and the young lady got out of it, and paid the chauffeur.

"She was in evening-dress. She crossed the pavement, and as she reached the gate a young gentleman, whom I had not noticed until then, hurried towards her, and——"

"A young gentleman?" Douglas Matheson interrupted. "What was he like? How would you describe him?"

"He wore a grey overcoat and a soft hat, sir, and he was tall and clean-shaven," Constable Parker answered.



On the dressing-table, as Nelson Lee had noticed, were a cork, and a glass the size of a claret tumbler, at the bottom of which was a small quantity of a cloudy, brown liquid. Lee picked the glass up. He held it to his nose, and put it down.

"Since ten o'clock last night, Mr. Lee."

"Did you see anybody come out of Mr. Matheson's residence during the night?"

"No, sir, I didn't, but I saw the young lady who lives there come home, as it happened. I was rather surprised to see her, for I knew that house had been closed for a month or so, and I had heard that Mr. Matheson was abroad."

"It was shortly before twelve o'clock, and I was standing over by the railings, in the shadow of a tree. A cab came along

"By heavens that was Lester Halford!" Douglas Matheson eagerly exclaimed. "It is just as I thought, Lee. Go on, constable," he bade. "Was there a conversation between the two?"

"Yes, sir, there was," the constable assented. "They stood talking for some time. It may have been a quarter of an hour. Then the young lady went through the gate, and the gentleman walked slowly away."

"Did you overhear any of the conversation?"



"No, sir, not a word. I wasn't near enough to them."

Constable Parker's curiosity had been stirred. He hesitated, and, seeing that he was not going to get any information, he touched his helmet again, and walked on his homeward way, puffing at his pipe. There was a hard glitter in Mr. Matheson's eyes.

"I knew it!" he cried angrily. "I told you so, Lee! My ward has eloped with Lester Halford!"

"It would seem so, from what we learned from the constable," Nelson Lee replied, though not in a very hearty tone.

"Yes, they had it all arranged. They settled their plans yesterday, or perhaps several days ago. They have been writing to each other, of course. It was no sudden decision on Olive's part. Halford knew she was at the theatre with the Draycotts last night, and he waited here until she returned, either to make sure that she had not changed her mind, or to tell her at what time she was to slip out to meet him."

"Why should they have gone off at night, instead of by day?"

"There was no need of it. But that doesn't alter the facts. The ungrateful, wicked girl! How she has deceived me! And she has stolen my dead wife's jewels, at the instigation of that rascal Halford! If they have left London—and I am pretty sure they have—I can't prevent them from being married."

"I daresay you can't."

"They ought both to be arrested. I am strongly inclined to inform the police, and put them on their track."

"I shouldn't do that, Matheson. You had better be guided by me. It is barely possible that you are jumping at hasty conclusions."

"Hasty conclusions? You think I may be wrong, after what the constable told us?"

"No, I don't. It would appear that you are right. But the circumstances are so peculiar that I can't form any positive opinion as yet. Come along. I am anxious to see the French maid."

Having passed through the gate into the front garden, and gone round to the rear of the house, they entered by the kitchen door, and went upstairs to Diane Merode's bedchamber.

She was still in a heavy slumber. Her cheeks were flushed, and she was breathing heavily.

On the dressing-table, as Nelson Lee at once noticed, were a cork, and a glass the size of a claret tumbler, at the bottom of which was a small quantity of a cloudy, brown liquid.

Lee picked the glass up. He held it to his nose, and put it down.

"There was stout in this," he remarked.

He moved to the bed, and when he had stood there for a few seconds, scrutinising the maid's face, he raised her eyelids with his thumb and finger, and let them drop.

"The pupils of her eyes are dilated," he said. "She has been drugged."

"I was sure she had been," Douglas Matheson replied.

"Yes, it is quite clear. The drug must have been in the stout she drank."

"Do you think you can rouse her?"

"I sha'n't try now, Matheson. We will go to the other room first."

Olive Brent's bedchamber was close by, several yards along the passage. On entering it, Mr. Matheson drew the curtains apart from the window, letting in the light of day; and Nelson Lee gazed around him for a brief interval, his keen, observant eyes roving everywhere, missing no detail.

The bed had been slept in, but it was not in a state of disorder. The blankets and sheets were elevated in the middle, as if somebody was beneath them; and on the crumpled pillow, which was partly beneath the coverings, was a veil that was of a pale golden colour. It was bunched together, as if it had been carelessly thrown there.

Lying on the floor, by the side of the bed, were the things that Douglas Matheson had mentioned—an evening gown of pink silk, a pair of pink slippers, and a wrap of black satin.

On a chair was a small travelling-bag that was empty, and over the back of a chair hung a skirt of black silk. There were some toilet articles on the dressing-table, and on another table were a pair of scissors, a clean glass, and a bottle of stout. The bottle had been opened, but none of the contents had been poured out.

"Does it strike you that the bed looks as if somebody was asleep in it?" Nelson Lee remarked.

"It does, now that you have spoken of it," Mr. Matheson assented. "And I see that Olive had left a veil on the pillow."

"I noticed that. By the way, I believe your ward has golden hair."

"Yes, so she has. That's right. Why did you ask?"

"For no particular reason, Matheson. It was the veil that prompted the question. Miss Brent is evidently a careless sort of a person. There are her toilet articles on the dressing-table. I wonder why she left them behind?"

"I suppose she was in a hurry, Lee, and she forgot them."

"Yes, very likely."

Something occurred to Nelson Lee as he spoke. Having turned back the bedclothes, and peered under the bed, he thoroughly searched the room. He looked into a cupboard and into a chest of drawers, and finally, opening a wardrobe, he took from it a blouse, a skirt and jacket of brown cloth, a pair of brown shoes, and a small hat of the same colour. He glanced at the bottom of the wardrobe, and at an empty shelf at the top of it, and gave a start.

(To be continued.)



(Continued from page 14.)

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE NEW RECRUIT!

**H**ANDFORTH stared as Archie came marching down one of the communication trenches. Handforth was busily manufacturing snowballs—at least, he was seeing that Church and McClure were manufacturing snowballs. It seemed to take him all his time to keep them going.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Edward Oswald. "Who the dickens told Archie to get dressed up in uniform? The silly fathead ought to——"

"Greetings, laddie!" said Archie briskly, as he saluted. "I mean to say, here we are, all ready to do a lot of hard work. The commander-in-chief has told me to report for service. So here we are!"

"Nipper sent you here?"

"Absolutely!"

"I thought Nipper had more sense!" grunted Handforth. "Still, if you want some work, I'll jolly soon give you some! In fact, it'll do you good. You've been slacking too long, my lad! Come on!"

Archie brightened up. He was being set to the task at once, and this was just what he required. There was nothing to please him better. At least, so he thought at the moment.

Handforth led the way along the trench until he arrived at a sharp corner. Here there was a very soft patch of ground, a patch which the frost had not reached. A lot of snow had drifted in, and this snow had melted with the soil.

As a result, there was a wide patch at the corner of the two trenches, about six feet across. The mud was of the most fearful kind—thick, boggy, and inky black. It descended to a depth of about sixteen inches. In order to get past this spot, one had either to jump, or else to wade across the morass.

"See that?" said Handforth, pointing.

Archie adjusted his monocle.

"Dash it all, a chappie can hardly avoid seeing it," he remarked. "I mean, what a ghastly-looking puddle! Frightfully queer, too! What about the old frost?"

"The frost doesn't reach down here; this corner's protected from the wind," explained Handforth. "And don't mess about with that fatheaded eyeglass! Put it away!"

"But, dear old tulip——"

"Put it away!" thundered Handforth.

"Gadzooks!" gasped Archie. "What a shocking noise, don't you know! I really think you ought to do something about it, old sport!"

"Never you mind my voice!" snorted Handforth. "You're acting under my orders, and you've got to obey! If you want to be a cadet, you've got to do everything

you're told! And if there's any insolence, you'll be reported to the commander-in-chief."

"My only sainted aunt!" murmured Archie faintly.

"You'll see a shovel standing against the trench," went on Handforth. "There it is—just along there! Fetch it, and then clear all this mud away, and dump it over the top. I'll come back in half an hour and see how you're getting on."

Handforth turned away, but Archie grasped his arm. In fact, Archie was feeling rather faint.

"But, my dear old lad!" he protested. "Nipper suggested something about making about four hundred and thirty snowballs! This mud, don't you know! Not quite the thing——"

"You've got to obey my orders!" snapped Handforth. "So don't try to get out of it. If you want to be a cadet, you've got to do the work. Go and get that shovel!"

Archie gazed at it dazedly.

"But—but it's on the other side of the old puddle," he objected.

"Exactly—get busy on the work!" said Handforth curtly.

Archie still seemed reluctant, so Handforth gave him a shove which sent the dismayed junior hurtling forward. It was only by a miracle that Archie saved himself from sitting down in the very middle of that morass. As it was, he plunged into it with squealing, gurgling sounds.

And he stood there, horrified.

"Now you can go and get the shovel, and clear up the mess!" said Handforth callously. "Perhaps you can understand why the job's got to be done. We can't have all this mud knocking about."

Archie was too dazed to speak. The expression in his face would have made any other fellow howl with merriment, but Handforth remained aggressive. He wasted that mud cleared away. Archie was the very fellow for the work.

When the unfortunate recruit found his voice, Handforth had gone. This part of the trench was quite deserted. Archie had nobody to speak to. But he had got his orders, and he felt rather faint.

"I mean to say, it appears that dashing about and working is a fearfully foul business!" murmured Archie, in dire dismay. "Gadzooks! I've stuck! Absolutely caught in the old bog!"

He moved gingerly and slowly. And as his feet came out of the mud, there was a repetition of that squealing sound which caused shudders to pass up and down Archie's spine. Crossing an ordinary muddy street was an ordeal for Archie. His present predicament was unspeakable.

But, somehow or other, he managed to extricate himself, and reached the solid ground on the other side. Then, with a pale face, he gazed at his mud-caked boots, he gazed at the shovel, and gazed at the morass.



"Dash it all!" he moaned. "It strikes me that I was several kinds of a bally ass! However, it's got to be done! I mean to say, when the Glenthornes start something, they bally well finish it!"

He braced himself up, seized the shovel, and set his teeth. Never would he admit defeat. The work, although positively ghastly, simply had to be done. There was no getting out of it.

"This, as it were, is where I've got to bring vast quantities of courage to the old surface!" murmured Archie. "I mean, I've absolutely got to set the old teeth, and dash into the fray!"

The prospect was appalling, but it couldn't be helped.

Archie drove the shovel into the mud, and got a huge quantity up. Then he gazed at the top of the trench, which was nearly on the level of his chin. Exactly how he was going to lift the shovelful of mud so high he didn't quite know. But there was nothing like trying.

Archie tried.

He was not lacking in strength, and the shovelful of mud rose up, wobbling slightly, and dropping a few blobs on its way. It reached the top of the trench, and Archie gave a final heave.

But, somehow or other, he twisted the shovel in the wrong way. The next second the entire load of mud descended in one fearful cascade upon Archie's head. Instead of depositing the mud outside the trench, he had deposited it upon himself.

And this was not the only disaster.

He was so staggered that he felt faint. He swayed, slipped in the slime, and then sat down. He sat down with a fearful, squelching sound, and literally proceeded to indulge in a mud bath. The unfortunate junior was coated from head to foot.

"Help!" moaned Archie faintly, waving a feeble hand. "S.O.S.! Dear old lads, kindly rally round in chunks! Archie needs assistance! In fact, Archie needs a dashed good bath, too!"

He never knew exactly how he did it, but he managed to crawl out of that sticky horror. And he decided that he had done quite sufficient work for the day. He crawled along the trench, leaving mud behind him in blobs. And ten minutes later he emerged from one of the inner trenches, and approached the barn. Phipps was waiting there—grave and expectant. For Phipps had fully anticipated something of this kind.

Archie clutched at Phipps wildly.

"Dear old lad, this is the end!" he murmured. "The young master is positively in the final throes of miz!"

"You certainly appear to be in an unfortunate state, sir," said Phipps solemnly.

"Unfortunate!" repeated Archie. "Dash it all, I'm——"

Before Archie could say exactly what he was, a hail came from the front line trench.

"Enemy in sight!" rang out the shout. "Everybody to his post!"

And within a minute all the defence works were filled with expectant, eager rebels.

Archie Glenthorne and his troubles were forgotten.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ENTER FARMER HOLT!

**S**NOW was just beginning to fall. The clouds had been gathering for well over an hour past, and at the first cry of the look-out, a few flakes came down. And now, several minutes later, snow was descending thickly.

"Just our luck!" exclaimed Reggie Pitt. "This is going to be a nuisance to us! Look! We can't see across the fields properly even now! A snowstorm is almost as bad as fog!"

"Can't be helped!" I said. "We don't control the weather!"

There was not really a great deal to worry about. The enemy, as far as we could see, consisted of one man. And this one man was known to all of us—being Farmer Holt. There was hardly anybody in the village that the juniors detested more. And they still remembered Holt's brutal treatment of "Softy" Wade, the lad he had employed a month or so earlier.

"My hat!" said Handforth. "Has Miss Trumble employed this rotter to get us out?"

"Hope so!" said Church. "There's nothing I love better than chucking snowballs at old Holt. He's a beast!"

The front line trench was bristling with interested cadets as the farmer came up. He was a big, lumbering man, of about middle age, and with a decidedly brutal cast of countenance.

He showed his character in every line of his features. But the juniors were not afraid of him. They regarded his arrival with pleasure rather than anything else. Inactivity did not suit them. Here was an indication that something was in the wind.

The farmer came up within ten yards, and then halted. He stood quite still, eyeing the juniors from beneath lowering brows. He waved his big stick in a menacing manner.

"Come out o' that, you young varmint!" he shouted grimly.

"Go away, you ruffian!" roared Handforth. "You ought to have been shoved in prison months ago."

"Hear, hear!"

"Buzz off!"

"Your face gives us a pain!"

Farmer Holt shook his stick again.

"I'll give ye just ten minutes to get off this 'ere ground!" he thundered. "Understand, my lads—ten minutes! I've got a perfect right to order you off, an' you'd best not try any tricks! I've got the law on my side——"



"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pardon me, Mr. Holt, but what gave you such an idea?" I asked, standing up. "These meadows belong to the school, and you've got no more right to order us off than—"

"Belong to the school, do they?" broke in the farmer sneeringly. "Who told you that? It strikes me you're a bit behind the times, young man. These 'ere meadows belong to me."

"Rats!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Hold on, you chaps!" I said. "Look here, Mr. Holt, when did you buy this property?"

"Never you mind when I bought it!" retorted Holt. "It's mine—every darned stone, and every darned blade of grass! Understand? These 'ere meadows are part of my farm now, an' they ain't connected with the school any longer! So you'd best clear out, before I get nasty!"

"We don't believe you!"

"This property belongs to the school!"

"It did belong to the school, but it don't now!" shouted Holt. "I've come 'ere, and I find you kids trespassin'. Well, you can't say that I ain't give you full warnin'. If ye don't clear, I'll pitch you out o' these meadows by force!"

I jumped out of the trench, and walked straight up to the farmer.

"Let's have this quite clear, Mr. Holt," I said quietly. "When we came on this property it was a part of the school grounds. When did you buy it? It's only fair that I should know."

The farmer hesitated for a moment.

"If you're so blamed inquisitive, I'll tell you!" he said, at last. "I wanted these 'ere meadows months ago, but the sale was only completed this mornin'. I'm a fool to show you, but 'ere's the receipt, if you ain't satisfied."

And Mr. Holt brought out a big, important-looking document. He held it in front of my face, and I had no difficulty in seeing that it was, indeed, a perfectly valid and legal receipt. The meadows and the barn were certainly the property of Jeremiah Holt. They were no longer attached to St. Frank's College.

"Thank you?" I said quietly.

"Satisfied?" sneered Holt.

"Quite."

"And will you give me your word that these 'ere youngsters will clear out?"

"Not at all," I said promptly. "I'm very sorry Mr Holt, but we're not going to budge because of this little piece of trickery!"

"Trickery?" he roared.

"It's nothing else," I retorted. "Miss Trumble has been trying to get us out of this position for days and she's failed. So she's got you to buy the land—thus making us trespassers on your property. Well, if you want to get us off, you'll have to put us off. Either that, or you can go to law. They'll both be pretty stiff jobs."

The farmer raised his stick.

"All right! Hit me," I said calmly. "You'll be sorry if you do!"

"Do you absolutely refuse to leave?" he grated harshly.

"Absolutely!"

"All right, my young spark," snarled the farmer. "All right! We'll see about it. It won't be long before I'm back! An' then you'll come out o' this 'ere kids' castle in double quick time!"

He half turned, shaking his stick menacingly.

"Duck, you ass!" roared Handforth.

I knew what his idea was, and I quickly dodged back into the trench. And then farmer Holt was made the target for hundreds of accurately flung snowballs. They pelted on him from every side.

So severe was the fusillade, in fact, that he staggered and almost fell. And in about ten seconds he was smothered from head to foot. He gave one bellow of rage, and blundered off through the falling snow.

And the juniors yelled with derision.

"It's all very well, but this alters the whole position," I said, turning to the juniors near me. "We're not on the school property now—we're trespassing on Holt's property. And you can bet he'll come here with a strong force of men, and try to pitch us out."

"I'm glad you said 'try,'" grinned Pitt. "If those gipsies couldn't do the trick, Holt won't."

"At the same time, we've got to be fully prepared," I said seriously. "These men will have the benefit of the first scrap—they'll know what they've got to face. And they'll come prepared."

"We've got plenty of snowballs and pea-shooters—"

"There won't be enough!" I declared firmly. "Look here—you remember we were talking about the old fire engine? It's stuck in a garage at the back of the school."

"Yes, it was shoved there when the new one came in, a few months ago," said De Valerie. "It's a hand-worked affair, and still in good order. Do you think we can do anything with it?"

"A party of twelve of us are going on another raiding expedition—now!" I replied briskly. "The party will have time to get back before Holt shows up with his men. If that first raid can succeed, so can this. That fire-engine has got three or four hoses to it, and we can get plenty of water out of the stream at the back."

"Good wheeze!" declared Handforth enthusiastically. "Cold water on a day like this will be as effective as liquid fire! The enemy will never advance in face of it."

In a very few minutes the party was formed—with Pitt at the head. They went on across the meadows at the double—and now the weather conditions were in our favour. For the rapidly falling snow served



as an excellent shield for the movements of the juniors.

I was rather anxious, and had every available fellow in the trenches, at their posts. If Farmer Holt came back with his men now, it would be rather serious. But it was hardly likely that he could be ready so soon.

I needn't have been concerned. In less than half an hour, the raiders were back, and they brought the fire-engine with them. Pitt reported that they had met with no opposition, and, indeed, had seen nobody with the exception of an under-gardener.

The fire-engine was a cumbersome affair, and old-fashioned. It could be easily worked by four fellows, by means of long handles. Then and there, we set it in position, and placed the feed-pipe in the stream. Armstrong, Merrill, Marriott and Freeman—all strong fellows—were told off to do the pumping. They had to remain by the engine, and commence work the instant they heard the signal. A good piece of work had been done.

And then, with the snow falling thickly about us we waited—fully confident that we should be able to beat off any attacks that Farmer Holt liked to make. We were quite convinced that we were safe.

But we waited eagerly and expectantly for the fray.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE STORMING OF THE STRONGHOLD!

**S**USPENSE is always very trying. And the Remove passed through a period of suspense after the fire-engine had been got into position. We were all expecting Farmer Holt to return with his men practically at once within half an hour, at least.

But we were wrong.

An hour passed, and then another hour. And it was just about the middle of the afternoon—when all the fellows were at lessons at St. Frank's that we received the first intimation that the expected trouble was about to arrive.

Snow was still falling heavily.

I had sent out two or three scouts in all directions, to give the first warning of the approaching enemy. And we were still worrying—still on tenterhooks—when one of these scouts came in.

He loomed up through the snow suddenly, appearing without any warning. He was nearly pelted with snowballs, some of the fellows mistaking him for the enemy.

Then he dropped into the trench—he was Lawrence, of the College House.

"Better be on the alert!" he gasped breathlessly. "They're coming!"

"Good!" said Handforth.

"Many?" I asked.

"Well, I caught sight of fifteen or twenty," said Lawrence. "Holt and all his labourers, you know. And I believe most of the village roughs have joined in, too."

"My hat!"

"Then it looks like being a stiff fight!"

"Rather!"

"The stiffer the better!"

"Hurrah!"

The juniors were excited. All sorts of shouts and exclamations were to be heard up and down the trenches. Snowballs were got ready, to say nothing of soot bags and pea shooters.

When the enemy commenced their assault, they would find the Remove fully prepared to meet all the attacks. And the juniors fairly gloated in the prospect of a good old scrap.

And then, almost at once, the enemy came.

It was the snow that gave them the chance.

If the afternoon had been clear, we should have seen them from afar, and would have been able to concentrate all our forces upon the one section that bore the brunt of the attack.

As it was we had to keep the trenches guarded on all sides. And, suddenly, crowds of the enemy loomed up through the rapidly falling snowflakes. About fifteen men dashed up at full speed.

They were bending low—bending so that they would not receive any of our missiles in their faces. They had learned from Miss Trumble, probably, that we had pea-shooters.

So they were prepared.

That first rush was a very determined affair.

The enemy came on, one row after another—but Farmer Holt took good care to remain in the background. He was not undergoing many risks. But his men came on with tremendous energy.

They were rough fellows, for the most part—the youngsters off his own farm, a number of loungers from the village, and all the louts of the surrounding district. It was a veritable army.

And, although we had been prepared for a large number, we had hardly expected such a host as this. We waited until they were within twenty yards—and then came the orders.

"Fire!" I yelled. "Let 'em have the snowballs!"

"Hurrah!"

"Rebels for ever!"

"Down with Holt and his men!"

Whizz! Whizz! Whizz!

The snowballs were sent out from the front

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line trench in a perfect hail. Hundreds of them were thrown during the first minute. And many of the juniors hurled the bags of soot, too.

The effect was rather startling.

The snowballs burst over the oncoming enemy. Then some of the soot bags struck, and the air was filled with powdery snow and soot-dust. The attacking force received a big surprise.

They hesitated, wavered, and then the ranks broke.

And at that moment I gave a long, shrill whistle—using two of my fingers for the purpose and the cadets in charge of the hose department knew exactly what that whistle meant.

The pumpers commenced work on the instant.

And a second or two later, water commenced to shoot out of the nozzle of the hose which was in my hand. The other pipes were not in this particular section, and were therefore useless.

A tremendous stream of water was soon hissing out.

Swish!

I directed it over the top of the trench, and the icy cold water splashed over the roughs in a great cascade. They howled with rage and surprise. Two or three of them were knocked down, and the rest fled.

"Hurrah!"

"That's the stuff to give 'em!"

"Now then—another go of snowballs!"

Farmer Holt's men received the shock of their lives. Never had they believed it possible that such resistance as this would be met. As we were safely in trenches, we had all the advantage.

Holt's men had brought stones, and other missiles, but we did not fear them. For the men had practically nothing to aim at. We were hidden in the trenches, and were quite safe.

The attackers were routed.

They broke up, and disappeared through the snow—swearing and shouting in an abominable way. We could hear Farmer Holt raging at them, and urging them to dash to the attack once more.

"Hurrah!"

"The rotters are whacked!"

"For the time being, yes!" I exclaimed. "But they're bound to return—and we can look for the second onslaught within a few minutes! There's no sense in being too confident."

The rebels were all laughing and joking over the defeat of Holt's men. And then the snow came down in even greater flurries than before. The wind came whistling down from the east, bringing with it a miniature hurricane.

It was a tremendous burst of snow—so thick that we could hardly see three yards in front of us. And what with the flakes driving into our faces, we had the utmost difficulty in keeping a lookout at all.



**So severe was the fusilade, in fact, that Farmer Holt staggered and almost fell. And in about ten seconds he was smothered from head to foot with snow.**

I was pretty certain that Farmer Holt would seize this advantage.

"Don't forget, you chaps, that the attack might come now!" I shouted, up and down the lines. "Be ready! And don't hesitate, either. If any of the men get in the trench, chuck them out as quickly as possible!"

"Leave it to us, old son!"

"We're not going to be whacked by these ruffians!"

"Hurrah!"

And then, almost before the juniors could realise it, the second attack developed, and Farmer Holt, although he was a dull sort of man, displayed a certain amount of strategy.

Instead of making a frontal attack as he had done before, he sent his men round in two different batches. They attacked simultaneously, and at widely different sections of the trench.

And this time the men received instructions that they were to press on, in spite of all opposition. Farmer Holt had scathingly told them that a little water could not do any harm. And once they were through, the thing would be easy. The main thing was to get past that first defence.

The enemy, too, had probably been made



liberal promises of pay if they succeeded in routing us out. At all events, they came on with greater determination than ever. And in spite of all the snowballs and the peas and the soot bags, they advanced.

In these two sections the hoses were not ready. Within a minute or two we should have rushed them up, but the enemy broke through in the first moment. They had the thick snowstorm to thank for their victory.

For they came up almost before the juniors could be aware of it. They jumped down into the trench in threes and fours, and commenced using the heavy sticks they carried.

It so happened that I was left quite to myself at the moment. The cadets on either side of me had rushed off to assist elsewhere. Anyhow, in the snow I saw two men rushing up to me. I pelted them with snowballs, but they took no notice. One of the men was Farmer Holt himself.

I turned, realising that it was impossible to face them single-handed. But a stone struck me on the back of the head, and I swayed dizzily. The next moment Holt had grasped my arm.

"No you don't, you little demon!" he snarled. "I've got you!"

"Rescue!" I shouted desperately.

Holt and the other man held me tight, and just then two figures loomed up. I hoped against hope that they were cadets; but they proved to be more of the enemy. But another figure came from the opposite direction.

"Here we are—absolutely in the jolly old thick of it!" exclaimed a well-known voice.

"Gadzooks, and what not! There appears to be a large slice of trouble in this quarter! Nipper, old lad, I'm on the spot!"

"Tell the others, Archie!" I gasped. "Tell them——"

A hand was clasped over my mouth, and I was forced to the bottom of the trench, and held there, in spite of my struggles. As for Archie, he was captured almost before he had time to turn round. He acted with the best intentions, but he was rash!

He flung himself into the fight with tremendous vim. He rushed up and made a dash at two of the men. One of his fists went home, and Archie gave a yelp.

"What-ho!" he gasped. "Gadzooks! What was it? Dear old laddie, you've got a chin like a chunk of iron. I mean to say, the old knuckles——"

"Hang you!" snarled the man, rubbing his chin. "Take that!"

Archie just managed to dodge a powerful blow. But the next moment he went down, for one of the men behind had struck Archie across the shoulders with his stick. And, almost before we knew it, the pair of us were lifted out of the trench and taken away.

The snow was coming down as thickly as ever, and I was dreadfully anxious about the rest of the camp. It was appalling that I should be captured in this way. Yet I

could not blame myself. It was just a bad piece of luck, in which the weather had played the most important part.

Fiercely gripped by the four men, Archie and I had utterly no chance of getting away. We had been taken prisoners. I couldn't see how this would help Miss Trumble; but she had evidently issued instructions that if any of us were caught, we were to be taken off.

I should have worried less if I had known the actual truth.

For Reginald Pitt and Bob Christine and one or two of the others had rallied the rebel forces. For ten minutes hand-to-hand fighting went on in the trenches.

Handforth had the time of his life.

With his nose bleeding, with a cut lip, and with one of his eyes slowly closing up, he fought harder than ever. A few minor injuries of that kind only made Handforth all the more eager for the fray.

And he did wonders.

Using only his bare fists, he defeated man after man. And Willy Handforth distinguished himself nearly as much. The fog proved that we had not made any mistake by admitting him. The way in which he fought was a bit of a revelation to some of the Removites.

The hoses were brought into play again. True, quite a number of the rebels got drenched in the confusion, but this was only a detail. And then, at the crucial moment, the weather became more kindly—it changed in our favour. For the snow flurry ceased, and for a short time the air was perfectly clear. There was a period when the blue sky showed for a spell.

And the much-tried rebels could see clearly in every direction, over the entire position. This gave them the opportunity they wanted. The enemy were thrown out of the trenches one after the other, battered, sore, and with a much greater respect for the Remove than they had ever had before.

And as the defeated ruffians crawled away, they were hastened by numerous snowballs which were sent hurtling after them. Showers of water followed, too, and almost before the rebels knew it, the danger was over.

The enemy had been beaten off.

The cheers rang out from every side. But only for a time. For the rebels discovered, to their consternation, that two of their number were completely missing. These two were Archie Glenthorne and myself.

"They must have been taken prisoners!" exclaimed Pitt anxiously. "Right in the thick of that big snowstorm, I expect. I remember that Nipper was left to himself. I thought he'd go along with the others——"

"Well, there's nothing much to worry about, anyhow," panted Bob Christine. "We've held the position, and we're not likely to have another attack as severe as that one. I reckon we can hold out against any form of assault now."

"Rather!"



"As for Nipper and Archie, they'll be turning up again soon," said De Valerie. But the rebels were very concerned.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE HOSTAGES!

MISS TRUMBLE stood in her study, gazing out of the window. The snow was coming down thickly, and she was both glad and sorry. She could not see out; it was impossible to make out the chestnut-trees in the Triangle. At the same time, she knew that this snowstorm would aid farmer Holt and his men.

It was nearly time for afternoon lessons to be over. It was also nearly time for Miss Trumble to be hearing some report concerning the battle, which she knew was going on.

And then, out of the snow came a number of figures.

Miss Trumble stared, anxious.

Archie Glenthorne and I had an idea as to what was coming. The fact that we had been brought to the school told us that Miss Trumble had given orders to that effect. And we were taken straight across to the private doorway of the Head's house.

And then, a few minutes later, we were forced along the passage, and into Miss Trumble's study. Farmer Holt and one of his men were grasping us firmly, so that we could not possibly escape.

"Two of 'em, so far, mam," said Farmer Holt gruffly. "I dunno about the others. Mebbe there'll be some more."

"Indeed!" said Miss Trumble, her voice like ice. "At all events, it is excellent that you have captured two of these insufferable young rascals. Boys! What have you to say for yourselves?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie indignantly. "I mean to say, this is rather foul! Being yanked along like a couple of blessed pick-pockets, don't you know! To be exact, old darling, it's frightfully perpendicular! I mean, just slightly beyond the old limit."

"You wretched child!" snapped Miss Trumble.

"A thousand pardons, but allow me to point out that you're absolutely wrong!" said Archie firmly. "Wretched? What a frightfully ridic. suggesch! As a matter of fact, I'm feeling dashed braced! It seems that the life positively suits me!"

"If I were you, Archie, I shouldn't say much!" I put in quietly. "We have been brought here by force, and——"

"You will be quiet, boy!" commanded Miss Trumble. "At last I have compelled you to leave your retreat!"

"You mean that you hired these ruffians to attack us in a blackguardly manner!" I said coldly. "I'm amazed, Miss Trumble, that you could descend to such methods! They are hardly in-keeping with the traditions——"

"Silence!" shouted the Headmistress. "How dare you say such a thing? You have the audacity to talk about traditions! And you are rebelling against all authority, and defying every rule!"

"Please let me correct you, ma'am," I said. "The boys of the Remove have never rebelled against authority. They rebelled because they could not accept the altered conditions——"

"Enough!" interrupted Miss Trumble curtly. "It is not my intention to argue with you. You are the ringleader of this insurrection. Is that true, or is it not true?"

"It's quite true."

"You admit it?"

"There's no need for me to say so twice, ma'am," I replied calmly.

"Your impudence is far more than I had bargained for!" exclaimed Miss Trumble. "But I intend to make you suffer very dearly for it. I have my plans all cut and dried."

Archie and I were still being held firmly. Our captors did not release their hold at once, and Miss Trumble was still gazing at us in a gloating kind of way. There was an expression in her eyes which seemed to indicate that she had the upper hand.

"You are the ringleader!" exclaimed the Headmistress, after a few moments. "You must surely realise by now that this absurdity has gone far enough. Will you surrender?"

"I'm a prisoner, ma'am," I replied. "I don't see how I can surrender——"

"I mean, will you go back to your companions, and surrender in their name?" she asked. "As the commander of the whole rebel force, it is for you to surrender, if you so desire."

"We are really wasting time, ma'am," I interrupted. "I have no intention of surrendering for the others."

"Absolutely not," agreed Archie. "I am with you, laddie."

"Very well; you will both be taken at once to the punishment-room," said Miss Trumble curtly. "Later on your punishment will be made known to you."

And within five minutes we were both on the way. We arrived in the punishment-room, and found that it was quite another apartment to the usual room. For, earlier in the rebellion, we had rescued Willy Handforth, smashing the lock of the punishment-room in the process.

Now, however, we were taken down to one of the cellars, and thrust into a dark apartment where there was a heavy door. The outside, as I could see, was provided with great bolts. Once in there, there was no prospect of getting out.

And, in the meantime, Miss Trumble was hurrying out to survey the position.

The snow had ceased, and as Miss Trumble approached she had no difficulty in seeing



that the rebels still held control of Fort Resolute. There was no sign whatever of Holt's men.

And the rebels were moving about in the trenches and near the barn. But there were many shouts as soon as Miss Trumble put in an appearance. She walked straight on, her lips set.

She had half-expected this. It had been too much to hope that all the rebels had been driven out. And, in her opinion, it didn't matter. Her plan was one that would bring utter and complete defeat.

As she approached the front-line trench, she pulled out her handkerchief and waved it. And the juniors who had collected there wondered. Was Miss Trumble going to capitulate?

"Good old Handy!"

"Listen to me!" shouted Miss Trumble. "I will allow you all to return to the school peacefully, and you have my word that there will be no punishments whatsoever. But you must return at once, in orderly fashion, and continue your duties in exactly the same manner as usual."

"What about Nipper and Glenthorne?"

"Their half-holidays for the remainder of the term will be cancelled," said Miss Trumble. "That is the only punishment I shall inflict. Stay! I shall not include Glenthorne. Nipper is the ringleader, and he is the one who will suffer. But you must all return immediately——"

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"It's the white flag!" exclaimed Pitt tensely. "Either she's going to give in, or else she wants to talk to us about Nipper."

Miss Trumble came right up, and dozens of juniors collected round.

"Boys, I've only a few words to say!" exclaimed the Headmistress curtly. "Nipper and Glenthorne are in my hands, and I have a proposition to make to you."

"If you're going to ask for any conditions, you're not going to get any!" snorted Handforth. "The only thing we'll agree to is the complete dismissal of all the women teachers—including yourself."

"Hear, hear!"

"We won't stand any more petticoat rule!"

There was no mistaking the shouts of the juniors.

"Very well!" said Miss Trumble fiercely. "I will tell you what the result will be, if you persist in this obstinate attitude. Nipper and Glenthorne will be expelled in disgrace. You have half an hour to decide. I will return then, and you must give me your answer!"

And the Headmistress turned and walked away, leaving the Remove feeling decidedly staggered.



## CHAPTER XI.

## WILLY MAKES SURE!

**R**EGINALD PITT took a deep breath. "Well, it places us in a very difficult position," he exclaimed. "If we surrender we shall be no better off than we were before we began the barring-out, and if we don't surrender, Nipper and Archie will get the sack!"

"My goodness!"

"What's to be done?"

"As far as I can see, we've got to give in!" exclaimed Bob Christine.

"You—you ass!" snorted Handforth. "We'll never give in!"

"But we must!" insisted Bob. "We can't possibly let Nipper suffer for us. Miss Trumble's got the upper hand. Just think! If we hold out, poor old Nipper will get expelled in disgrace!"

The rebels were silent.

"It'll be terribly rough on him," said Jack Grey, at length. "It's hardly fair, you know. We shall be all right—we can stick it out—but Nipper will be sent away from the school——"

"Shall we be all right?" put in Bob Christine keenly. "Don't forget we've had Nipper here, and all you chaps have got to admit that he's been the leader all along. Without Nipper we should never have carried on. We owe our success to him."

"That's right enough."

"And without him we shall probably fail——"

"Oh, rot!" said Handforth. "I'm jolly sorry about Nipper, but I'll take the leadership. Trust me, and I won't let you down! It was his own silly fault, too! Why did he go and let himself get captured?"

"Fathead!" growled Church. "He couldn't help it!"

"It's all very well to say he couldn't help it; no proper leader would let himself get captured!" declared Handforth. "Was I captured? We drove the enemy out long after Nipper had gone."

"That's nothing to do with the present question!" said Bob Christine. "We've got to choose the lesser of two evils. Shall we stick it out here, and let Nipper and Glenthorne be sacked, or shall we give in, and submit to Miss Trumble again?"

"Well, it seems to me that we've got to surrender!"

"It's horribly rough, but there's nothing else for it," exclaimed Pitt, frowning. "If we could only rescue the poor chaps it would be all right. But we can't do that. You can bet Miss Trumble isn't keeping them in the punishment-room now. And we daren't send out a raiding-party. There might be another attack before long. We need all our forces."

The juniors were in a state of absolute indecision. The very idea of giving in was fearful. But, at the same time, they could

not dream of allowing Glenthorne and I to suffer alone.

Accordingly, the majority of the rebels came to the reluctant conclusion that they would have to return to St. Frank's. Miss Trumble had played a trump card, and the game was hers.

But Willy Handforth was not satisfied.

He had been considering everything; he had been listening to the talk of all the others. And it struck him that it would be a terrible pity to forsake Fort Resolute when the rebels were within reach of victory. And the fag decided that he would make certain of things.

And so, unnoticed, he slipped along the trenches, and made his way out at the far corner, and ran across the meadow towards the school. It was snowing again slightly, and there was not much chance of the fag being spotted.

"I'm jolly well going to see Nipper, if I can," muttered Willy. "I'll bet anything that he won't let us surrender. If those fatheads are left to themselves they'll ruin everything."

He pressed on, and arrived in the Triangle just after lessons were over. A number of fags were playing snowballs. Willy strolled up to them calmly. He was quite unafraid. He didn't care for Miss Trumble, or anybody else.

Chubby Heath and Owen minor grabbed him.

"You—you bounder!" gasped Chubby. "We've missed you a tremendous lot!"

"Rather!" said Owen. "What have you come back for?"

"I've come on business!" said Willy. "Don't mess me about! I haven't got any time for rot! Look here, Chubby Heath, if you keep yanking my arm about like that, I'll jolly well biff you!"

"I'm shaking hands!" said Chubby indignantly.

"Oh, all right, then!" said Willy. "I thought you were trying to put my shoulder out of joint! Heard the news?"

"What news?"

"Don't be a couple of idiots!" went on Willy. "There's only one piece of news that's any good. Nipper and Glenthorne have been pinched by the old cat. Do you know where they are?"

"Of course we do!" said Chubby eagerly. "Miss Trumble's had 'em taken down the cellars; she's afraid of the punishment-room now."

"Which cellars?" asked Willy eagerly.

"Oh, round the back, somewhere——"

Handforth minor did not wait to hear any more. He was delighted. Nothing could suit his purpose better. He had intended climbing on the roof, and then getting into the punishment-room window by means of the gutter. But it was far better to learn that the prisoners were in a cellar.

There were only a certain line of cellars that could be used as prisons. And Willy



knew that these were provided with gratings. He had no scheme for doing any rescue work, because the gratings, for one thing, were only about six inches square, and no human being could squeeze through, even after the bars had been taken out.

But he could certainly talk!

He went from one grating to another, crouching low. And at each one he made the same remark. It was low, and very penetrating.

"Rebels ahoy!" he exclaimed. "You down there?"

Three gratings proved fruitless. Then, at the fourth, he nearly jumped for joy. For a voice came up to him.

"Hallo!" it said. "Who's that?"

I was the speaker, and I gazed at the grating with a certain amount of eagerness, although I didn't exactly recognise the voice. It was only a tiny grating, and practically no light came through.

"It's all right, Nipper; Willy speaking," breathed Handforth minor. "Look here, I'm on scouting work. Miss Trumble's been, and there's the dickens to pay!"

In a few brief sentences Willy explained the position. And Archie and I listened, rather startled.

"So now you know all about it!" concluded Willy. "The fatheads are talking about surrendering; in fact, they've decided to do so. They say they've got to, in order to save you from being sacked! But if I was in your position, Nipper, I'd tell 'em all to hold out——"

"Brainy lad!" I interrupted crisply. "Dash back to camp as hard as you can go, Willy. Take a message from me. Tell the Remove to hold out under all circumstances. Tell them to stand firm! They needn't worry about Archie and I at all!"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie promptly.

"Tell Pitt to take command, and tell all the rest not to worry themselves," I exclaimed. "And now rush off!"

"Good luck!" came Willy's voice. "So long!"

He was off like the wind, and less than ten minutes later the Remove was buzzing with excitement. Handforth minor had got in with my message, and he had delivered it broadcast. And the Remove, relieved of all anxiety, decided to obey my instructions. They would stand firm!

They did. Less than twelve minutes afterwards, Miss Trumble appeared again, full of confidence that all the boys would form into line and follow her back to the school. Once again she was wrong. Once again she made a serious miscalculation.

In decided tones, Reginald Pitt told her that he was the new leader, and that the rebel Remove was determined to defy her to the very last. They would return to the school upon one condition—and one condition only. The masters had to be reinstated!

Miss Trumble stood there, blazing with

## CHAPTER XII.

### EXPELLED FROM ST. FRANK'S!

**B**UT the Headmistress was not going to be absolutely foiled.

As soon as she returned to St. Frank's, she came to a definite decision. She was greatly disappointed, but her mind was made up. She would show the rebels that she was as good as her word!

She could nearly have cried with rage as she stood in her study. She had made certain that the rebels would succumb; that, in order to save Archie and I, they would weakly give in. Instead of that, they were as firm as ever, and all her work had been for practically nothing.

But, at least, she would have the satisfaction of expelling two of the culprits.

And orders went forth that the school was to gather together in Big Hall. Of course, everybody knew why. The whole story was being circulated throughout the school. And at just about tea-time, the fags and the seniors were all in their usual places in the great hall.

Only that part of the hall usually occupied by the Remove was empty. There was a loud buzz of talk until Miss Trumble appeared on the platform.

She came forward amid a deep hush. And just in her rear Archie Glenthorne and I were brought forward, in the firm grasp of two of the school grooms. I think we could have got away if we'd liked—at least, I could. But it wasn't worth while. And I was quite curious to see what Miss Trumble was going to do.

"I have called you all together, boys, because I have a very serious duty to perform!" exclaimed Miss Trumble. "I think you all know what misdemeanours these unfortunate children are guilty of."

She paused impressively, and the school continued to listen.

"It is quite unnecessary for me to go into any details of the matter," proceeded Miss Trumble. "The Remove Form has thought fit to disregard my authority, and to take up its own quarters outside of the school property——"

"You sold the ground to old Holt!"

"Yah! It was a trick!"

"Silence!" commanded Miss Trumble fiercely. "How dare you make such insolent remarks? These boys here have been brought back—and I intend to make an example of them."

"Why not let the whole Remove come back?" shouted a Fifth Former.

"Let's have the masters back!"

"Hurrah!"

There was quite a commotion for a few moments.

"Why you senior boys should misbehave yourselves in this manner is quite incomprehensible to me," said Miss Trumble angrily.



"The mystery is not so deep when I am dealing with juniors. But I do not intend to prolong this scene. It shall be quite brief."

"Thank goodness!" said somebody audibly.

You see these two wretched children!" exclaimed Miss Trumble, pointing to Archie and I with a dramatic movement. "Under no circumstances can I allow them to remain pupils at this old college. They are expelled—they will leave this school to-day."

"Oh!"

A large number of groans sounded.

"Possibly, the boys do not realise the gravity of this punishment," went on Miss Trumble. "As they are rebelling against authority, it may seem to them that this expulsion is a mere farce. But such is not the case. They are disgraced—not merely now, but for all the time."

"It's not fair!"

"We won't stand it, Miss Trumble!"

"For all time!" shouted Miss Trumble loudly. "They will find it impossible to gain admittance to any other famous public school—they will find it equally impossible to go up to Oxford or Cambridge. Their expulsion from St. Frank's will blacken them as they so richly deserve. It is the reward of insubordination."

There was such a tone of gloating triumph in Miss Trumble's voice that the majority of the seniors were quite disgusted. It was clear that she absolutely relished this task—a task which ought to have been distasteful to her.

As for Archie Glenthorne and I, we merely glanced at one another. Archie was slightly pale, but he managed to smile.

"Absolutely, old dear!" he murmured. "I mean to say, large quantities of cheer surge through the old bosom!"

The school was in a ferment.

The fifth Formers quite forgot themselves. There were hoots, howls, and all sorts of catcalls. The fags, emboldened by the example of the fifth proceeded to yell with derision.

And Miss Trumble vainly tried to stop it.

At last the excitement grew so intense that Chambers was bold enough to step forward, out of the ranks of the fifth. Chambers was always fond of the lime-light, and here he had a good chance.

He felt that the school supported him, and so he went forward. Indeed, he went practically up to the platform.

"We're not going to stand it, Miss Trumble," he shouted warmly.

"Go back to your place, boy!" commanded Miss Trumble.

"Not likely!" shouted Chambers. "I'm going to speak my mind! The whole school is behind the Remove—the whole school supports what they're doing! We want the masters back!"

"Hear, hear!" yelled the Fifth valiantly. Miss Trumble staggered.

"This—this is too much!" she exclaimed



**"Absolutely!" said Archie indignantly. "I mean to say, this is rather foul, being yanked along like a couple of pickpockets, don't you know! To be exact, old darling, it's frightfully perpendicular! I mean, just slightly beyond the old limit!"**

faintly. "It was appalling for the Remove boys to show such insubordination—but I hardly believed that the Fifth Form would forget themselves to that extent."

"We're not forgetting ourselves, Miss Trumble!" shouted Chambers. "We know exactly what we're doing. And we're not going to stand here and see those youngsters kicked out of the school in disgrace!"

"No!" roared the fifth.

"If Nipper and Glenthorne are expelled, we'll join the rebels!" declared Chambers fiercely. "Now, what do you think about that? We'll join the rebels—and, what's more, I'll lead the fifth!"

"Hurrah!"

"We'll revolt, too!"

"Sack those juniors, and we'll walk out of the school!"

"That's the idea!" yelled Chambers. "Good men! Back me up, and you'll be all right! I don't believe in this kind of thing as a rule—it's undignified—but the circumstances are exceptional. We're not going to stand here and see injustice done!"

"Never!"

"So it's up to you, Miss Trumble, to let the kids off!" declared Chambers. "Sack them, and the Fifth joins the rebels!"

The tumult was tremendous.

Miss Trumble stood there, breathing hard, and scarcely knowing whether she was on her head or her heels. She had a feeling



of faintness. Now, indeed, she was losing control of the school. If the Fifth Form went, disaster would be certain and complete.

Her only chance was to stop this fresh rebellion at once.

She advanced to the front of the platform, and held up her hand.

"Boys—boys!" she exclaimed quietly. "Listen to me!"

There was something in her tone which stilled the tumult.

"I could understand the Remove undertaking this foolhardy rebellion!" continued Miss Trumble. "But you must let me remind you that you are seniors—and, as members of the Fifth Form, you have your dignity to think of."

The Fifth was silent.

"Have you no sense of responsibility?" went on Miss Trumble, her voice quivering with indignation. "Have you no realisation of your position in the school? Think of your future! before long you will be going up to Oxford or Cambridge."

The Fifth remained silent.

"Do you feel disposed to abandon your whole careers, just for the sake of a few wretched junior boys who have defied authority?" asked Miss Trumble, her voice quivering. "Think of your parents—what will they say? I am ashamed of you—I am amazed that boys of your age should so far forget themselves!"

The Fifth was rather startled—with the exception of Chambers.

"Look here, Miss Trumble, that sort of talk doesn't go down with me," he said truculently. "If the Fifth joins the rebels, you can be pretty certain that there's going to be a change at St. Frank's——"

"Dry up, Chambers!"

"Better be quiet, old man!"

"It's no good—we can't act like kids!"

All sorts of whispers came to Chambers from the ranks of the Fifth. Chambers looked round, rather startled by the change in the tone of his Form mates. And before he could say any more, Miss Trumble waved her hand.

"The school is dismissed!" she said curtly.

I turned to Archie.

"And we can go, old son!" I said. "We're no longer pupils here, and so we might as well walk out."

"Gadzooks!" said Archie, in astonishment. "But, my dear old lad, I had an idea that we were to be shoved back into the old dungeon——"

"I don't think so," I smiled. "I had an idea that Miss Trumble might have sent for your pater, but perhaps she forgot that.

Anyway, we're clearing out now, while we've got the chance."

And, straight off, we hurried outside.

Numbers of Fifth Formers tried to stop us—but I wouldn't let them. As a matter of fact, I was a bit disgusted with the Fifth. At first they had shown the right spirit—a spirit which would have won us the day in next to no time if they had maintained it. If the Fifth had stuck to their guns, Miss Trumble would have been beaten on the spot.

But a few words from the Headmistress, and they had weakly succumbed. They had failed to support Chambers, who had done well. We met Chambers just outside the Ancient House.

"Good man!" I said heartily. "Thanks awfully for your support."

Chambers glared.

"What do you think of them?" he asked bitterly. "The weaklings—the miserable rotters! Backing me up—and then sliding out of it! They're nothing but a lot of worms!"

"I won't tell you my opinion of the Fifth—it might offend you," I replied. "But you're true blue, Chambers. If only your pals had stuck to you, we should have had the masters back by to-morrow. But you needn't worry—they'll be back before long. The Remove will see to that!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie heartily.

And then we went straight off in the gathering dusk—we hurried back to Fort Resolute. And we were greeted with hearty cheers as soon as we appeared out of the dusk. We jumped into the trenches, and we were carried swiftly away to the larp.

"Good!" I said heartily. "This is great! I was worrying about you fellows. So everything's all right? You beat off all the attacks?"

"Rather!" said Pitt.

"Then there's no need to worry," I exclaimed. "We'll win yet!"

"But—but you've been sacked!" said Tommy Watson in alarm.

"My dear old ass, do you think Archie and I will worry about that?" I grinned. "We're no longer pupils of St. Frank's, but we'll still stick to the Rebel Remove!"

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for Nipper!"

"And what's more, as soon as we've won our cause, we shall be reinstated!" I declared. "You needn't worry about that, old sons. So everything in the garden is lovely!"

And the excitements of the day being over, the rebels held a big celebration, in which Fatty Little did wonders in the food line. Once again the victory was ours.

And now we were within sight of final triumph!



# Editorial Announcement.

My dear Readers:—

The large numbers of entries in the Story Voting Competition makes it impossible for me to publish the result this week as I had intended. Every coupon is most carefully examined and in fairness to the competitors, no trouble is spared in finding the right winner. It is taking longer than I anticipated, but you may rest assured that the result will be ready for publication by next week.

## THE SIEGE OF FORT RESOLUTE!

The war of the Remove against Miss Trumble continues unabated. The commandeering of food supplies from the school pantry under the very nose of the Head-mistress has unfortunately disclosed to the latter the one vital and weak spot of her enemy. No army can exist very long when its food supplies are cut off. For some reason or other this elementary fact seems to have escaped the attention of Miss Trumble. But now she realises it and a plan for besieging the Remove has already formed itself in her mind.

In our next story of the exciting "Barring Out" series, "The Siege of Fort Resolute," it will be told how Miss Trumble sets to work to starve the Juniors into submission. This time without doubt she succeeds in

dealing her opponents their first serious reverse, Fatty Little is, of course, more concerned than anybody. Things soon become desperate and Nipper is temporarily in the unenviable position of having to find a way out of the Remove's terrible plight. There are many other minor incidents in this story which add to its general liveliness. Fullwood and Co. for instance, get somewhat out of hand, and have to be court-martialled for leaving their posts when on guard. There is also a lively scene between Chambers of the Fifth and Miss Trumble, resulting in the sacking of the former, and his appearance among the rebels.

## THE RIVAL REPORTER!

The adventures of Mervyn Hume, the famous newspaper sleuth will continue next week in the Detective Story Section with another brilliant story from the vivid pen of Mr. Rossiter Shepherd called, "THE RIVAL REPORTER!" It is a wonderful account of the romance of the news-getter and crime investigator working in this unique and double capacity and his adventures with a rival reporter, whose skill in picking other people's brains dishonestly is greatly in excess of his ability to use his own.

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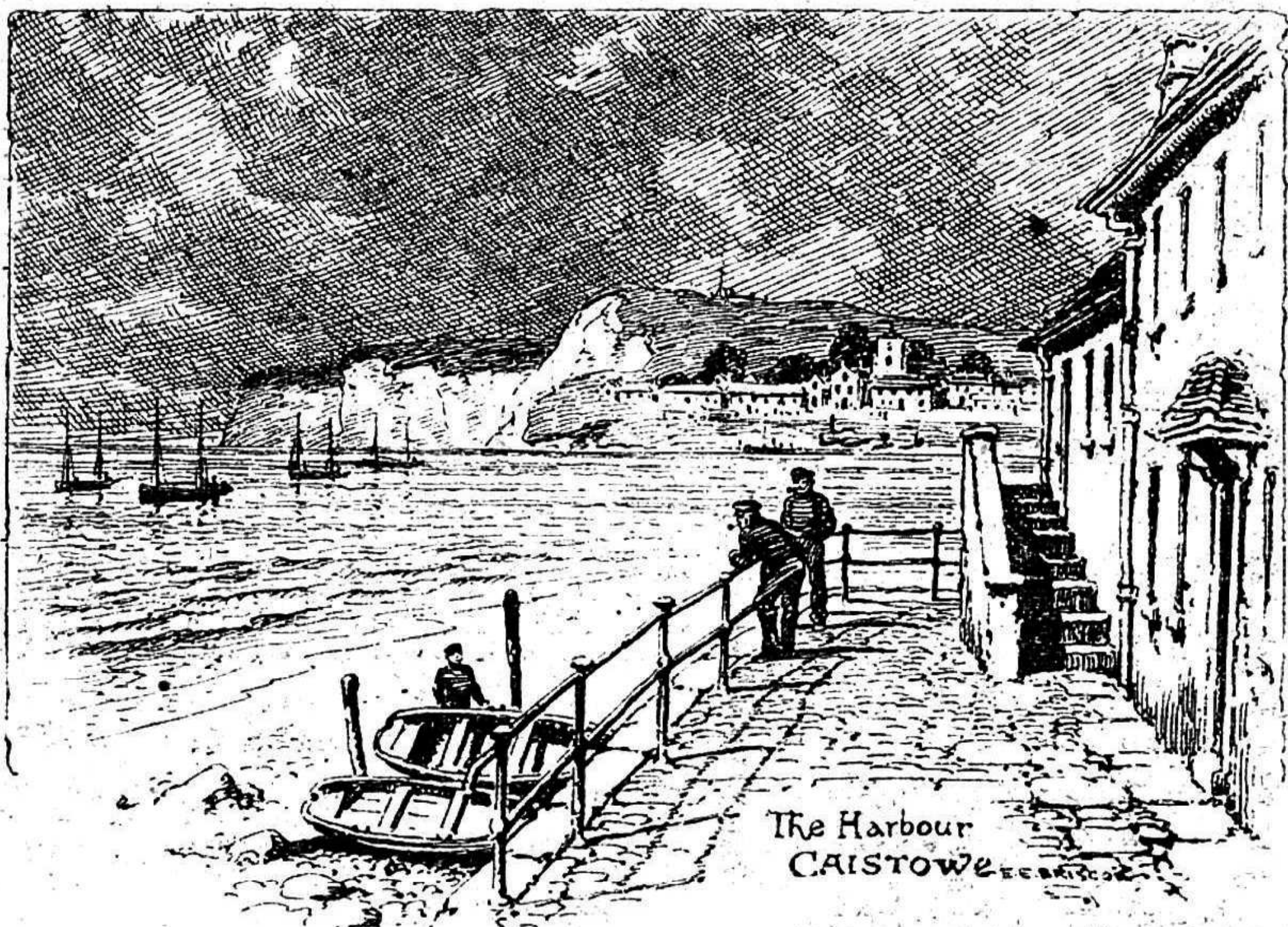
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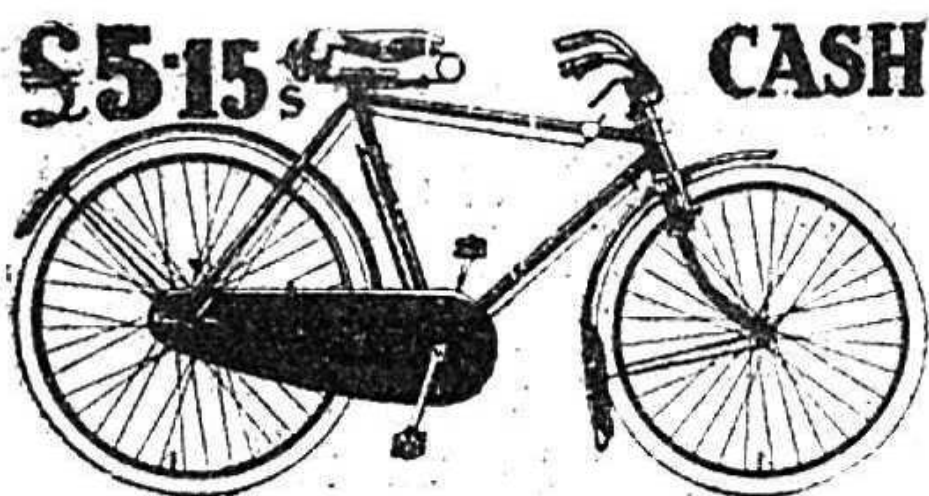
## :: CAISTOWE ::

Caistowe is a small fishing village on the South Coast, about three miles from St. Frank's. It boasts of a modest harbour at the mouth of the River Stowe, which here joins the sea. On the shores of the sheltered Bay of Caistowe, protected by high, chalky cliffs, the boys of St. Frank's frequently foregather in spring and summer to bathe. Many of them will have cause to remember this otherwise insignificant seaport as a place associated with some of their most thrilling experiences. Not so long ago Willy Handforth and his two chums nearly came to grief in an open boat in the bay. A fog came on and they lost their bearings, afterwards losing their boat—and nearly their lives—while endeavouring to land on some rocks. Happily, the rocks were connected to the mainland, and led Willy and

Co. to a secret cavern and other adventures. Last year Yung Ching, the Chinese boy, was kidnapped by men in a motor-boat while bathing in the bay. There was an exciting chase in another motor-boat by Nipper, and from this developed a remarkable series of travel and adventure in the South Seas. To the casual observer Caistowe would appear to be rather a sleepy kind of place. Were it not for the frequent excursions made here by the boys of St. Frank's it certainly would be a dull place. It is connected by rail to Belton, but most of the boys use the road, either on their bicycles or walking.

That Caistowe will figure prominently again in the St. Frank's stories before very long is as certain as the coming of spring and summer.





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