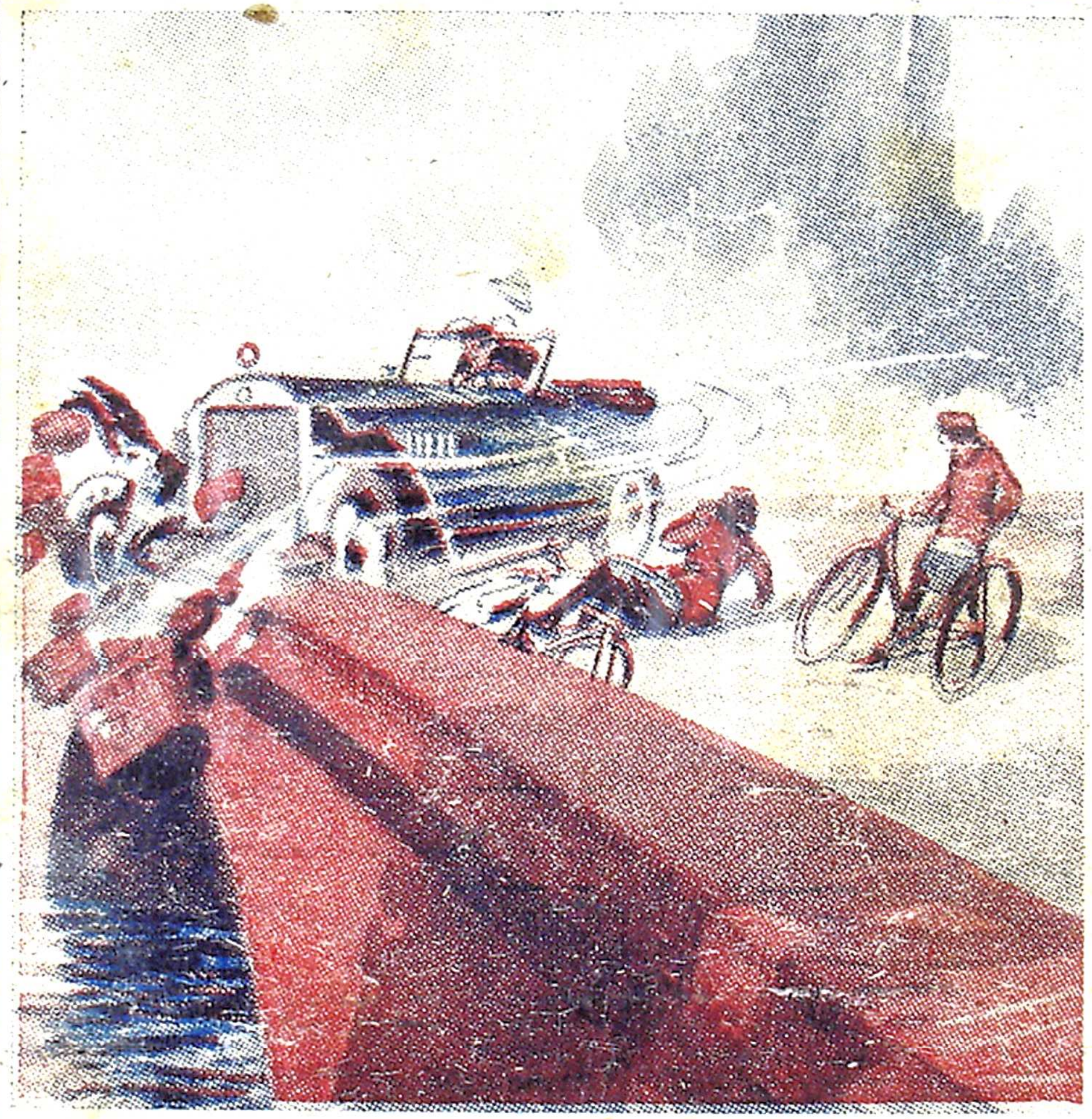
BARRING-OUT SERIES STARTS IN THIS NUMBER !

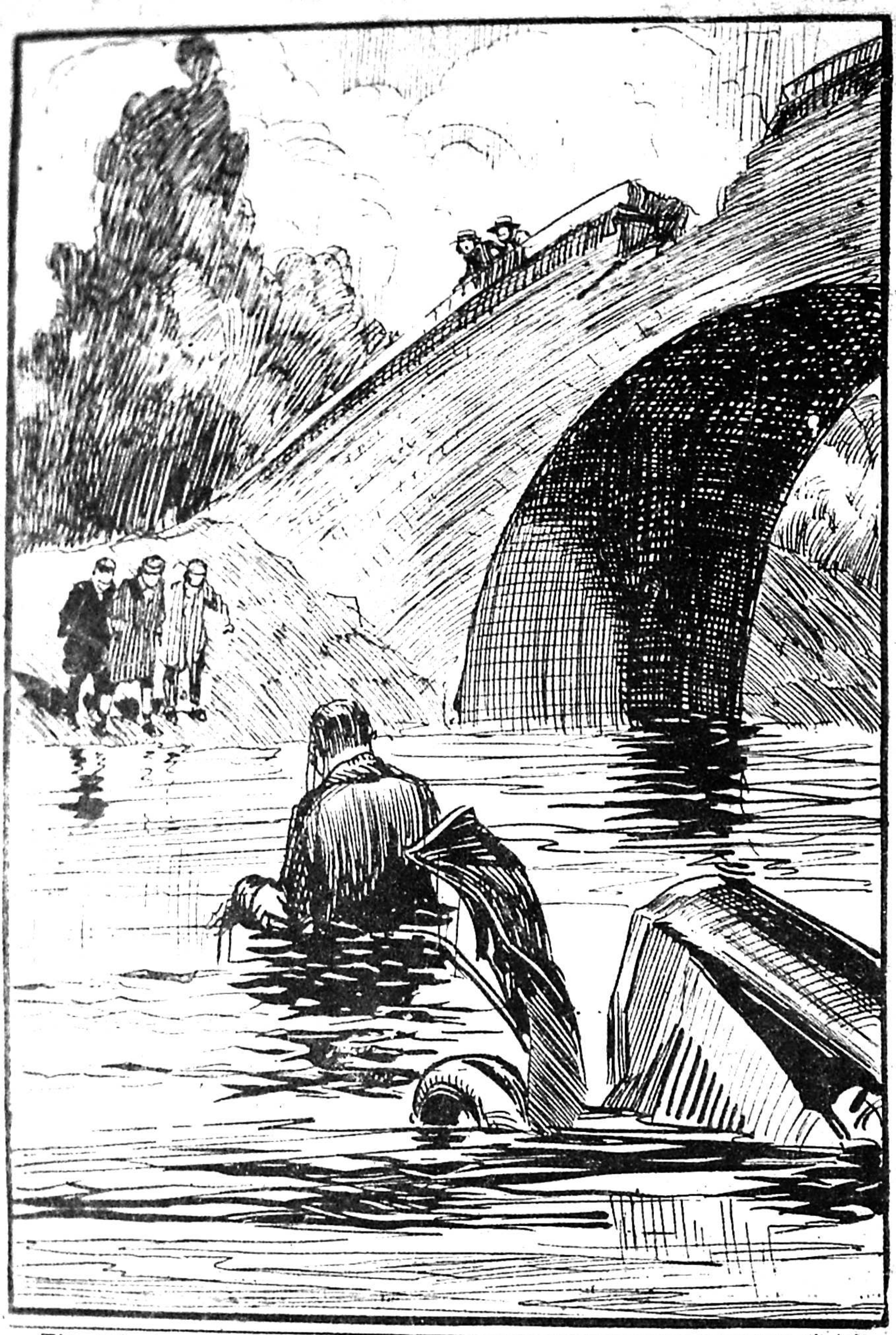
The NELSON LEE Library
AND ST. FRANK'S MAGAZINE
2D.



The parapet crumbled up with the force of the impact, and the car dashed headlong into the river below.

Read This Week's Opening Story of Grand New Barring-Out Series :—

THE INVASION OF ST. FRANK'S !



The unfortunate motorist was now wading out apparently unharmed by his terrifying experience. As the juniors appeared, he paused, standing there in the river mud.

THE INVASION OF ST FRANK'S!

Tell all your friends, dear reader, not on any account to miss this week's story, for it begins an exceptionally fine and original new series, leading up to an exciting "barring-out" by the Remove. Stirring times are threatened not only at St. Frank's but in and around the whole of the sleepy village of Bellton, including the small seaport of Caistowe. You will perhaps wonder what extraordinary happening could create such widespread excitement throughout this otherwise peaceful countryside. This will be explained in the sudden appearance in the neighbourhood of Wilhelm Karl Schmidt, alias Mr. W. K. Smith, a German-American millionaire. This individual has bought up the whole estate of Bellton and Caistowe for the purpose of making it a big industrial centre for the manufacture of his own products. In short, Mr. Smith intends to disfigure the beautiful surroundings of St. Frank's with hideous factories and an American township. Not for nothing has he been called "Cyclone Smith," for in an incredibly short time, sky-scrapers, huge chimney stacks and a mushroom city make their appearance. I have said enough, I think, to arouse your impatience to get on with the story.

THE EDITOR.

The Narrative Related by NIPPER and Set Down by E. SEARLES BROOKS.

CHAPTER I.

LISTENING IN!

"ZURRRH—ZING—GURRRR—PHUT!" said the loud-speaker discordantly.

"Fine!" said Bob Christine.

"Amazing!" declared Yorke. "What's it supposed to be—a dog fight, or a level crossing accident?"

John Busterfield Boots frowned.

"Don't try to be funny!" he said sourly. "There's nothing wrong with the thing—it's only a bit out of adjustment. These big four-valve sets need a lot of care and attention. I'll soon have it going fine."

"Zurr-bing!" observed the loud-speaker complacently.

"It's talking German now," said Talmadge. "I don't want to pass any unpleasant remarks, but my home-made crystal set beats this thing into a dozen fits. I get a fine reception."

Buster Boots tinkered desperately with the controls of the big valve set, and his audience looked on with a somewhat obvious air of boredom. Several of them began to shift restlessly.

"I say, let's clear off to my study," whispered Talmadge. "They're sending out a speech on rabbit-keeping at half-past seven, and it's nearly that now. I want to pick up a few hints."

Study V, in the College House at St. Frank's, was rather crowded. In addition to John Busterfield Boots and Percy Bray—the rightful occupants—there were a number of visitors, including Christine and Co. and Clapson.

Buster had made a big splash about this valve set of his. It was a present from an over-generous and misguided uncle, and must

have cost anything between twenty and thirty pounds.

But, somehow, it didn't seem to be very successful. The aerial was all right, because Boots had recently possessed a crystal set, and had never had any trouble. He was rather dismayed at the inferior results of the loud-speaker.

Since the recent departure of Dr. Karnak from the school a period of comparative quietness had set in, and a wave of wireless enthusiasm had swept through St. Frank's—particularly among the juniors.

Of course, a number of fellows had been keen on the radio for some time, but now it was considered to be almost a sign of abject poverty not to have a wireless set of some kind in one's study.

The Head had appreciated the boys' enthusiasm, and had facilitated their efforts to the best of his ability. There had been no trouble about aerials, and so forth. Many members of the Sixth were the proud possessors of valve sets, but there were not many of these in the Remove.

Archie Glenthorne had one, but then, Archie had enough money to get a dozen, if he wanted them. The rank and file of the juniors considered themselves lucky if they were able to save enough pocket-money to construct a home-made set.

Boots had sprung his surprise on the Monks rather dramatically—it was one of his characteristics to astonish the natives. He had said nothing until the four-valve set was all fitted up. And then he had invited a chosen few to listen-in. They were now listening-in.

"Pop pop pop-gug-plup!" remarked the loud-speaker cheerfully.

"Blessed if I can understand it!" growled Buster. "All the connections are right, and the valves are working. I've got the correct tuning, and everything else. The confounded thing's jamming somewhere."

"Try and get a different wave-length," said Clap-on vaguely. "I don't know much about wireless, but I've heard that you've got to get one of these giddy things. Anybody might think it was a piano!"

Buster was still experimenting, but all his efforts seemed to be of no avail. He had switched off the loud-speaker, and was now wearing head-phones. And suddenly he gave a start of surprise and delight.

"I've got 'em!" he exclaimed triumphantly.

"I've suspected it for weeks!" said Bob Christine, nodding.

Buster, intent upon the controls, failed to hear the insult, and the audience was somewhat surprised to hear the loud-speaker begin once more. And now the blaring and shrieking had completely vanished.

"Hallo, everybody!" said the loud-speaker uncannily. "ZZXXVV calling. We are now about to commence our special local concert, after which you will hear news, stock exchange quotations, and the weather. Stand by for one minute, please. Or if you don't like to stand by, sit by!"

There was a grating kind of click, and the loud-speaker became dead. The juniors looked at one another, puzzled.

"The chap was trying to be funny!" said Bob Christine. "And who the dickens is ZZXXVV? We generally listen-in to Bournemouth—6BM."

"Sometimes we get 2LO, relayed," put in Yorke.

"With this set I can get Cardiff and Glasgow—and perhaps America," said Boots calmly. "It all depends upon the tuning-in. But I won't touch it now—I'll wait for this mysterious ZZXXVV. Must be some broadcasting station we haven't heard of before."

The loud-speaker gave a preliminary snap, and then broke into voice.

"The Celebrated Radio Quartette will now give a series of humorous items," said the announcer. "Stand by for about two jiffs. The Quartette will now proceed to start on the job. Sit tight, and have some water handy."

The listening juniors gazed at one another.

"Never heard anything like it!" said Christine, scandalised. "The loud-speaker's all right, though. Don't touch anything, Buster."

"Shush!" said Boots cautiously.

For the alleged concert had just commenced. It proved to be of a somewhat startling nature, and totally different from any radio concert that the juniors had ever listened-in to. The announcer was not only inspired by a sense of levity, but he became absolutely personal—which, to say the least of it, was the most astonishing thing the juniors had ever heard.

"Here we are—just going to start," said the loud-speaker. "Are you there, Boots, old man? Or has that valve set of yours refused to function? In case you're listening, let me wish you many happy returns of the day! May your wisdom increase, and your swelled head decrease, and see if you can do anything for that wart on the side of your nose!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Boots, startled.

"He knows you!" exclaimed Christine amazedly.

"Hallo! Hallo!" said the loud-speaker. "River House fellows, ahoy! Listen carefully, because one of these songs is all about Brewster and Co. There's another one about you, Wellborne—although I'm afraid you won't like it. The truth is sometimes unpleasant, my sporty old spark."

"It's uncanny!" muttered Talmadge.

"College House of St. Frank's! Lend me your ears!" continued the loud-speaker. "The concert we are now going to present affects you materially. So listen with all your ears. That ought to be easy, for ears in the College House run large. This only applies to juniors—please note! Now, you beggars—if you want to hear something worth listening to, hold tight, for Mary's going to sing!"

Boots and Co. were not the only fellows who were startled.

In other studies, in all parts of the school, seniors and juniors were listening-in, quite amazed. At the River House School, near the village, Brewster and his merry men were intent upon catching every word.

The concert which followed was a sensation.

A song was delivered by three voices—a kind of concerted number. The Ancient House listeners-in absolutely hugged themselves with sheer glee, for the Monks were caricatured in verse—alleged verse, that is—to a screaming degree. Some of the verses of that song were worth quids, as Reggie Pitt afterwards declared.

The College House, of course, was in a ferment. But nobody would have imagined so, had he strolled indoors. For the juniors, although bubbling with fierce indignation, continued to listen-in. The storm would break later.

But the song, although personal in every line, was strictly decorous, in no way lacking in propriety, and only calculated to cause amusement—except to the unfortunate victims. And even they had to grin.

It happened that the Headmaster himself was listening-in, and although he was astounded, he privately informed Mr. Paget, later, that the concert was quite diverting. The Head was in no way scandalised, for it took him only a few minutes to realise that this affair was a mere harmless practical joke.

But the College House raved.

Brewster and Co. and the other juniors of the River House School yelled with laughter—until the next song commenced. Then they became indignant. For they were dealt with in ludicrous fashion.

One song, a parody on a popular ditty, told the truth about Wellborne and Co. very neatly and adroitly. Those who were fully acquainted with Wellborne's character appreciated all the subtle digs—whilst those who were not gained no certainty of information.

The concert was concluded at last, after about three-quarters of an hour. And by this time both St. Frank's and the River House School were almost on the point of boiling over.

"And that," said the loud-speaker in Boots' study, "is that! We regret to announce, everybody, that we have come to the end of our programme. But don't worry! You'll probably have some more tomorrow night. We've got a specially good song about Boots and his number tens, but it isn't rehearsed. Take our advice, and switch over to 6BM. The programme won't be so diverting, but there's no question that it will be more classy. Oh, just a minute! We trust we have not offended the lordly Sixth, or any members of the august scholastic staff. If so, we tender our sincere apologies, and hope for the best. Good-night, everybody! In other words, Cheerio!"

There was a slight snap, and the loud-speaker became silent. Boots and Co. looked at one another, their emotions too deep for mere words. Without saying anything, Boots altered the wave-length, and in a few moments he had tuned-in Bournemouth.

The sweet strains of a violin solo sounded magically from the loud-speaker, but Boots switched it off quite rudely.

"Blow that!" he growled. "We don't want to listen to classical music! The question is, who the dickens gave that concert just now."

Christine couldn't help grinning.

"It was pretty rich, you know," he said. "Those songs about the River House chaps were a scream. I wouldn't have missed this for worlds!"

"But what about us?" roared Buster. "Are we going to stand being insulted on the giddy radio? I've never heard of such nerve!"

"I don't see what we can do," remarked Yorke. "We don't know where the broadcasting station is, or who's responsible. We're dished!"

And, sad though it was, Yorke spoke the truth.

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CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT WIRELESS JAPE!

WILLARD'S ISLAND lay dark and silent.

At least, nearly dark and nearly silent. Any wayfarer, chancing to stroll along the towing-path, beside the River Stowe, might possibly have seen or heard something slightly suspicious, but it is doubtful.

For the most elaborate precautions were being taken to ensure complete secrecy. The February evening was dark and rather windy, and low-lying clouds were sweeping across the sky.

Willard's Island was of somewhat peculiar formation, and quite a unique piece of the local geography. It was a long, narrow islet lying almost in the centre of the River Stowe, where that stream broadened to almost imposing proportions.

The island itself was wooded, and rose slightly towards the centre, this knoll being capped by a peculiar, antique-looking building. It was erected in the style of a mediæval castle, with turrets and towers and granite buttresses. It was quite a picturesque landmark.

The juniors had used the island as their own for ages past. The castle had never really been completed, and was a relic of the long-deceased Mr. Willard, who had, according to local hearsay, been more than a little eccentric.

The property really belonged to Colonel Glenthorne, the esteemed pater of the one and only Archie. So the Remove always regarded Willard's Island as its own particular possession, and permission was never

required for the use of it. It was not even out of bounds.

Within the quaint stone building were a number of juniors. I was in charge of the little party, and among the others were Archie Glenthorne, Reggie Pitt, Tregellis-West, and Handforth and Co.

And it can readily be guessed that we were responsible for the consternation which was now abounding in the College House and in the River House School. For there, in that old building, an elaborate broadcasting set had been rigged up. And the facetious announcer who had so scandalised the Monks was none other than myself—with my voice carefully altered.

The whole affair, of course, was an elaborate jape.

Archie had supplied the money for the enterprise—Archie being in the fortunate position of having more than he knew what to do with. And for days we had been preparing.

It was an Ancient House secret.

And at last the experiment had been tried. We had played a fine practical joke on the College House and on our friendly rivals of the River House School. And so careful had been our movements that none suspected.

The aerial had not been erected until a couple of hours before the actual transmission had been commenced—when Willard's Island was practically deserted by all—save the conspirators.

"Well, you chaps, I think it's been a pretty big success," I remarked cheerfully, as I turned away from the microphone. "Our little concert has been heard all over this district within a radius of three or four miles."

Handforth looked doubtful.

"I'm not so sure about it," he said. "We arranged with Burton to come and give us the tip if everything was going all right, but he hasn't appeared. The current's too weak, or something—our broadcasting hasn't been received by anybody, I'll bet."

"It ought to have been—everything's in perfect order," I replied. "Of course, it's only a local affair—almost private, in fact. But that's what we wanted. There's no need to broadcast our affairs to listeners-in twenty miles away."

"Still, it seems to be a bit flat," remarked Church. "That's one disadvantage of this radio business. You sing all sorts of funny things, and yet you can't hear any laughter from your giddy audience! Everything seems so jolly dead!"

"It won't be dead for long, I'll bet!" grinned Pitt.

"Hallo! Somebody coming!" said McClure, who was near the door. "Look out, you chaps! Switch the light off!"

McClure was on watch, for we did not want any interruptions. It wouldn't matter so much now, because the truth would have to come out.

Switching off the two small electric lamps, we stood waiting. And McClure, from his position, could see out into the open. A small boat nosed against the island, and a burly, youthful figure approached.

"Ahoy, there, shipmates!" came a soft hail.

"It's the Bo'sun!" said McClure. "O.K.! Put the lights on!"

As I switched them on, Tom Burton appeared. He was grinning cheerfully, and this was quite enough to assure us of the success of our efforts. The Bo'sun had brought good news.

"Souse my scuppers! The best jape has happened since I came aboard this craft!" he said, with a chuckle. "Your voice was as clear as a bell, shipmate—and so were the others. All hands are nearly on the point of mutiny in the College House."

Burton proceeded to tell us that every listener-in had heard the concert with surprising clearness. Even the home-made crystal sets had received the waves with remarkable clarity.

"Well, it's worked," I said, with satisfaction. "And we've given the fellows something to talk about. Must wake things up a bit in these dull days. And I think the Ancient House owes a vote of thanks to Archie for making such a great jape possible."

"Hear, hear!"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie stoutly. "Why, dash it, I've done nothing. I mean to say, I've simply whizzed about in the offing, looking on, while you chappies have been dashing about like anything. I mean, the very thought of all this work sends large assortments of quivers down the old spine."

"Yes, old man, but you provided the money," said Pitt.

"Odds life!" said Archie. "What priceless rot! My dear old soul, you're absolutely making me go all hot and cold with embarrassment. Kindly cease the chatter, as it were, and change the old sub."

And while Tom Burton was entertaining us with further stories of how our special broadcasting had been received, a dim figure lurked on the river bank, just opposite the island.

"Oh! So that's it!" he muttered gloatingly.

The dim figure was that of Master Teddy Long, of the Remove—and Teddy, with his usual inquisitiveness, had been doing a bit of detective work that would have been a revelation to Handforth.

As a matter of fact, the sneak of the Remove had been rather struck by Tom Burton's obvious excitement. Some little time earlier Burton had passed swiftly out of the Ancient House, chuckling to himself.

And Teddy, who happened to see this, became suspicious.

"There's something on!" he told himself cunningly.

And, forthwith, he followed the unsuspecting Bo'sun across the Triangle, and thence into the playing fields. Burton had not been cautious, because he had never

dreamed that anybody would be interested in his movements.

So he had never once glanced behind him on his journey to Willard's Island—to report the result of the broadcasting. Long was a perfect little terror for spying, and he fairly gloated when he observed the Bo'sun's quiet crossing of the river, and his disappearance into the quaint building.

And Teddy's sharp eyes had not failed to detect the wireless aerials. He wasn't quite such a fool as some of the fellows believed, and it only took him a moment to put two and two together.

There was very little that Teddy missed. He knew, for example, that the aerial had not been in position at sunset. It stood to reason, therefore, that the mysterious concert had emanated from this place. Furthermore, it was quite clear that the leading lights of the Ancient House Remove were the jokers.

Teddy Long was off like the wind, bubbling with his news.

Strictly speaking, he ought to have felt highly elated. For this was a jape against the Monks, and through sheer loyalty to the Ancient House, he should have kept his discovery to himself.

But loyalty and Teddy Long were absolute strangers.

His mind was mercenary, and it chanced that he was stony. Not that there was much chance about this—it was his usual condition. And here he saw a way of improving his finances.

Reaching the Triangle breathless, he dashed towards the College House, and was just about to enter when Christine and Co., Boots, and a few other Monks came crowding out.

They were all excitedly discussing the recent events, and trying to form some plan whereby they could locate the impudent bounders who had dared to make fun at the expense of the College House. Nothing could have been better for Teddy Long's purpose. He came to a halt, panting and excited.

"I say, you fellows——" he began.

"Clear out, you blessed fossil!" growled Boots. "We've had enough of you for one evening! I'll bet your chaps know something about this giddy business!"

"Are you there, Boots, old man?" said the loud speaker. "Let me wish you many happy returns of the day! And may your wisdom increase and your swelled head decrease!"

"I can tell you all about it!" said Teddy eagerly.

"Eh? What's that?"

"If you chaps'll give me a bob each, I'll tell you where you can find the chaps who sent out those insulting broadcasts," declared Long.

He cast his eye rapidly over the Monks. There were ten of them. Half a quid! He called himself an idiot for not asking more. And he wriggled a moment later when Christine and Boots grasped his arms.

"So you know something about this, do you?" asked Bob Christine grimly.

"Yes, please, Christine," said Long.

"Then out with it—and buck up!" commanded Boots.

"I'll tell you for a bob each—it's worth

it," said Teddy tensely. "I ought to charge you half a crown, really, but I'm not greedy. A bob each, and I'll tell you who the chaps are, and where you can find them the broadcasting apparatus, and everything."

The Monks were uncertain for a moment. It was always very risky to attach any credence to Teddy Long's words. But this time he was so intent, and so serious, that he appeared to be telling the truth.

"Out with it!" growled Boots aggressively. "No blackmail with us, my lad! Unless you cough up that information, we'll make you run the gauntlet! And after that I'll biff you into the fountain!"

"You—you mean beast!" said Teddy shuffly. "Ain't it worth a bob?"

"Oh, let's give it to him, and get rid of the worm," said Bob Christine contemptuously. "After all, he's right—it's worth the money. But if we find he's telling us lies, we'll hang him and then boil his remains in oil!"

The cash was handed over, and Long gleefully blurted out the truth. Even though he had hoped for such success as this, he had never really expected it. And if the Monks had not been so worked up, they would never have been parties to his scheme of extortion.

"On Willard's Island, eh?" said Boots slowly. "By jingo! We might have guessed it! Nipper and his gang! A giddy House jape! Now, you chaps, go and collect the crowd—we'll take revenge at once!"

Word flew round like lightning.

The Monks came out in swarms—until, indeed, practically the whole force was out in the triangle. And then, under the leadership of Boots, they rushed off to Willard's Island.

It so happened, however, that Armstrong had seen this motley crowd dashing off, and he guessed what their object was: In two minutes a whole flock of Fossils went tearing after Boots and Co. at top speed.

In the meantime, the Monks raided the boat-house. Everything that was capable of floating was commandeered—boats and punts, and even racing skiffs. And then came the great crossing.

We, on Willard's Island, were left in no uncertainty as to the nature of this onslaught. The Monks took no measures to conceal their movements, or to maintain silence. And we stood on the bank, hastily formed into a defence squad.

"Monks, ahoy!" I yelled. "How did you enjoy ZZXXVV?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah! Fossils! We're going to smash you up!"

"Good! Come and try it!"

We were greatly outnumbered, but made light of this. And when the Monks swarmed on to the island a free fight was in progress in less than ten seconds. It was just a good, old-fashioned House row—one that we had all been longing for for weeks. Nothing vindictive about it, but gory, for all that.

Without a doubt, the Monks would have been victorious but for the timely arrival of Armstrong and a big crowd. They managed to get across somehow, two or three fellows nearly falling into the water in the process.

Reinforcements turned the tide, and in a very short time the Monks were compelled to surrender. It was either that, or a wholesale ducking—and they preferred to admit defeat.

Thus, from every point of view, it was considered to be a red-letter day for the Ancient House. And many were the dark threats that went the rounds in the College House that night.

It seemed that Bob Christine, Boots & Co., would have to look to their laurels pretty smartly, and they were already making plots and plans for revenge. They didn't know that certain events were to occur which would drive all thoughts of House rivalry from their heads.

For, if the truth must be told, a bombshell was even then speeding towards St. Frank's, and the explosion was destined to create about the biggest sensation in the old school's history!

CHAPTER III.

WILHELM KARL SCHMIDT OF CHICAGO.

VAL BREWSTER looked decidedly grim.

"Do something?" he repeated. "Of course we're going to do something! You don't think we'll let those St. Frank's chaps crow over us, I suppose? We are going to make them sit up, my lads."

"It's one thing to talk," said Glynn, "but it's another thing to do!"

"Hear, hear!" remarked Ascott.

Brewster & Co., of Study 4, at the River House School, were chatting with Kingswood and Norton and Robinson, of Study No. 2. They were all standing in the somewhat bare courtyard in front of the school.

It was just after morning lessons, and the River House fellows had been seething ever since early morning—when they had learned the truth about that broadcasting jape. For they had been made the butt of the Ancient House humour quite as much as Christine & Co.

The River House School was looking somewhat drab this morning, for the sky was dull, and the leafless trees rose stark and gaunt on all sides. At the best, the school building was not a marvel of architectural beauty.

"Something oought to be done," said Kingswood vaguely.

"It will be done, too," declared Brewster. "It'll be a bit of a job to beat that wireless stunt, but we cannot let the present

situation stand. Why, Nipper and his crowd will crow for months if we don't take them down a peg or two."

The attention of the juniors was drawn to a massive limousine car which turned into the gateway, and glided smoothly to the main door. It was really one of the best cars that the juniors had seen—a sheer glory of highly polished, spotless blue, with flashing nickel work and every possible comfort that could be imagined.

"Who's the millionaire?" murmured Robinson. "My hat! What a car! It must have cost two thousand quid, if a penny!"

The juniors looked on, frankly interested. A car of this description at the River House School was unusual. Seldom, indeed, was it that such a luxurious automobile graced St. Frank's.

The chauffeur leapt nimbly down, opened the rear door, and a stranger stepped briskly out. He stood for a moment, looking up at the school building, as though no observers were watching him.

He was a tall man, lithe, active, and he had an appearance of great wiriness. His shoulders were excessively broad, and his head was set squarely on him, with lank, tawny hair. He had removed his hat, and was wearing a thoughtful, reflective expression on his powerful face.

"Some dump, Martin," he observed.

"You sure said it, sir," replied the chauffeur promptly.

The stranger removed a cigar from his waistcoat pocket, bit the end off, and spat it out. With the air of one who does this sort of thing twenty times daily, he clamped his powerful teeth on the cigar, and struck a match by the simple expedient of nipping it between his finger-nails.

The man's face was one that could not be forgotten easily, once studied. He was clean-shaven, his nose was straight and thin, and his ears stood out widely. His eyes were steely, pale blue—strong, intense eyes that looked as though they could be dangerous. And his mouth was big, drooping at one corner, with thin, cruel-looking lips.

And as he again surveyed the building he mechanically transferred the cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other—evidently performing this operation by the aid of his tongue.

A flicker of a smile crossed his face. He turned to the door, and rang the bell.

"American!" whispered Glynn.

"Marvellous!" said Brewster sarcastically. "Anybody can see he's American—even if they couldn't hear it. Wonder what he's doing down here? My hat! Seeing about his son, perhaps—and that means a giddy Yank for us."

The juniors, however, were wrong for once. The maid-servant who had answered the door ushered the stranger in and took his card straight to the Headmaster's study.

Dr. Molyneux Hogge, M.A., was going through some accounts, and he looked up rather testily. He didn't like being disturbed at such a time. But he took the card and glanced at it.

"The gentleman's in a hurry, sir," said the maid.

"Indeed!" said Dr. Hogge, who never hurried over anything. "That is unfortunate. Dear me! What is this? I seem to remember——"

He gazed at the card, with a slightly puzzled frown on his brow. It was quite plain except for the name "William K. Smith" printed neatly in the centre. There was not even an address.

"Smith!" murmured Dr. Hogge absently. "A somewhat familiar name, of course. But I seem to have seen—— Ah, yes, to be sure! William K. Smith, the great American millionaire. But, of course, this man can have no connection with the famous Mr. Smith of Chicago. Hum! Did the gentleman state his business, Ellen?"

"No, sir," replied the maid.

"Perhaps you had better usher him in——"

"No need!" came a crisp voice from the door. "Sorry, Dr. Hogge, to intrude. But my time's worth a thousand dollars a minute, so I don't figure to waste any. I'm here on business."

The Headmaster rose, flustered.

"Indeed, sir," he said mildly. "I'm afraid, Mr. Smith, I have not the honour of your acquaintance——"

"Sure you have—you're talking to me right now," said Mr. William K. Smith. "Say, ever head of Cyclone Smith? Well, I'm that guy!"

"Upon my soul!" ejaculated Dr. Hogge. "Am I to understand that you are Mr. William K. Smith of Chicago—the Mr. Smith?"

"You," replied Mr. Smith, "have said it!"

He sat down, and Dr. Hogge dropped back rather limply into his own chair. If somebody had told him that "Cyclone" Smith, the millionaire, would visit him that morning, he would have considered that somebody insane.

Dr. Hogge could not adjust his thoughts rapidly. He had never been accustomed to such a thing. And this startling affair took his breath away. He had heard of William K.—who hadn't? For was not Mr. Smith one of the four richest men in the entire world?

As Dr. Hogge knew, his visitor was a man who had driven his way upwards through sheer, indomitable relentlessness and determination. He was a whole driving force in himself. And his millions were capable, in one hour, of causing the utmost havoc on every stock exchange of the world.

His methods were grim, utterly brutal, and straight from the shoulder. If anybody got into Mr. Smith's way, that person got out of it. If he was trampled under foot, it made little difference to this modern Goliath. Ever since he had started his forceful career, twenty years ago, he had gone from victory to victory—with never a single defeat. He was a human

cyclone, and his whirlwind methods had earned him the nick-name.

Never once, in the whole course of his career, had a man, or a body of men, opposed him successfully. They had inevitably gone to the wall. And it was William K. Smith's proud boast that there was no force on earth capable of hindering any enterprise that he chose to initiate.

Dr. Hogge, mild and slow-going, felt, somehow like a small boy in the presence of a powerful bully. He was almost helpless. His visitor's personality seemed to overwhelm him.

But he managed to grip himself somewhat, and look severe. For he remembered that this man was really a German. He didn't look like a German, certainly, but this was probably because of his American environment. The fact remained, however—and the whole world knew it—that he had been christened Wilhelm Karl Schmidt. He had arrived in the United States at the age of six months, so he could safely be regarded as an American citizen.

He was American, too—but, deep within him, he possessed all the brutal nature of his Prussian parents, and it had always been known that he was rabidly anti-English in feeling. His activity against Great Britain during the war was still remembered, both in this country and in the United States.

And Dr. Hogge looked severe. He realised that his effort was weak, but he wanted to show this man that he didn't approve of him—despite the fact that he was worth one hundred million dollars. The thought of that figure rather flustered Dr. Hogge. Twenty million pounds! And this, probably, was quite a conservative estimate.

"Er—may I inquire the nature of your business, sir?" asked Dr. Hogge coldly.

"You can," said Mr. Smith. "I'm here to buy this property."

Dr. Hogge started.

"I—I beg your pardon, Mr. Smith," he faltered.

"I am right here to buy this school, the grounds, and the whole darn shoot," said the millionaire. "What's your price, Dr. Hogge? Name it, and we'll clinch the deal pronto!"

"But—but—— Good gracious! Are you joking, sir?"

"Joking," replied Mr. Smith, "is not my habit."

"But—but—surely, you cannot be serious!" gasped Dr. Hogge, surprised out of his assumed calmness. "Upon my soul! You wish to buy the school? Ridiculous,

Mr. Smith! Impossible! The school is not for sale!"

Cyclone Smith removed his cigar.

"See here, Dr. Hogge, I want this school—and I'm going to have it!" he said, his words coming out short, sharp, like machine-gun fire. "Get me? I'm going to have it!"

"Really, sir, I cannot possibly consider the matter in such a brief time as this," said the Headmaster. "I must have time—a month, at least. I must beg of you to consult my solicitors—if, indeed, you actually——"

"Say, I'm not here to waste time," interrupted Mr. Smith sharply. "We'll settle this deal right now. I want this property, and you'd best get it clear that I want it in twenty-four hours!"

Dr. Hogge started to his feet.

"Twenty-four hours!" he repeated. "Preposterous! What is your object, sir, in coming to me with this extraordinary proposal? A proposal, indeed, which is little short of farcical."

Cyclone Smith chewed his cigar savagely.

"Gee! You sure make me tired," he said. "See here, Dr. Hogge, what's your price? We'll get that fixed, I guess. Your price, sir!"

Again Dr. Hogge sank back into his chair, and now he was feeling somewhat faint. At the same time, it crept into his mind that Mr. Smith was actually in earnest. Astounding as it seemed, he wanted to buy the River House School, and take possession of it within twenty-four hours!

And the Head was brought up with a kind of jerk. It was his own property—freehold, and entirely unencumbered. If he chose to sell, he could do so without consulting a soul. Not only was he the Headmaster of the school, but the sole and only proprietor.

And it was rather curious that Mr. Smith should come at such a time—for the worthy Head had been rather worried over his accounts. The school was doing well, but there were many improvements that he had long had in mind—improvements that would bring him many new pupils. But finances had never allowed him to indulge in these idealistic dreams.

"My—my price?" he repeated nervously. "Really, Mr. Smith, cannot you give me time to think this matter over? I really cannot say——"

"I'll give you two thousand pounds—down," interrupted Mr. Smith.

"What, sir? Upon my soul! Do you realise what you are saying, sir?" demanded Dr. Hogge, startled into active life. "Your offer is perfectly absurd! The school itself, before I spent a penny on the many improvements, cost me over four thousand ——"

"Good!" said Mr. Smith. "We're getting to business. Six thousand, Dr. Hogge—and my cheque's ready right now."

"Six thousand!" repeated the Head, with a kind of gulp.

He lay back, no longer nerveless, but with his brain acting like lightning. Indeed, he was surprised at his own swiftness. Perhaps some of Cyclone Smith's volcanic personality had crossed the desk.

Dr. Hogge would sell for six thousand—but it was quite plain that Mr. Smith was very anxious to buy. And Dr. Hogge had plans—those wonderful ideals of his.

"I am afraid, Mr. Smith, that you do not appreciate the value of this property," said Dr. Hogge smoothly. "It is a highly successful school, and under no circumstances could I transfer my boys into other quarters in less than six weeks. If we can discuss this matter——"

"Say, quit that!" snapped Mr. Smith. "I'll give you a week—one week from today, and not a second longer. Quit these premises in that time, and I'll pay you eight thousand pounds. I'm a man of business, Dr. Hogge, and I realise that you'll have some trouble in getting out. There's my offer."

"A week!" stuttered the Head, his mind thinking of the eight thousand. "But it is impossible——"

"Nothing," said Mr. Smith, "is impossible. Say, let's talk some. I want this school, and I'm going to have it. Get that! And if we can't come to terms, I guess you'll be a heap sorry."

Dr. Hogge firmly shook his head.

"Under no circumstances can I undertake to vacate the school within the ridiculously short time of one week," he said quietly. "I have my boys to consider, and——" He paused, his eyes suddenly lighting up. "One moment, Mr. Smith!" he added grimly. "You say you want this school?"

"I sure do!"

"And I must give you possession within one week?"

"Not one minute later!"

"Then, Mr. Smith, you shall have the school within that period for the sum of ten thousand pounds—upon the condition that you find accommodation for all my boys in the meantime."

Mr. William K. Smith started. He slowly removed the cigar from his mouth, and then his face broke into a slow smile.

"Done!" he said crisply. "Say, Dr. Hogge, I sure take off my hat to you. By gosh, sir, you're a better business man than I gave you credit for. Ten thousand pounds it is—and the condition don't hurt me one heck!"

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CHAPTER IV.

NOTHING DOING!

MR. WILLIAM K. SMITH stepped briskly out of the River House School, and jumped into his waiting car.

"St. Frank's College!" he said shortly, to his chauffeur.

He was frowning slightly, but his powerful face was still calm and absolutely expressive of bull-dog determination. He had entered the River House School rather contemptuous of Dr. Molyneux Hogge. He had left the building with a sense of grudging admiration for that gentleman.

For Dr. Hogge had been firm.

The interview had concluded with a firm stipulation that the millionaire should find accommodation for all the River House boys —and, furthermore, that St. Frank's itself should provide that accommodation.

In talking the matter over, after the deal had been tentatively settled, Dr. Hogge had realised that, left to himself, Mr. William K. Smith would not be at any particular pains to provide for the ejected boys, so long as they were provided for. And it had occurred to the Headmaster that it would be wise on his part to be on safe ground.

It would never do if Mr. Smith made arrangements for the River House boys to be bundled into a Council School in Bannington, or a boarding-house, or some such place. And Mr. Smith was quite capable of this—for having gained possession of the building, he wouldn't have any further interest in the late tenants.

Consequently, Dr. Hogge had made it a strict and binding condition of the sale that all his boys should be taken in at St. Frank's College. And, to Dr. Hogge's surprise, Mr. William K. Smith had promptly agreed—although he had stipulated that he could not guarantee any permanency of this arrangement. But he promised that Dr. Hogge's boys should find sanctuary within St. Frank's for at least one month. During this time, better arrangements could be made.

And Mr. Smith frowned.

His hand had been forced—and by a mild-mannered, insignificant schoolmaster. It was a novel experience for the hard-headed millionaire. He was the one who always forced the bargain. But he admired Dr. Hogge, too—as he admired all men who battled with him.

However, the honours of the day were decidedly with Mr. William K. Smith. He had come to the River House School to buy it—and he had bought it. He was determined to get possession within one week—and it was fixed. On the morrow, legal gentlemen would hurry to Bellton, and the whole matter would be made fixed and binding. As an assurance of good faith, Dr. Hogge already held Mr. Smith's cheque for ten thousand pounds.

The millionaire was not the kind of man to let the grass grow under his feet. He went straight to St. Frank's, determined to have the matter settled then and there.

There was very little comment when the luxurious car drew up in front of the Head's house. A few juniors noticed it, but hardly gave it a glance. One of the Governors, perhaps, or the pater of some Sixth-former.

Dr. Stafford received Mr. William K. Smith courteously, but was rather surprised at that gentleman's rough and ready manners. The millionaire tossed his cigar-end away, sat down, and produced two more cigars.

"Let's smoke," he said crisply.

"Thank you all the same, Mr.—er—Smith, but I would prefer not to," said the Head. "But pray do not refrain, yourself."

"You bet I won't," said Mr. Smith, chewing the end off his cigar, and sticking the cigar into the corner of his mouth. "Now, Dr. Stafford, see here. Maybe you know me—by name?"

"Am I correct in assuming that you are Mr. William K. Smith, the Chicago manufacturer?"

"Say, can you beat that?" asked Mr. Smith. "I guess there's no other guy on this little old pill of our's who can put William K. before his name. It'll kind of interest you to know that I've bought the River House School—the rival joint way down the road."

Dr. Stafford looked mildly astonished.

"Yes, indeed," he said. "Your information interests me considerably, Mr. Smith. I was not aware that you were giving your attention to such affairs. But you are quite wrong in describing the River House School as a rival establishment. Dr. Hogge's academy is a preparatory school—completely different in type and general policy from St. Frank's."

"Well, I guess it don't matter a cent," replied Mr. Smith. "I've bought the school, and Dr. Hogge's boys will quit this day week. I'm figuring that those young guys will come right along here."

Dr. Stafford looked rather puzzled.

"I must confess, Mr. Smith, that I fail to grasp your meaning," he said.

"It's not my habit to waste words," said Cyclone Smith. "Those boys have got to go somewhere, and I've promised Dr. Hogge that you'll find accommodation for the whole crowd under this roof."

The Head started slightly, and looked at Mr. Smith in anger.

"Indeed, sir!" he exclaimed coldly. "May I inquire what led you to take this unwarrantable liberty?"

"Say, it won't do any good to take that tone," broke in Mr. Smith, leaning forward. "Say, those boys are coming here. Get me?"

"Under no circumstances can I give my consent to this high-handed action of yours, Mr. Smith," retorted the Head, with heat. "Indeed, I cannot find words to express my indignation at your unpardonable impudence. Yes, sir—impudence! Your business with Dr. Hogge is no concern of mine. Quite apart from the inconvenience of accommodating the River House boys, such an arrangement is absolutely impossible."

Cyclone Smith leaned back in his chair.

"Let's talk some, and get this thing clear," he said evenly. "There's no need for excitement, Dr. Stafford. I want that building—and I've got it. Those boys have got to be around some place—they can't be put into the road. This school is right here, and if you can't find accommodation for that bunch in all these buildings, I'll swallow this durned cigar!"

The Head maintained his attitude of coldness.

"Really, Mr. Smith, this interview is becoming irksome," he said stiffly. "If I were called upon to criticise your action, I should regard your haste as most unseemly. It may be customary to act in this way in America, but I can assure you that in England we are more staid. In any case, what possible object can you have in buying the River House School?"

"That," said Mr. Smith, "is my business."

Dr. Stafford rose to his feet.

"I accept the rebuke, sir," he replied. "Pray allow me to apologise for making any remark that could be interpreted as a sign of inquisitiveness. I shall be obliged, Mr. Smith, if you will close this interview forthwith. You will kindly permit me to ring for——"

"See here, Dr. Stafford, that tone of yours won't help any," snapped Cyclone Smith, his words icy and clear-cut. "Let's figure this thing out some. You'll be fully recompensed for your trouble in taking these boys—Dr. Hogge will sure fix that. But I've given him my word they'll come, and William K. Smith always keeps his word."

"In this instance, Mr. Smith, I am afraid that you'll not do so," replied the Head curtly. "It grieves me that Dr. Hogge should make himself a party to this impertinence—but I can readily excuse him, for I have no doubt that you over-rode any objections he may have made."

"You've hit it," replied Mr. Smith. "I'd just like to let you know that I'm determined."

"Your determination, sir, is no more than mine."

"Say, that's a pity," sighed Mr. Smith. "It means a fight—and when it comes to a fight with me, the other man goes to the wall. I've not been beaten yet, and you're not the guy to put anything over on me. There's no man in this world who has ever defied me successfully."

Dr. Stafford rang the bell.

"You are becoming offensive, Mr. Smith," he said coldly. "I have no alternative but to request your immediate departure. Tubbs," he added, as the door opened, "kindly show this—er—gentleman to the door."

Mr. William K. Smith stood there, his eyes burning with sudden fury. And although the Head returned that stare, he half recoiled. There was something horribly

For there, in that old building, an elaborate broadcasting set had been rigged up. The whole affair, of course, was an elaborate jape.

vindictive and menacing in Mr. Smith's gaze.

"All right, Dr. Stafford—I'm kicked out, eh?" said the millionaire, his voice quite steady. "Say that's fine! It's sure the first time I've been kicked out since I was a kid. But let me tell you one thing—you've put a halter round your own neck, and, by gosh, I'm the feller who's going to pull the rope!"

CHAPTER V.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE!

"MY hat!" said Handforth excitedly.

He and his two chums had just cycled sedately out of the Triangle, and they turned in the direction of Bellton. It was Handforth's idea to run into Bannington, and Church and McClure were practically compelled to go with him.

"Come on, you chaps!" went on Handforth. "Put some speed on!"

"I never knew such a giddy weathercock!" grumbled Church. "Only two minutes ago you were telling us to take it easy, because your knee hurt a bit. And now you want us to speed."

"Can't help that," snapped Handforth. "When a chap's on a bike, he ought to let himself go. It's first-class exercise, and there's no sense in cycling at all unless it's done properly."

And Edward Oswald commenced pedalling in grim earnest—in spite of his aching knee, which was a legacy of a fall downstairs earlier. Church's swollen left ear was also

a legacy of that regrettable incident. There had been a scrap on the landing, and Church happened to duck at an inopportune moment, with the result that Handforth plunged downstairs before he could stop himself.

"It's all right," said McClure. "I suppose we'd better keep pace. There's a simple explanation of Handy's sudden energy."

"Blessed if I can see it," grumbled Church.

McClure grinned, and nodded down the lane.

And then, in a flash, Church understood. Three other cyclists were about to negotiate the bend, just past the rustic stile. And, Church's eyesight being excellent, he had no difficulty in recognising those three cyclists as Irene and Co., of Moor View School.

The three girls were cycling leisurely down the lane, and the very first sight of them had electrified Handforth into activity. Not for worlds would he have admitted that he was anxious to overtake the young ladies. For this reason he had made no mention of them.

Irene Manners and Marjorie Temple and Doris Berkeley were the leaders of the girls at the Moor View School—and probably the three prettiest young ladies in the whole establishment. Handforth had a special liking for Irene, although the very hinting of such a thing would have earned the hinter an instantaneous black eye.

"Come on!" urged Handforth. "Looks a bit cloudy to me, and there might be some rain. We want to get to Bannington as soon as we can, so that we can get home in good time."

"Exactly," said Church drily. "But it's quite likely we shall never go to Bannington at all it all depends which way the girls are going."

"Girls?" repeated Handforth, with exaggerated carelessness. "Oh, yes, by George! Now you mention it, I believe Irene and her chums are just ahead. Funny thing I hadn't noticed 'em!"

Church and McClure roared—inwardly. It would have been most unwise to do so in any other way. And it so happened that Doris glanced behind at this moment—just as she was turning the bend.

As she did so she chuckled, and glanced at her companions.

"Get a hustle on!" she advised. "We're being chased."

"Chased!" echoed Irene, in surprise.

"You bet!" grinned Doris. "Handforth and Co.! They're buzzing down the lane like the dickens! Oh, girls, I'm so shy!"

"Doris!" protested Irene, shocked. "You seem to be getting more slangy every day! I'm sure Miss Bond would be terribly upset if she could hear you."

"Keep your hair on!" grinned Doris. "What the ear doesn't hear, the heart doesn't grieve about. You know as well as I do that old Bondy is narrow-minded when it comes to free speech. I say! Hurry, for goodness' sake! I want us to be vanished by the time those chaps turn the bend."

Doris was always a bit of a trial to her chums. She would insist upon talking with just as much slang as any schoolboy, and it sounded all the more incongruous because Doris was such a sweet, ultra-feminine girl. Irene and Marjorie had never been able to cure her.

She pedalled on at full speed, and, not wishing to be left behind, the other two girls followed her example. And they fairly whizzed down the lane towards the bridge.

"Like their cheek!" panted Doris, as she sped along. "This'll just show them that they can't chase us as they like."

"Don't be ridiculous, Doris!" protested Irene. "They weren't chasing us at all! Can't they use the road now without you thinking things like that?"

"Never mind," said Doris. "Let's get over the bridge, and dodge down that little by-lane. It'll be worth a new hat to see them go shooting by, with blank expressions on their faces!"

Strictly speaking, the girls were riding at a reckless pace—not that this was anything unusual. The lane was generally so quiet and sedate that the ordinary precautions of the road were hardly necessary. And, in any case, the young ladies were keeping well to the left, in accordance with the time-honoured rule of the road.

There was just a slight turn before reaching the bridge which spanned the River Stowe. It was an old bridge, and had served humanity well. A stone parapet ran along either side, and in the summer time this was the popular resort of numerous village urchins, who professed to fish.

But at present the bridge was empty and deserted. And as the three girls approached they were travelling at a speed that was far more exhilarating than safe.

And it so happened that a powerful touring car came rushing on to the bridge at the same second, from the opposite direction. It contained a solitary occupant—a man in a fur coat, who crouched behind the wheel.

The car was a smart, sporting model—in fact, almost a racer. And it was travelling at hurtling speed. What was more, the driver was using the wrong side of the road. Instead of being on the left, he was on the right. Thus, he bore down like a charging juggernaut upon the startled girls.

It was all over in a flash.

Irene saw the danger first, and gave a sharp cry of warning, applying her brakes so abruptly that she nearly met with disaster. If the car had been on its left no danger of any sort could have arisen—although it was decidedly not advisable for either the car or the cyclists to cross the bridge at such a speed.

As it was, there was no time for the girls to get clear.

Marjorie momentarily lost her head, her front wheel swerved round, and struck the

rear wheel of Doris's machine. In a moment the pair fell to the ground in confusion.

And Irene gave a scream of sheer horror. For it seemed that no power on earth could avert a ghastly tragedy. The car was actually upon them—with the driver startled and grim. But even in this dire extremity he kept his head. Had it been otherwise the girls could never had escaped disaster, and possibly destruction.

The man at the wheel snapped his teeth together, and acted on the instant. His mind worked like a flash of lightning. He made no attempt to apply the brakes, because he instinctively knew there was no time.

Instead, he gave one terrific wrench at the wheel, and the car gave a sickening lurch, and swung round. In fact, it swung round so abruptly that two wheels left the ground, and it was touch and go whether or not the automobile would turn a complete somersault.

Crash!

There was no time for the somersault. The car plunged headlong through the stone parapet of the bridge, sending a smother of debris flying in all directions. And the car plunged into space, overturning in mid-air, and struck the calm waters of the Stowe with a terrific, appalling splash.

"Oh!" exclaimed Irene faintly. "Oh!"

For the life of her, she couldn't say anything but that one ejaculation. She had been expecting to meet death, and it seemed an absolute miracle that the car had avoided her and her companions.

And while the three girls were still undecided—in fact, before Doris and Marjorie had picked themselves up—Handforth and Co. came swooping down. The juniors, in fact, had heard the crash, and were almost sick with alarm. Their relief was unbounded when they saw the girls intact.

"What's happened?" gasped Handforth, leaping off his machine. "Is anybody hurt?"

"Oh! He—he went into the river!" said Marjorie faintly. "He must be killed! Can't you do something, Handforth? Quick—quick! Call for help!"

"He jolly well deserves to get a ducking!" said Handforth hotly. "He might have run you down——"

"Don't you dare to say that!" protested Irene. "It was wonderful! In order to save us, he went clean through the bridge, and I believe he's killed himself! Oh, please! Can't you boys dive in, and see——"

Handforth and Co. waited no longer. They rushed to the parapet of of the bridge, and gazed over. The water was still disturbed from the recent plunging car, and a portion of the automobile itself was sticking up grotesquely out of the river.

There came a swirl of water, and a figure appeared.

"He's alive!" gasped Church. "Quick! Let's go and lug him out!"

They raced across the bridge to the end, and then turned down the steep slope until they were standing on the river's bank. They were quite prepared to plunge straight in to the assistance of this stranger.

But it was unnecessary.

For the unfortunate motorist was now wading out—apparently unharmed by his terrifying experience. He was hatless, and his fur coat was dripping with water. And as the juniors appeared, he paused, standing there in the river mud, practically up to his waist.

"For de love of Mike!" he ejaculated. "Say, kiddoes, can youse beat dat? I sure figgered I was cashin' in! Say, is dem boids O.K.?"

Handforth stared, blank astonishment on his face. For he not only recognised the voice, but he recognised the figure.

"Dinty Todd!" he shouted.

"Gee!" exclaimed the stranger, when he reached dry land. "If it ain't de guy I hit against way back in little old New Yoik! Dis is sure de frog's elbow! And, say, dis is de foist time I've tasted water neat since I was a kid!"

Mr. Todd had waded out, and hauled himself up the bank. By this time the girls had appeared too, and were looking on, anxious, interested, and greatly relieved. It astonished them to see that the luckless motorist was actually grinning.

"Say, goils, I'm real sorry," said Mr. Todd. "I guess youse figgered dat de end had come. Gee! I sure had to show some speed, or there'd have bin such a dog-goned bust-up that no guy on oith could have sorted out the remnants! I guess I'm sure sorry."

"But—but how did it happen?" asked Church.

"Aw, gee! I'm sure some dumb-bell!" said Mr. Todd disgustedly. "You see, I ain't got these English rules doped out. They're kinder different—every durned thing is the other way around, if you get me. I guess it was my fault all right. I was on de wrong side of de road, and when I saw dem goils I just shot de old auto into de wall!"

"You saved our lives by doing that," said Irene quietly.

"You bet your little life!" replied Dinty Todd. "You'd have sure been croaked all right, all right! Gee! Youse can set me down as a bonehead! Say, I ain't feeling so good!"

"You'd better buzz along to the George Tavern, and get dried," suggested Handforth. "You ought to think yourself lucky to be alive, you know. And what do you mean by driving with a car without knowing the proper rules of the road?" he added magisterially.

"Say, youse sure got some noive," replied Mr. Todd. "I don't allow no guy to hand me dat line of talk. De fact is, dis is de foist ride I've took on dese punk roads. For de love of Mike! Youse sure do things queer in dis little old island of yours! Guess some of these folks around here will get

...ute excited when they see that smashed bridge."

"Never mind the bridge," put in deClare. "Human life's more important than a bit of stone-work. I think it's marvellous that you all escaped without being hurt. What about your car?"

"De old flivver?" said Dinty Todd, with contempt. "Aw, it don't matter a nickel! Say, an' that auto cost two thousand bucks, too! Get that? Two thousand bones! Say, let the blame thing lie right there! Guess it's only a Smith, anyways."

"Smith?" repeated Handforth. "Never heard of it!"

"Well, what do you know about dat?" ejaculated Mr. Todd. "Say, de boss wouldn't be any pleased wit' youse. Listen! De Smith car is surely de last woid in automobiles. An' it won't be long before dis part of de woild has so many Smiths running around dat youse won't see de road!"

"You seem to have come up in the world a bit," remarked Handforth bluntly. "The last time we met you, Dinty, you were in a pretty low state. And now you can lose a two-thousand-dollar motor-car without worrying about it."

The juniors regarded Mr. Todd with interest as he stood there, attempting to wipe his face. He was unhurt, except for a few bruises, and a small gash on his left cheek.

The juniors had met him on one other famous occasion—in New York, when they had gone over to the United States during the previous summer holidays. They had reason to suspect that Mr. Dinty Todd was a crook, or, at least, an associate of crooks, and a desperate gun-man.

But they remembered that Todd had served them well, getting them out of a very tight corner of New York's Chinatown. And it was clear that he had acted with consummate bravery on this present occasion.

Rather than run the girls down, Todd had deliberately turned into the stone wall of the bridge, and he must have known full well that his own life would be the probable forfeit. Yet he had not hesitated. And it proved to the juniors that Mr. Todd was a man of pluck, whatever his other qualities were.

And if they were surprised to see him, he was certainly surprised to see them. And he seemed rather dismayed when he learned that St. Frank's College was near by.

"Say, can you imagine dat?" he remarked slowly. "I'm sure tellin' de woild dat it's a pity. I didn't want you young guys to be around dis outfit. By heck, no! Because I'm tellin' youse, dere's gonna be blazes!"

"We're going to have some excitement round here?" asked Church.

"Youse said a mouthful," replied Mr. Todd. "But I guess I ain't handin' out any more dope. I'm feelin' punk, an' I've gotta show some speed, or I'll sure be gettin' the grippe!"

Mr. Todd allowed the juniors to escort him to the George Tavern, the girls, meanwhile, returning to the Moor View School, for they were so shaken and upset that they did not feel like any further riding.

And Handforth and Co. were greatly puzzled by the presence of this New York gunman in the neighbourhood—and further puzzled by the intimation that he was likely to be "around" for a considerable time. And they could get no information out of him. He was strangely secretive.

Vaguely the juniors felt that this was only the beginning of something.

CHAPTER VI.

A SHOCK FOR THE RIVER HOUSE SCHOOL!

BREWSTER AND CO., of the River House School, looked puzzled.

"It's a bit thick—that's what I say," remarked Dave Ascott gruffly. "Fancy calling the whole giddy school together in the middle of the afternoon—and a half-holiday, too! Old Hogge ought to be boiled!"

"We don't want a smell of bacon all over the place," said Glynn. "At the same time, he ought to have more consideration. Grant and Riley and a few of those chaps were just off to Bannington, but the Head's gated the whole crowd of us."

"Got to attend a meeting in Hall!" growled Ascott. "Sickening—that's what it is! We can't call a minute our own!"

Hal Brewster grinned.

"My dear old fatheads, it's no good chewing the rag," he said calmly. "And don't be so unreasonable. The Head hasn't called the school together on a half-holiday ever before, as far as I can remember. That proves that there must be something very special in the wind."

"Very special?"

"Something important, I should think," said Brewster. "The Head's a decent old bird, taking him all round, and he wouldn't take away our afternoon's liberty for a mere trifle."

On the other side of the River House courtyard, the Honourable Aubrey de Vere Wellborne was discussing matters with his two boon chums, the Hon. Bertram Carstairs and the Hon. Cyril Coates.

These three juniors considered themselves to be far above the rest of the school. They were the representatives of "class," all their paters being titled. As a matter of fact, they were snobs of the very first water. The very fact that they were on very friendly terms with Fullwood and Co.

of the Remove is enough to indicate their character.

The River House boys were comparatively few in number. It was only a small establishment, and although Dr. Hogge had had more pupils at one time, the school now consisted of just forty-two boys. The seniors were dealt with by Dr. Hogge in person, and the juniors were in charge of Mr. Wragge, the assistant master.

Strictly speaking, there was very little difference between seniors and juniors—that is, in age. The seniors, however, considered themselves to be very important people, and disdained the junior herd.

Wellborne and Co. were the leaders of that party which was known as the "Honourables." And Brewster and his chums, more democratic, took a great pride in calling themselves the "Commoners." And it cannot be denied that the Commoners were the real backbone of the school.

"Absolutely beastly!" said the Hon. Aubrey, with disgust. "Just as we were goin' off to meet those St. Frank's chaps, too. A bally sell, confound it! I've a dashed good mind to ignore the rotten ordah!"

"Too risky," said the Hon. Bertram, shaking his head. "We've got to go indoors in five minutes, an' old Wragge's nosin' about somewhere, keepin' his eye open. I wonder what the game is?"

"Haven't the faintest ideah, my deah boy," said Wellborne. "I expect it's some bally announcement about the exams, or something. I call it a frightful bore—absolutely!"

Before the discussion could go farther, a bell rang sharply, and all the fellows in the courtyard made a move towards the doorway. And before long they were crowding into the main class-room of the school, which was dignified by the name of "Hall."

But, if the truth must be told, the River House School was by no means pretentious, and although the place was most exclusive, and the fees high, the boys had only a tithe of the privileges that the St. Frank's Remove enjoyed. Secretly, the River House fellows were jealous of their public school rivals.

Dr. Molyneux Hogge came briskly into the big room, and took his place on the raised platform. As a rule, Dr. Hogge was quiet and decidedly subdued—a meek, mild figure, who went through the term with a mechanical regularity that was uninspiring to his pupils.

But this afternoon there was a change in him.

Even the dullest of the River House fellows noticed it at once. Somehow, Dr. Hogge was brisk, alert, and imbued with a boundless energy that he had previously allowed to remain dormant. His eyes sparkled, he walked with a brisk step, and there was something about his whole bearing that electrified the school. They regarded their headmaster in mild astonishment.

"What's come over the old boy?" breathed Ascott. "He's as sprightly as a giddy squirrel this afternoon! Can't make it out!"

"Something big must have happened," said Brewster. "I wonder if he's come into a fortune, or something?"

Dr. Hogge gave a preliminary cough and adjusted his glasses.

"This afternoon, boys, I have an announcement to make that will, I am sure, come as a complete surprise to you," he said, his voice trembling somewhat. "Let me add at once that I have some strange news for you—indeed, extraordinary news. But it will in no way affect the conduct of this school. Even though we may not be here, within these walls, the school itself will be unchanged. And in this reference to the school, I mean you, yourselves."

The River House boys looked at the Head rather blankly.

"But, of course, you do not understand me," pursued Dr. Hogge. "I find it somewhat difficult to put my thoughts into the words I should desire—for, to tell the truth, I am quite excited. And you, too, will be excited when you hear my announcement. Perhaps it will be as well to spring it upon you suddenly. In short, I have sold the River House School, lock, stock, and barrel."

"Sold it!"

"Sold the school!"

There was an instant buzz of excited, low-voiced comment.

"One week from to-day these walls will be no longer mine," continued Dr. Hogge, rather enjoying the sensation he had caused. "To be quite exact, the property is not mine even now. But I have been allowed one week to vacate the premises. This means that we must all get into other quarters by next Wednesday."

The sudden buzz of excitement turned to consternation and dismay—indeed, many of the fellows were getting angry.

"A week, sir!" shouted somebody. "We can't get out in a week!"

"And where can we get to, sir?"

"Shall we be sent home, sir?"

"No, no—by all means, no!" said Dr. Hogge quickly. "Let me make it plain at once that you will not be sent home. We shall have two days of commotion and upset, I fear, but after that we shall again shake down to our work. But from next Wednesday onwards we shall no longer live in this building, for by that time it will have been handed over to its new owner."

"Who's he, sir?"

"Is he going to start another school, sir?"

"The gentleman who has bought the premises has no intention of using them as a school," replied the Head. "He is Mr. William K. Smith, the famous American millionaire—but that, I presume, is of no

interest to you. Perhaps it will interest you to know that Mr. Smith has promised to find accommodation for you all at St. Frank's College."

"At Frank's!" yelled the River House boys excitedly.

"Precisely—at St. Frank's," said the Head. "By Thursday of next week, my boys, we shall all be under the roof of St. Frank's. Of course, we shall still take lessons as heretofore. The change will in no way affect our own school routine. By this I mean that you will not become St. Frank's boys, but will merely be sheltering in that famous old pile."

"How long for, sir?"

"A month at least—and possibly longer," replied Dr. Hogge. "In the meantime, boys, building will commence on a wonderful new River House School—a school that you will all be proud of."

Dr. Hogge's boys were now thoroughly excited.

"For a considerable time I have had dreams concerning this new school," went on the Head absently. "I have had ideals, but I always feared that they would be nothing but idle fancies. And now, suddenly, dramatically, I find myself in a position to turn my dreams into realities. The new school will spring up a short distance down the river, and it will be a fine building, equipped in a manner that will make you proud of your alma mater. You will have better class-rooms, better studies, better dormitories. I have some wonderful ideas regarding our new playing-fields, and I may tell you at once that the new school will be much larger, with accommodation for at least double your present number."

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for the new school!"

"Hurrah!"

The attitude of the boys had changed with surprising rapidity. At first they had been surprised, then half-hostile, and now they were filled with excitement and enthusiasm.

Dr. Hogge's announcement was dramatic and totally unexpected.

Not only were the boys to clear out of the building, but they were to live under the roof of St. Frank's for some time, and ultimately they were to go into a fine new school. To hear all this at once was rather too much for their equilibrium, and they could do nothing but yell.

"I am warning you of this change at the earliest possible moment, so that you can be fully prepared," continued the Head, as soon as he could make himself heard again. "Lessons will continue during the forthcoming week, but I shall have some announcements to make before Saturday regarding curtailment of ordinary work, so that you may have time to do the necessary packing."

"Hurrah!"

"In the meantime, Mr. Smith, the gentleman who has purchased this building, is making all arrangements regarding your sojourn at St. Frank's," said Dr. Hogge. "And I want to warn you all that you must remember the fine traditions of this school, and I trust you to behave as young gentlemen. While under the St. Frank's roof, we will do our utmost to carry on in the usual manner. There may be difficulties, but these will doubtless be overcome. Of this, however, more anon. This is merely a preliminary announcement, and I shall have much more to tell you either on Saturday or Monday. But let me add that the change will be all for the good. Our new school will be one that we can be proud of—for I can tell you quite frankly that I have sold this present building on most satisfactory terms, and nothing whatever stands in the way of achieving my hope of many years."

A few minutes later the school was dismissed, and the fellows crowded out, talking excitedly over the news. There were no grumbles now about the half-holiday having been ruined. Even the Honourables were so elated that they mixed with their rivals, and discussed the matter as eagerly and as keenly as any. They quite forgot to be snobbish.

Brewster and Co., bubbling over with the importance of the occasion, set out in search of St. Frank's fellows. And they were lucky enough to run into Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey and a few other Removites who had come down to have a look at the damaged bridge.

"Heard the latest?" asked Brewster eagerly, as he and his chums came to a halt.

"Yes," said Pitt. "There's another railway strike."

"Blow the railway strike!" interrupted Brewster. "Dr. Hogge's sold the River House School, and we're all coming to St. Frank's."

"Fine!" said Pitt. "Now I'll tell one. Dr. Stafford has sold St. Frank's, and we're all going to stay at the Crystal Palace!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you funny ass!" shouted Glynn. "It's true! Dr. Hogge's just announced it. He's sold the school to an American millionaire, and we're going to clear out next Wednesday. And this American millionaire is fixing things up with your headmaster."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you believe it?" roared Brewster indignantly.

Pitt looked at him rather pityingly.

"My dear chap, if you can't think of a better wheeze than that, let me advise you

to go straight to bed, and tie a cold towel round your head. What you need is a complete rest—your brain's going curdled!"

Hal Brewster glared.

"You—you rotter!" he shouted. "I tell you it's true!"

"Oh, come off it!" growled Jack Grey. "You can't stuff us up with a silly yarn like that. Even if the Head fixed things up for you to come to St. Frank's, do you think we'd take you in?"

"Never!" said Pitt stoutly. "I should think we've got a little pride left!"

The River House boys fairly quivered with indignation.

"Sorry, Dr. Hogge, to intrude," said a crisp voice. "My time's worth a thousand dollars a minute, so I don't figure to waste any. I'm here on business."

"Why, you—you priggish cads——" began Brewster.

"Steady, old son," grinned Reggie. "Only our lark. If you come to St. Frank's, we'll kiss each of you, and distribute lollipops! But the idea's so remote that we're simply wasting time. I can understand an earthquake, or the world coming to an end, but you're asking us to believe too much."

And Pitt and his companions walked on, chuckling—leaving Brewster and Co. practically speechless with dismay. Although their news was perfectly true, it sounded so far-fetched that the St. Frank's fellows simply wouldn't believe it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE METHODS OF MR. WILLIAM K. SMITH.

SIR JOHN BRENT, BART., pursed his lips thoughtfully as he gazed at the neat slip of pasteboard.

"William K. Smith," he murmured, frowning. "Surely this must be the big Mr. Smith, of Chicago. Strange that he should call upon me without an appointment. Yes, Walters," he added, raising his voice, "show Mr. Smith in."

The secretary departed at once, and Sir John sat back in his chair, and fell to wondering what business the notorious Mr. Smith could have with him. The millionaire's reputation in London was not of the best.

Sir John Brent was in his private office, for, although a man of wealth, he applied himself rigorously to business. Sir John was the managing director of one of the biggest building and contracting firms in London—to say nothing of being director of various other companies.

In addition, he was the chairman of the St. Frank's Governing Board—although, at the moment, St. Frank's was far from Sir John's mind. He certainly did not attri-

bute the visit of Mr. William K. Smith to any question connected with the school.

A moment later the Chicago millionaire strode in—brisk, alert, with the inevitable cigar sticking from the corner of his mouth, clamped firmly between his powerful teeth.

"Glad to meet you, Sir John," he said briskly, as he shook hands. "Your time's valuable—so is mine. I guess we'll get this business through at speed. Say, you're the chairman of the St. Frank's Governing Board?"

"Why, yes," said Sir John mildly.

"Fine!" said Mr. Smith. "I'm right here to tell you that I've bought up a whole piece of country around Bellton and Caistowe, and it so happens that I'm a heap interested in the district."

"I am surprised to hear this, Mr. Smith," said Sir John. "I really had no idea that you were interesting yourself in our quiet section of rural Sussex. I hardly thought it was in your province."

"Yep, I'm getting real busy," said Cyclone Smith calmly. "But we don't need to waste time on that. See here, Sir John, there's a guy named Dr. Stafford in charge of St. Frank's College."

"I presume you mean the headmaster," answered Sir John, slightly nettled.

"You've got me," agreed the other. "That man has displeased me—a whole lot. I'm here to tell you that he's got to quit!"

Sir John was more than surprised.

"Really, Mr. Smith, I quite fail to understand your statement," he said coldly. "By what right do you presume to come here and give me orders that Dr. Stafford shall be dismissed? The doctor is a scholar of world-wide repute, and he has presided over the school for many years—with eminent success, I may say. He has the full confidence of myself and of my fellow-governors. And please let me add that I resent this dictatorial air of yours."

Mr. Smith tossed his cigar towards the fireplace, and made no move when he observed that the smouldering stub alighted on the rich carpet.

"Get me right, Sir John," he said crisply. "Dr. Stafford has opposed me, and there's only one thing happens to men who do that. They quit! And they quit rapidly. There's not room for Dr. Stafford and me around that outfit, and Dr. Stafford's got to go!"

Sir John rose to his feet.

"Apparently, Mr. Smith, you have come here for the sole purpose of insulting me," he said curtly. "These methods may be practised in America, but let me tell you that in London they are insufferable. I regard your demand as an impertinence, and I bid you good-day."

The multi-millionaire smiled.

"Listen!" he said calmly. "Quit this high-handed stuff and sit down. I've bought the River House School, and it may be to your interest to know what my plans are."

And before Sir John Brent could protest, Mr. Smith related in crisp, short sentences what had transpired. He explained that he had given his pledge to Dr. Hogge that the River House boys should be provided for at St. Frank's, and that Dr. Stafford had pooh-poohed the idea. Sir John listened with accumulating anger.

"If you make such rash promises, Mr. Smith, you have only yourself to blame for the consequences," he said at length. "It would have been as well, I imagine, if you had placed this matter before my colleagues and myself. I can only describe your action as high-handed and extraordinary in the extreme. Naturally, I uphold Dr. Stafford, and cannot possibly submit to any form of dictation. If you had come to me in a different spirit, I have no doubt that the matter could have been amicably arranged. But I positively refuse to——"

"You'd better not refuse, Sir John," interrupted Mr. Smith.

"Indeed!" shouted Sir John. "Good gracious! Are you daring to threaten me? I'm astounded that Dr. Hogge should have made himself a party to this atrocious piece of impudence——"

"You've got me wrong," interrupted Mr. Smith again. "Dr. Hogge knew nothing—he figured that I had the whole thing set."

"Then your own responsibility is considerable," said Sir John. "I repeat, Mr. Smith, that Dr. Stafford has my complete confidence, and your whirlwind methods leave me quite cold. As I have said before, they may be quite effective in the United States, but we are accustomed to more sedate habits in this country. I regard this interview as closed."

"Just a minute," said the German-American grimly. "I'm going to tell you something that'll be interesting. Maybe you happen to know the Pensa Iron and Steel Manufacturing Co.? And the Oggran Oil Refining Corporation? And the Whitfield Mining Trust?"

Sir John started slightly.

"Yes, I do know those concerns," he admitted.

"I guess you've got a whole pile of money tied up around those three?" went on Mr. Smith relentlessiy. "Say, Sir John, we'll quit bluffing. The money you've got in those companies represents two-thirds of your fortune. And I happen to know that Lord Walberry and General Milton and two other of your fellow Governors are also interested more than a heap."

"I fail to follow your meaning, Mr. Smith," said Sir John curtly.

"Then I guess I'll make it clear," replied the millionaire. "Those three concerns, although the public don't know it, are mine! Do you get me, Sir John? They're mine—I control the whole darn shoot! I'm reputed to be worth a hundred million dollars. Say, I should smile! I'll give you until two o'clock this afternoon to telephone to my London office."

"What—what do you mean, sir?" snapped Sir John, nearly choking.

"I mean that if you don't agree to fire Dr. Stafford, according to my demand, I'll make the money market wobble so darn bad that your fortune will kind of dwindle," replied William K. Smith. "Within two days you'll be a bankrupt. Just a little Stock Exchange juggling, Sir John, and the thing's done. And, say, where will you and your friends be?"

Sir John nearly burst a blood-vessel.

"You—you scoundrel!" he shouted thickly. "This is nothing more nor less than blackmail. You are holding a pistol to my head——"

"You said it!" interrupted Mr. Smith calmly. "You've sure got me all right! But listen! You'd best quit that talk about blackmail. Any action that I shall take will be legitimate—honest to goodness business. And, remember—I'll give you until two o'clock. I guess I'm through."

The millionaire picked up his hat walked to the door, and passed out without once glancing back. Sir John Brent could hardly say a word for several minutes. His indignation was at fever-heat.

Business for the morning was forgotten. By telephone and telegram he called a rush meeting of the St. Frank's Governing Board. By one o'clock the Governors were in council, and they were startled to hear Sir John's news.

But they unanimously declared that they would take no notice of the American's high-handed bluff. The injustice of dismissing Dr. Stafford was apparent to all. Such a step was unthinkable. And the Governors broke up, angry, but slightly uneasy. They did not forget that Mr. William K. Smith was an enormous power in the financial world.

By three o'clock Sir John was back in his office, attending to his ordinary business as calmly as possible, under the circumstances. He had ignored Mr. Smith completely.

And at four o'clock Sir John's stockbroker rang him up urgently and excitedly. He reported an alarming and sensational fall in the market—indeed, a fall that was tantamount to a collapse.

Sir John sat back in his chair, pale to the lips.

But, stubbornly, he gave his stockbroker curt instructions, and rang off. Half an hour later, two of his fellow Governors arrived—alarmed, agitated, and furious.

And while they were there, again Sir John's stockbroker rang up—and this time he was frantic. The fall had become a debacle, and in the terms of the money market, Sir John Brent was in danger of being wiped out.

"This—this is appalling!" muttered the baronet, at his wits' end. "We can do nothing—absolutely nothing! This man is so powerful that he can manipulate the market to suit his own ends. We are puny by comparison."

"By gad, sir, we shall be ruined!" shouted General Milton.

"Dr. Stafford must go—it is the only possible solution," declared Lord Walberry. "A detestable piece of injustice; but self-preservation comes first, Sir John. We cannot stand by and see ourselves rendered penniless by this financial fiend."

Sir John breathed hard.

"Mr. Smith is doubtless chuckling in his own office," he said bitterly. "In order to gain his own ends, he is not only content to ruin us, but thousands of perfectly innocent and uninterested outsiders. For this collapse will ruin thousands.

"Cannot something be done?" asked the general desperately.

"Nothing!" replied Sir John. "My brokers are helpless. An ant cannot fight against a lion. There is only one way in which to stop this rot—and that is to give in to Smith."

"Then we must give in," said Lord Walberry quietly.

Sir John, even now, loathed and detested the idea. But there was no help for it. By acting at once he might possibly restore the market to its former level. But by leaving matters until the morrow, it would be too late.

With a harsh exclamation, Sir John Brent grasped the telephone and rang up William K. Smith—the financial wizard of two continents. This day's work alone was ample proof of his tremendous power.

"That you, Sir John?" came Smith's voice over the 'phone—cool, calm, and slightly cynical. "Changed your mind?"

"Mr. Smith, I shall be glad if you will grant me an interview at once," said Sir John, every word an effort. "I have consulted with my colleagues, and we have decided to carefully consider your proposal."

Mr. Smith chuckled.

"Wonderful!' he said. "I'm your man, Sir John. Come right along, and bring the bunch. And, say—you don't need to worry. I guess things will be O.K. on the money market within an hour."

Amazingly enough, Mr. Smith spoke the truth. By some magic touch—eloquent of his power—the money market recovered in a manner that astounded and almost stupefied those who were not in the secret.

But, to achieve this end, the fate of Dr. Malcolm Stafford had been sealed!

CHAPTER VIII.

NO ALTERNATIVE!

ST. FRANK'S was chuckling over the absurd rumour that the River House boys were to invade the old school. The story had got round by now, and it was regarded as the joke of the term.

It was morning, and although the rumour persisted, the fellows absolutely refused to take it seriously. For the very idea seemed

palpably absurd. There had been no official confirmation, and no official denial. It seemed, therefore, that the rumour would die the natural death of all rumours.

"It's sheer piffle, of course," said Handforth, with a sniff. "In the first place, we wouldn't allow those River House asses here - not likely! I'm not a snob, but everybody knows that St. Frank's is on a higher plane than the River House. It wouldn't be the thing."

"Of course not," agreed Church. "Besides, there's no room."

"Not a bit," said Handforth promptly. "Where the dickens would they have lessons, and where would they sleep? The rumour's so ridiculous that it's an insult to keen intelligence to even think of it."

"I suppose that's why you keep chewing the rag?" suggested McClure.

"It wouldn't matter if two or three of the fellows were being shoved on us," went on Handforth. "But the whole school! It's a pity if those River House chaps can't think of a better joke!"

And everybody else at St. Frank's shared Handforth's view. They looked upon it as a piece of cheek that Brewster & Co. should have the audacity to even suggest such an idea.

And when morning lessons commenced that day, St. Frank's little guessed the significance of the unexpected arrival of Sir John Brent and Lord Walberry. The pair arrived by car while the school was hard at work—and, indeed, only one or two fellows knew of the affair.

Sir John was looking ten years older, and the Head knew at once that something unusual was wrong, as soon as his visitors were ushered in. The situation was a delicate one, and Sir John hardly knew how to broach the subject.

"Doubtless, Dr. Stafford, you are surprised at our sudden descent upon you in this manner," said the chairman of the governors awkwardly. "As a matter of fact, we have—er—come to consult you concerning a certain Mr. William K. Smith. Indeed, the celebrated William K. Smith, of Chicago."

The Head frowned.

"I have good reason to know Mr. Smith," he said coldly. "Indeed, I have drawn up a report, and I intended submitting it to you——"

"As it happens, Dr. Stafford, we are fully acquainted with Mr. Smith's visit, and his proposal," put in Sir John. "He came to you, I understand, practically demanding that you should shelter the entire personnel of the River House School—which Mr. Smith has recently purchased?"

"Exactly," said the Head. "A most impudent, outrageous affair. The man was absolutely offensive, and I was compelled to practically turn him off the premises. I sincerely trust that you have heard the facts aright."

"We have heard them from Mr. Smith, and I may say at once that we fully approve of your attitude, Dr. Stafford, and commend you for your strength of will," said Sir John. "From my own experience, I know that Mr. William K. Smith is an arrogant rascal, and my only regret is that he should be in such a position of power that he can practically force our hand."

Dr. Stafford started.

"You surely do not mean to suggest——" he began.

"Dr. Stafford, we have come to St. Frank's on a painful mission," interrupted Sir John sadly. "Only too keenly do I realise the unhappy position in which you are placed. I will be quite blunt. It has become necessary for us to require your immediate resignation."

The Head turned rather pale, but remained calm.

"Indeed, sir?" he said, his voice shaking slightly. "From your previous remarks, I did not gather that you had lost confidence——"

"No, no!" put in Sir John quickly. "For Heaven's sake do not misunderstand me, Dr. Stafford. Our confidence in you is as strong and unwavering as ever. Our one desire is that you should continue to hold the reins. But circumstances have dictated this course, as I will at once explain."

And while the Head listened with pursed lips, Sir John Brent described the recent activity of Mr. William K. Smith. His anger rose as he did so, and by the time he had finished he was in a fever-heat of indignation and half-controlled rage.

"This scoundrel—this detestable German-American—holds us in the hollow of his hand," concluded Sir John thickly. "Against him we can do nothing—we are powerless. He is reputed to be worth twenty millions, but I have every reason to believe that his wealth is much greater, and he controls a sum ten times as large. The man is capable of making or breaking Governments themselves. With such financial power as his, he can rule the destinies of a nation. So how is it possible for such insignificant individuals as ourselves to hope for success in any battle against him?"

The Head nodded slowly.

"Sir John, I should like to say at once that I fully understand the position, and appreciate your difficulty," he exclaimed. "Under the circumstances, of course, I will tender my resignation forthwith."

An expression of relief appeared on Sir John's face, and it was reflected on the countenance of Lord Walberry. But they were both looking concerned and intensely worried.

"Your attitude is magnanimous," said Sir John quietly. "I cannot tell you in mere words how grateful I am for your ready appreciation of the predicament, Dr. Stafford. In a few words, the position amounts to this. If we persist in defying this millionaire, he will bring irretrievable ruin upon us all. But if you resign, and another Headmaster takes

your place, Mr. Smith will be content. As far as I can see, we have no alternative."

"Unquestionably you are right, Sir John," replied the Head steadily. "It would, of course, be quite impossible for me to remain in office, knowing that ruin would descend upon you. So I readily offer you my resignation, and I trust that the dear old school will prosper under its new principal. By the way, I assume that Mr. Smith reserves himself the right to select my successor?"

Sir John seemed to choke back something.

"Unfortunately, yes," he said gruffly. "There is no sense in denying the fact that we are absolutely in this millionaire's power. But always remember, Dr. Stafford, that our confidence in you is as strong as ever, and our one hope is that you will hold yourself in readiness to return as soon as circumstances will permit."

"By gad, yes, sir," put in Lord Walberry. "This man, Smith, is a relentless demon when it comes to financial business. Indeed, no man has ever been known to stand against him. For he is ruthless in his methods. But this may be a mere fad of his—a passing fancy. We shall watch closely, and we will do our best to retrieve the position. In the meantime, Dr. Stafford, let me suggest that you take a well-deserved holiday abroad—on the Riviera, for example. You may rest content that your income will continue, although you will not be holding the reins."

"Quite so," put in Sir John quickly. "We have already decided, Dr. Stafford, that the Governing Board shall defray this expense quite privately. It is but a meagre compensation——"

"I thank you for your consideration," interrupted the Head quietly. "But if I leave St. Frank's, gentlemen, I relinquish my work and my income, too. I wish that to be plainly understood."

Sir John was quite distressed.

"Please do not imagine, Dr. Stafford, that we are offering you charity," he said hastily. "Our offer is made in quite a business spirit, and we wish you to regard this income as a retaining fee."

"As you will," said the Head, rather wearily. "And I thank you deeply for your generous thought. Is it possible that you can tell me why this Mr. Smith so urgently desires the River House School property?"

"The matter is a complete mystery to us," replied Brent. "We know absolutely nothing. I can only assume that he has some big financial scheme afoot that is a secret. It has always been Mr. Smith's policy to perfect his schemes in utter secrecy, and then spring a dramatic surprise at the last moment. It is an indication, I fancy, of the man's vanity. It pleases him to give evidence of his enormous power."

The consultation in the Head's study continued for some little time; but the issue was settled. The Head had resigned, and it was arranged that he should leave St. Frank's on the following Monday. His successor would arrive later on the same day; but even the Governors themselves had no exact knowledge as to who that gentleman would be. They had no difficulty in guessing that he would be a man of Mr. William K. Smith's own choice.

The humiliation of the whole position was acute. The situation was unprecedented in the long history of the famous old school. But the Governors were forced into this hateful arrangement, and resistance meant ruin.

That same evening the school learned the truth.

The rumours concerning the River House School were forgotten—ignored completely. For this fresh news was utterly staggering. It came to St. Frank's in the form of a small notice, in the Head's own handwriting, pinned on the board. There were, of course, several of these notices on the various boards in different parts of the school.

There were no details.

The announcement merely stated that Dr. Stafford had resigned, that he was off for a prolonged holiday, and that he would take his departure on the following Monday. The name of the new Head would be stated later.

And St. Frank's positively seethed with excitement.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW HEAD.

RUMOUR succeeded rumour during the next few days.

A hundred different reasons were given for the Head's sudden resignation. But as nobody knew the exact truth, practically all these rumours were wrong. The story about the River House School was revived, too.

Brewster and Co. persisted so doggedly in their story that many of the St. Frank's fellows began to believe it. And they associated the Head's sudden departure with the River House affair, too,

But knowing nothing about Mr. Smith, it was really impossible for the boys to get at the inner truth of the matter. Upon the whole, the general feeling was one of concern and consternation.

A number of fellows, particularly juniors, thought that it would be a pretty good idea to have a new Head. There was always something interesting in a change. And it was high time Dr. Stafford stepped down, too.

But there was such a general feeling of regard for Dr. Stafford that the change was looked upon as unfortunate. And the lack of knowledge regarding the new Head was another cause for speculation. Some of the juniors declared that Nelson Lee himself would take up the reins.

But the famous Housemaster detective

made it quite plain that he was thinking of no such thing, even if he had been offered the appointment. I pressed the guv'nor for information, but obtained no satisfaction.

And so, at length, Monday came.

The Head had decided to leave in the middle of morning lessons, so that there could be no possible disturbance. It pained him to go; it pained him far more than he would allow anybody to see. But he knew well enough that he had nothing to reproach himself with.

This was no ordinary resignation, no dismissal. Indeed, in blunt truth, the Head was going in order to save the Governors from ruin. And there was always the prospect that he would return. Upon the whole, Dr. Stafford was by no means displeased, for he did feel in need of a rest.

But he was worried concerning the school. He was worried about the man who was to step into his shoes. For the Head loved St. Frank's dearly, and the honour of the old school was as sacred to him as his own personal honour.

The greater part of his luggage had left the school on the previous Saturday, and now, on Monday morning, the Head bade good-bye to Nelson Lee and Mr. Stockdale, and all the other masters before lessons commenced. Thus the ordinary routine was going on in the usual way. Nobody knew that the Head was leaving so early.

That morning, after prayers, the Head had addressed the school in Big Hall, and his quiet words left a big impression. There had been a great deal of cheering, but of the subdued variety. And it was noted by all that the Head gave no real details of his sudden resignation. The school felt that there was some mystery behind this.

The Head's own car drew up to the door, and the departure was to be as quiet and unobtrusive as possible.

But it happened that Willy Handforth had been sent across to the College House by his Form-master for one or two books. And Willy's sharp eyes had not failed to observe the car standing at the door of the Head's house, and the Head himself talking earnestly with Nelson Lee and Mr. Stockdale in the shadows of the hall. Clearly he was just on the point of departure.

Willy acted like lightning. He dashed across to the Ancient House, leapt up at the high window-sill of the Third Form room, and clung there. The window was open, and he looked straight into the class-room, where the Third was reluctantly settling down to work.

"Quick, you chaps!" yelled Willy. "Head's just going! Rush out and give him a cheer!"

In a second the Third Form was in an uproar. They had planned this send-off for the last two or three days, and the news that the Head was slipping off in this manner filled them with excitement.

"Hurrah!" roared the Third. "Good old Head!"

Mr. Suncliffe stood at his desk, horrified.

"Boys—boys!" he shouted. "How dare you! Sit down at once! Handforth minor, you will be flogged for this!"

But the Form-master might just as well have talked to the walls. Willy yelled at them and incited them, and in spite of all Mr. Suncliffe's efforts, the Third surged out of the doorway, and even out of the windows.

A minute later they swept into the Triangle, cheering like mad. They surrounded Dr. Stafford's car just as it was about to move off, with the Head sitting in the rear, looking rather startled.

In the Remove Form-room the juniors looked at one another wonderingly. Such a commotion as this in the Triangle during morning lessons was almost unheard of. Mr. Crowell rapped his desk sharply.

"Attend to your lessons!" he commanded. "Handforth, sit down!"

"But—but there's something going on, sir," said Handforth.

"That is no concern of ours!" snapped the Form-master.

But Clarence Fellowe, the lanky rhymester of the Remove, had got to his feet, and his excessive tallness enabled him to gaze over the high window-ledge. And he turned with great excitement after he had seen outside.

"What is it?" roared the Remove.

"The Head's about to go," replied Clarence. "And didn't let us know. The Third is cheering madly. In fact, they're acting badly. Let's make off from here and give the Head a cheer!"

"Good!"

"Come on, you chaps!"

"Keep your seats, boys!" thundered Mr. Crowell. "How dare you!"

"But please consider, pray!" shouted Clarence. "The Headmaster's just away. Unless we go out now, he'll slip away, I vow. We ought to say good-bye—at least, we'll have a try!"

Fellowe's words were hardly heeded, for already the Remove was imitating the example of the Third, and dashing out, in spite of all Mr. Crowell's threats and entreaties.

And two minutes after the Remove had swept into the Triangle, the Fifth began to appear, and then prefects and other Sixth-formers. And the masters, realising that it was quite impossible to regain control, stood by. And they could not help remembering that this was no ordinary breach of discipline, but an expression of loyalty and affection for the departing Head.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Dr. Stafford!"

"We don't want you to go, sir!"

"Speech—speech!"

The crowd whirled round the Head's car, excited and eager. Even if Dr. Stafford had wanted to drive off, such a thing was now impossible. That part of the Triangle

was a yelling mob of juniors and seniors. It spoke volumes for Dr. Stafford's popularity that even the Fifth threw its dignity to the winds and behaved as madly as the Remove and the Third.

To tell the truth, the fellows were a little bit incensed that the Head should have tried to slip away on the quiet. And they were just showing him that it hadn't worked. The demands for a speech were insistent. The cheering subsided, and the whole enormous crowd yelled the one word.

"Speech—speech!"

The school roared in one voice.

And Dr. Stafford, realising that it was hopeless for him to leave without satisfying this demand, got out of the car, and was immediately swooped upon by a dozen fellows.

He was raised shoulder high, and carried to the broad rim of the fountain, and there he stood, rather flustered, but taking the demonstration in the best of humours, and highly amused.

And as he cleared his throat, the whole great crowd fell into silence.

"I need hardly say, boys, how touched I am at this very wonderful expression of loyalty," said the Head, his voice carrying all over the Triangle. "It has struck me that you may, perhaps, have been under some misapprehension regarding my sudden departure from the school. Indeed, it has been rumoured that I have been practically dismissed."

"Yes, sir."

"We don't want you to go, sir!"

"Under the circumstances, I will take this opportunity to assure you that my resignation was voluntary," continued Dr. Stafford. "If you have been thinking harsh things about the school Governors, let me urge you to readjust your views. Sir John Brent and his colleagues have never ceased to have the utmost confidence in my integrity, and that confidence is now even higher than ever."

"Hurrah!"

"So dismiss all ideas of such a character from your minds," said the Head. "I feel that I need a complete rest, and so I am off to the South of France for a change and a holiday."

"We hope you'll enjoy yourself, sir."

"Hear, hear!"

"Needless to say, it is a great wrench for me to leave you in this manner, but I dare say St. Frank's will survive," continued Dr. Stafford drily. "Indeed, I am sorry to go, and I am deeply moved at this expression of affection on your part. Perhaps—after my period of rest is over—perhaps I may come back to take up the reins once more——"

"Yes, sir!"

"We shall expect you to come back, sir!"

"Hurrah!"

"But this is a problem which I cannot go into just now," said the Head. "I have been in harness for long years, and the vacation will do me a world of good. As I have told you before in my earlier speech, I look upon you all to uphold the highest traditions of St. Frank's, and to give your unswerving loyalty to the gentleman who will step into my shoes."

"Gee!" exclaimed the stranger. "If it ain't de guy I hit against way back in little old New Yoik! Dis is sure de frog's elbow!"

"Who is he, sir?" shouted a score of voices.

Dr. Stafford hesitated for a moment.

"Perhaps it would be as well if I made the announcement now," he replied. "I have left instructions that you should be informed by means of a written notice. But no matter. The gentleman who will take up the reins of control this afternoon is Mr. Ponsonby Small."

"Never heard of him, sir!"

"Why couldn't Mr. Lee have become Head?" yelled the Fossils.

"Or Mr. Stockdale?" roared the Monks.

"Neither Mr. Nelson Lee nor Mr. Stockdale cared for the responsibility of accepting the appointment," said Dr. Stafford diplomatically. "I have never met Mr. Ponsonby Small, but I understand that he is a gentleman of much learning, and a capable schoolmaster, coming to St. Frank's direct from the Royal Trafalgar College, London. I expect you all to obey Mr. Small, and to respect him. And now, my dear boys, I must crave your indulgence, for railway trains will not await my pleasure, and neither will steamboats. So I thank you again, and bid you farewell."

The Head was assisted down from the fountain by a strong bodyguard of prefects, who had skilfully come up on the flank, as it were. And they escorted Dr. Stafford

to his car, amid a storm of cheering and shouting.

Even then it was only possible for the car to crawl out of the Triangle inch by inch. But at last it was clear of the crowd, and the fellows caught a final glimpse of the automobile as it sped down the lane towards Bellton.

Dr. Malcolm Stafford had gone, and for the moment St. Frank's was without a Head. But later in the day Mr. Ponsonby Small was due to arrive. And now that Dr. Stafford had gone the school gave itself over to speculation regarding his successor.

"Sounds a rotten name, anyway!" growled Handforth. "Ponsonby Small! I'll bet he'll be an insignificant little worm of the creepy, crawly variety! I tell you, St. Frank's is going to the dogs!"

"You can't judge by a name, old man," said Reggie Pitt, shaking his head. "Look at Fatty Little. By just hearing the name, you'd think he was a small chap, yet he's like unto the elephant. It may be just the same with Mr. Ponsonby Small."

"Well, I'm going to hate him," said Handforth obstinately. "I've got a feeling in my bones that he'll be a beast. But, by George, if he starts any new-fangled rot, we'll squash him in no time!"

Pitt grinned.

"Handy evidently thinks that Mr. Ponsonby Small is a new kid," he chuckled. "But remember, Handy, that headmasters are unsquashable. Thy head is even as the turnip, and thy reasoning powers as eloquent as the ostrich!"

Handforth glared.

"Are you calling me an ostrich?" he asked wrathfully.

"May the ghost of my grandfather grow whiskers before I should hint at such a thing," replied Reggie. "At the same time, O thou of much brawn, remember that we are like unto the dust, and the Head is like unto the exalted. In other words, if the Headmaster orders us to eat coke, we've got to eat coke. If we don't obey the Head it means the sack."

"Finished?" asked Handforth sarcastically. "If there's one chap in the Remove who talks more rot than another, it's you! For two pins I'll biff you! I tell you that this Ponsonby Small will be a beast!"

"Well, I'll admit that he might be an animal," said Pitt, "because, when it comes to that, we're all animals."

Any further argument was out of the question, because the Remove was at once rounded up and hustled back into the Form-room. Not that any further work was done that morning.

Even after dinner, when lessons commenced for the afternoon, the school was so moved out of its usual calm, that work was tiresome and unwelcome. St. Frank's was anxious to see the new headmaster.

St. Frank's saw him—just after tea.

CHAPTER X.

QUITE BEYOND THE LIMIT!

MR. PONSONBY SMALL was not impressive. He proved to be astonishly like the mental picture that Handforth had painted—a thin, weedy individual, utterly insignificant. He had thin, wispy hair, watery eyes, and a receding chin.

There was nothing whatever about him that inspires boys with confidence and respect. Mr. Small had slightly stooping shoulders, and—horror of horrors—he was distinctly and palpably knock-kneed.

The school could have forgiven his weediness and his watery eyes, but the fact that he was knock-kneed settled him at once and for all time. And this—this caricature of humanity was the Headmaster of St. Frank's College!

Chambers of the Fifth, claimed the honour of having been the first to spot Mr. Ponsonby Small. But Chambers didn't brag so much after several fellows had pointed out that it was no honour at all, but a disgrace.

Chambers had gone down to the station to inquire about a parcel. And he observed Mr. Ponsonby Small alight from the London train and get into the waiting car. Chambers thought nothing of it at the time, because he never connected this miserable-looking individual with the new Head.

But the school was booked for more than one shock on this eventful day.

Before tea was actually over, the prefects came hustling round, warning the fellows that everybody had to collect in Big Hall at six o'clock sharp. The new Head was to address the school.

Ordinarily, the fellows regarded it as an unmitigrated nuisance, to be compelled to collect in Big Hall at this time of the day. But on this occasion they were only too eager to obey the summons. For their natural curiosity was great, and they were particularly anxious to hear what Mr. Ponsonby Small had to say.

At five minutes to six the bell clanged, as a final warning, and on the stroke of the hour the entire school was collected. A low buzz of talk went on until the door behind the platform opened, and the new headmaster stepped forward, flanked on either side by Nelson Lee and Mr. Stockdale.

Mr. Ponsonby Small was wearing his gown and mortar-board, and the robes, if anything, only served to add to his personal insignificance. But the gown mercifully shielded his knock-knees.

The whole school was dead silent. There was hardly the shuffle of a foot, a cough, or any other sound that may generally be heard in a big gathering. St. Frank's waited for Mr. Small to speak.

The new Head stepped to the table,

fidgetted nervously for a moment with his watch-chain, and then cleared his throat.

"I have very little to say with regard to my appointment as the new Headmaster of this famous old college," he said, in a clear, thin voice. "The usual routine will be continued without the slightest alteration—at least, to begin with. But I have a few words to say in connection with quite another matter."

He paused, and one or two murmurs broke out. Handforth confided to his chums in a loud whisper that Mr. Ponsonby Smalls' voice reminded him of a cracked piccolo.

"I have a few remarks to make about the River House School—which is, I understand, a small private establishment quite a short distance from St. Frank's," continued the Head. "Owing to circumstances which I need not enter into, Dr. Hogge finds it necessary to vacate his premises on Wednesday. And he is in the unfortunate position of having no accommodation available for his boys. In order to be neighbourly, and to help in what way we can, it has been decided that Dr. Hogge's boys shall find shelter under this famous old roof."

This time the buzz was general.

"Then it's true!"

"The River House chaps are really coming!"

"My only hat!"

"I'll bet the Head refused to allow it, and that's why he's gone!" muttered somebody. "There's been a wangle somewhere!"

"Silence!" shouted the prefects.

Order was restored after a few moments.

"It is quite unnecessary for me to go into any details," continued Mr. Ponsonby Small. "I am sure that your spirit of sportsmanship—for which St. Frank's is so famous—will lead you to give these newcomers a hearty welcome. It will be understood, of course, that the River House boys will remain under the sole control of their own masters. In no circumstance will they be placed on the same level as yourselves. They are not St. Frank's boys, and will never be St. Frank's boys. The arrangement is but a temporary one, after all. And I shall expect all my boys to give every facility, and to help in every way possible. It is my intention to outline, briefly, the manner in which this matter may be accomplished."

The school listened, fearing that they were to hear something unwelcome.

Mr. Ponsonby Small glanced at his notes, and paused for a moment. The school little realised that this man was nothing more nor less than a dummy—a puppet who had been placed in power by the order of Mr. William K. Smith. And the school governors had been compelled to submit to the hateful arrangement.

It would not matter so much if Mr. Ponsonby Small behaved with caution and discretion. But, after all, he was under the orders of the millionaire. Cyclone Smith was the brain—Mr. Ponsonby Small was but the mouthpiece. And, what was more, he looked it.

"It will be obvious to you all that a little readjustment will be necessary," continued Mr. Small, looking up from his notes. "I think there are about forty boys in Dr. Hogge's establishment, and to find accommodation for this number will tax our resources somewhat severely. However, there is quite an easy way out of the difficulty. I shall require all the junior studies to be vacated by to-morrow night, at the latest."

"The junior studies!"

"Vacated!"

Remove fellows repeated the words dazedly, hardly believing their ears.

"Naturally, I have realised that this will be something of a wrench. but I am sure you will co-operate heartily," said the new Head smoothly. "And, remember, you are doing it for the sake of those who are stranded. These studies will be required as bed-rooms. And if any boys fail to obey my orders, they will be severely punished. Notices will be placed upon the boards this evening, giving full details. After to-morrow evening the junior study passages will be strictly out of bounds."

"Oh!"

It was a gasp of dismay and consternation from the juniors.

"I further regret that the junior boys must be deprived of the Common-room," continued Mr. Ponsonby Small, gaining confidence, and now speaking with somewhat oily ease. "The Lecture-hall will be also placed at the disposal of Dr. Hogge—these two rooms serving, as you will appreciate, as class-rooms for the River House pupils. I may say at once that these new regulations apply equally in the College House and the Ancient House."

"Shame!"

"It's not fair!"

"We won't clear out of our studies!"

"Never!"

"Yah! Tyrant!"

Somebody started the shouting, and in a moment the entire junior school was in a state of uproar. Indeed, the juniors were seething with fury and indignation. And it was some moments before order was restored.

"Wait!" shouted the new Head. "It is just possible that the Common-room will not be required—but that will be adjusted after our guests have arrived. If the Lecture-halls in both Houses prove to be sufficiently large, the Common-rooms will be restored for your use. At the commencement, however, they will be strictly out of bounds."

"Rotten!"

"We're not going to be deprived of our liberties!"

"Never!"

"You're not wanted here—clear out!"

"Three cheers for Dr. Stafford!"

Mr. Ponsonby Small looked absolutely startled, as a perfect roar of cheering arose for Dr. Stafford. It was hardly a happy augury for the commencement of Mr. Small's own regime.

"I am amazed—indeed, staggered!" exclaimed the Headmaster, after the tumult had subsided. "Is this what you call your true spirit of sportsmanship? Have you no sense of shame? Have you no feeling of decency? I take it as a personal insult that you should display this spirit towards me."

The school glowered at him.

"But I would have you know, here and now, that my orders are to be obeyed!" went on Mr. Ponsonby Small, suddenly bursting into a rage. "Any boy who fails to obey the new orders will be dealt with drastically. As for this present disturbance, I will let you see that I am not to be flouted or defied. You, sir! What is your name?"

He pointed an accusing finger at Munroe, one of the College House juniors.

"Mum—me, sir?" stammered Munroe, "I'm Munroe, sir."

"Come here, Munroe," commanded the Head.

The College House fellow, who had been one of those to shout a few minutes earlier, went up on the platform, visibly trembling. He had been quite brave while among his companions. But he was a bit of a weakling alone, and he had turned quite pale as he stood there, singled out in this manner.

"You will leave this school by the first train in the morning, Munroe," said Mr. Ponsonby Small, with obvious relish. "You will leave in disgrace, for I am expelling you from St. Frank's for an act of sheer insubordination."

Munroe nearly fainted with fright.

"I—I'm expelled, sir?" he gasped, white to the lips.

"Yes, sir—expelled," replied Mr. Small viciously. "And let this be a warning to the others. I am here to be obeyed—not insulted."

The juniors were too startled and scared to make any uproar. And this summary treatment of Munroe gave them pause. At any moment Mr. Small might pick somebody else out. It behoved them to be careful.

"Ah! That has had some little effect, eh?" went on the Head, with a smile of triumph. "Splendid! I will let you see that I am not to be treated with disdain. Go, Munroe, and prepare to leave the school!"

"Please, sir, I didn't mean to be insulting, sir!" gasped Munroe, tearfully. "I won't do it again, sir, I swear! Don't sack me, sir! My pater will never forgive me—and—and——"

The wretched junior broke down, and sobbed almost pitifully. Many of the juniors felt sorry for him, and others were slightly contemptuous of his weakness. Mr. Ponsonby Small appeared to relax somewhat.

"It grieves me that I should commence my Headmastership by expelling one of my boys," he exclaimed. "And, perhaps, I may relent. It greatly depends upon the behaviour of the school in general. If there is no insubordination, Munroe, there will be hope for you."

"Please don't expel me, sir," wailed Munroe.

"It depends entirely upon your schoolfellows," said Mr. Small. "If they behave themselves between now and to-morrow evening, I will reconsider my decision. So the matter will lie in abeyance until then. But at the first sign of uproar or opposition to my wishes you will leave the school. You may go!"

It was a cunning move on Mr. Ponsonby Small's part.

Out of loyalty to the miserable junior, the Remove had to swallow its wrath. It rested with them whether Munroe was expelled or not. And for his sake they were bound to keep the peace.

The new Head had created a bad impression—the worst impression possible. For he had revealed himself as a trickster, and he earned nothing but contempt for himself.

But, without question, he was dangerous.

CHAPTER XI.

THE INVASION OF ST. FRANK'S!

THAT evening was one that was long remembered at St. Frank's. The junior school was simply boiling with subdued rage. It was impossible to make any organised outcry, because such a thing would have sealed Munroe's fate. But although the Remove remained calm outwardly, it was really and truly sizzling with fire.

Mr. Ponsonby Small was regarded as a beast and a cad and a viper. Not that Mr. Ponsonby Small cared. He had been warned, at the very outset, that he would earn the hatred of the school.

Mr. William K. Smith had made this quite plain, but his underling did not care. The honour of being Headmaster of such a famous school was a feather in his cap—for, hitherto, he had held only minor positions. Mr. Small was exactly what his name implied—small in figure, small in character, and small in brain power. Had he been other than this, he would not have accepted the appointment.

And so the turmoil did not worry him—because it had been expected.

"Of course, we're not going to stand it—that's certain!" declared Handforth, to a crowd in the Common-room. "What shall we do without our studies? We're not going to be hoofed out like this!"

"Not likely!"

"When those River House chaps come, we'll smash them!"

"Hear, hear!"

"It's no good blaming the River House fellows—they can't help it," I put in. "They've got to obey orders. And if we drop on them when they arrive, it'll be a pretty dirty trick."

"Do you want them here?" demanded Armstrong.

"No, of course I don't," I replied. "But it's perfectly ridiculous to talk about smashing them."

"That's right!" agreed Handforth. "We can't be caddish over it. Our quarrel is against Ponsonby Small for fixing the thing up. But, by George, if Wellborne and those other cads start any of their rotten games, we'll slaughter the whole crowd."

"Rather!"

"We won't stand any nonsense!"

"I quite agree to that," I said grimly.

And on Wednesday the invasion of St. Frank's took place.

Exactly as Mr. William K. Smith had planned, the entire personnel of the River House School marched down upon St. Frank's, and took up its abode under that famous old roof.

And, as a result, there was a great deal of overcrowding.

We had lost our studies, and felt absolutely at sea. There was nowhere to go. The junior passages were out of bounds, and so were the Common-rooms.

Hal Brewster was greatly concerned—and, indeed, indignant.

"I say, you fellows, I'm awfully sorry," he said, with gravity.

"And so you ought to be!"

"We hadn't the faintest idea that we should be turning you out of your studies," went on Brewster. "It's a dirty trick on you—but don't blame us! I feel that we're absolutely intruding!"

"You are!" said Armstrong bluntly.

"But, hang it all, we can't help it!" put in Ascott. "Dr. Hogge's brought us here, and there's an end of it. I know we're not welcome—we're not quite blind. And it's decent of you fellows to put up with us."

"We're not kicking as long as you behave," said Handforth. "But if any of you rotters start swanking about, we'll pitch you out like a shot. This doesn't apply to you, Brewster, but to Wellborne and his crowd."

The Hon. Aubrey de Vere Wellborne sneered.

"We'll do as we bally well like!" he said calmly. "We're heah, an' we don't have to ask you for permission to walk about."

But the Hon. Aubrey soon altered his tone.

Before the evening he and several of his chums were going about with black eyes and other sundry hurts. They had swanked, as Handforth had suspected. But they soon learned that this kind of thing wouldn't do.

The school, of course, was in confusion.

All the juniors were on top of one another, and there was simply nowhere for the fellows to go. As a last resort, the gymnasium became a kind of Common-room—for Monks and Fossils alike. House rivalry was completely forgotten in the mutual animosity against the new Head.

And in the evening the confusion became worse.

And Reggie Pitt brought an item of news which seemed to cast some light upon the whole situation. Pitt and Grey had met Mr. Dinty Todd once more, and the latter, though giving no definite information, had mentioned the name of Mr. William K. Smith, the millionaire.

And it leaked out that Mr. Smith was the purchaser of the River House School. Then somebody remembered that the American millionaire had interviewed the Head a few days earlier—that is, he had interviewed Dr. Stafford.

And it became public knowledge—or rumour, at all events—that Cyclone Smith was at the bottom of all this trouble. It was he who had compelled Dr. Stafford to resign—he who had brought about the appointment of Mr. Ponsonby Small—he who had planted the River House boys on St. Frank's.

But why?

What was his game? What possible reason could Mr. Smith have for buying a miserable old place like the River House School?

There was nobody who could answer these questions.

But if St. Frank's had only known the truth, the present astonishment would have turned to blank amazement. For there was something in store for the whole district that was to cause not only consternation, but absolutely dismay.

Mr. William K. Smith, in fact, had only just started!

THE END.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

Possession, we are told, is nine-tenths of the law, a fact which explains why Mr. W. K. Smith is able to throw his weight about in the locality of St. Frank's, and to over-ride the authority of the Governors of the school. It was from this quarter that the German-American millionaire feared the strongest opposition. Now that he has successfully overcome this obstacle, he feels he can proceed with his gigantic schemes without let or hindrance. But he has not reckoned with the boys of St. Frank's who are not going to submit to the running of the school to suit the whim of a rank outsider, even though he be a multi-millionaire. So next week's story, "THE AMAZING MR. SMITH!" will be full of surprises when Cyclone Smith begins to get a move on.

MY AMERICAN NOTE-BOOK

By the Author of our St Frank's Stories.

No. 12. NEW YORK MANNERS.

IT is my endeavour, in these little impressions, to set down a truthful account of everything I saw during my visit to the United States. As my previous articles have shown, there are many things that I greatly admire in America. On the other hand, there are a number of things I do not admire.

And if, in the course of my notes, I write with perfect frankness, I have no intention of giving offence to any American readers—although, to be quite straightforward about it, I fear I shall. For my experiences have taught me that the majority of Americans are very touchy, and have no great liking for open criticism.

And the manners of New York did not impress me favourably at all. Indeed, I have been told that New York possesses no manners whatever, but this is just a little too harsh.

In the streets, on the subway, or in the street cars, it is your plain duty to look after yourself. If you don't, you will get far more knocks than you care for, and a very small proportion of apologies. You will be pushed off the pavement into the road without compunction, and if you expect the offender to beg your pardon, you will probably be disappointed. Occasionally, one will meet with politeness, but when this does happen you have a mild feeling of surprise. For in New York you don't expect it.

Everything here is rush and bustle. If you are on a subway station, and a train comes in at that moment, everybody will rush for it in a kind of panic—a seething mob, pushing, squeezing, with absolutely no thought of gentleness or courtesy. And yet, to your astonishment, you observe that another train comes in, bound for the same destination, a couple of minutes afterwards. The New Yorkers never wait—they push their way in, and if you get hurt in the process, it's your fault for not getting out of the way.

This feverish hustle is more of a habit than anything else. A man will risk his life in dashing across the street through the traffic, push his way through the crowd on the pavement, and then, possibly meet a friend. His hustle vanishes. In all probability he will stand there, blocking the pavement, with his friend for five minutes, talking about nothing on earth that matters.

In most of the shops you are treated very brusquely. The storekeepers do not look upon your custom as a favour, but as a right. And if you don't speak up, you have to wait a long time before you're served. Being English, you say "Thank you!" after receiving your purchase, and thereupon the shopkeeper looks at you in astonishment. He doesn't expect any thanks—he never gets it from his ordinary customers. And instead of returning your thanks, as is the general custom in Great Britain, the New York shopkeeper will just exclaim, "All right," or "You bet!" Now and again he will say, "You're welcome."

The latter phrase is one that you hear fifty times a day in New York. You step out of the lift in your hotel and thank the attendant, and he says "You're welcome." You ask a man how to get to a certain street, and thank him, and you get the inevitable "You are welcome." This is one of the few ways in which the New Yorker is generally polite.

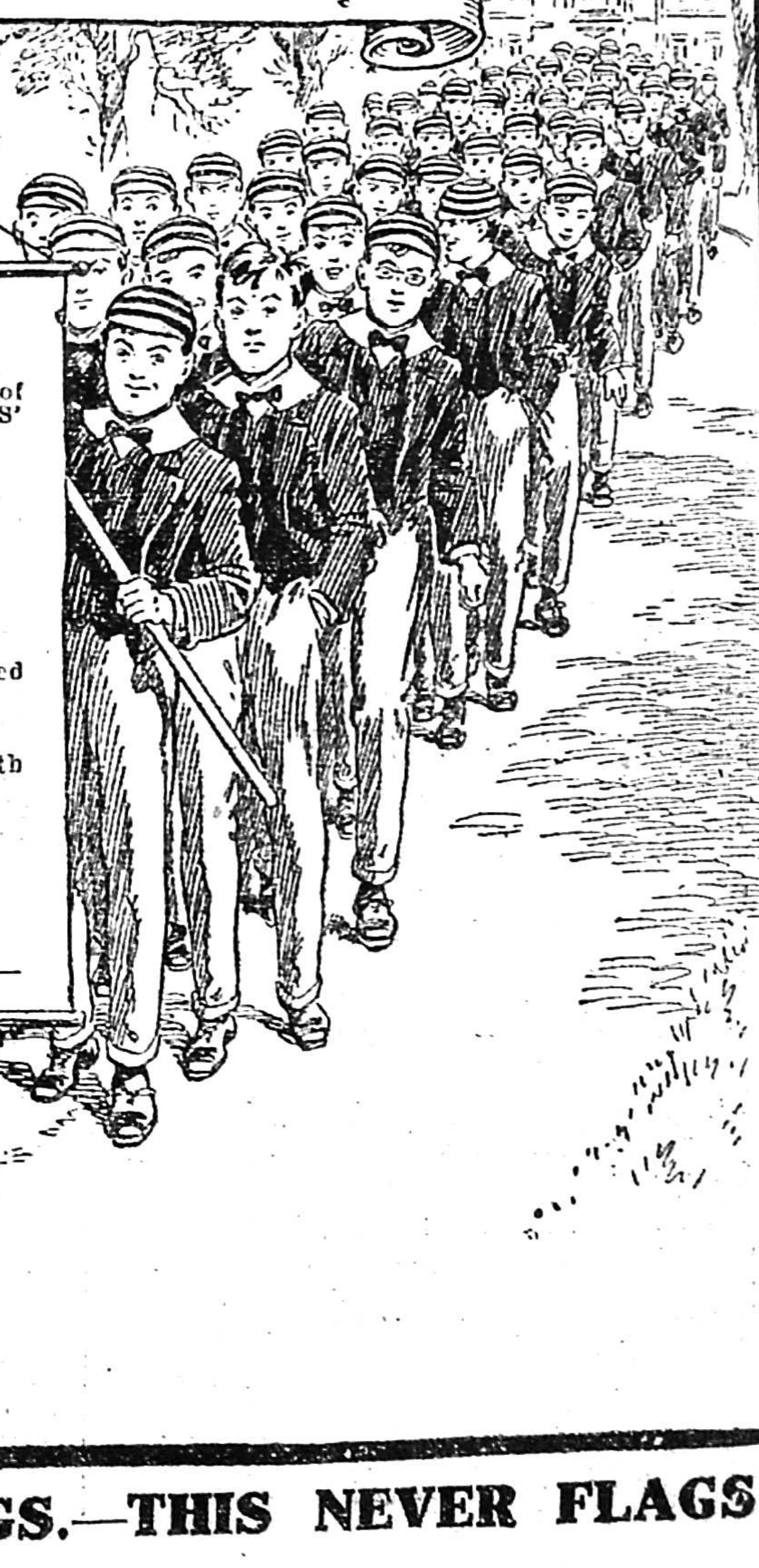
When I first arrived in New York, I was naturally rather at sea, and I insisted upon finding my own way about, as this is the only true way of learning a city. And if ever I asked a policeman a number of questions, he regarded me as an obvious nuisance, and something of an imbecile. It was practically the same with tram conductors and subway guards. And, having an English accent, it is nine chances out of ten that you will not be understood. And then you are barked at. This is most unpleasant to begin with, but you get used to it in time.

The truth of the whole matter is that it is the recognised rule in New York to look after yourself. It is every man's job to do this. He doesn't expect help from anybody else, and seldom gets it. They are always in a hurry, always self-centred, and it appears to me that the average New Yorker has no time in his life for politeness or good manners. Such things as these are regarded with a kind of contempt. To be polite in New York is to be a milksop, and not a he-man!

Read Handforth's Great Mystery Story!

No. 13. Vol. 1. Edited by Nipper. February 23, 1924.

St. Frank's Magazine



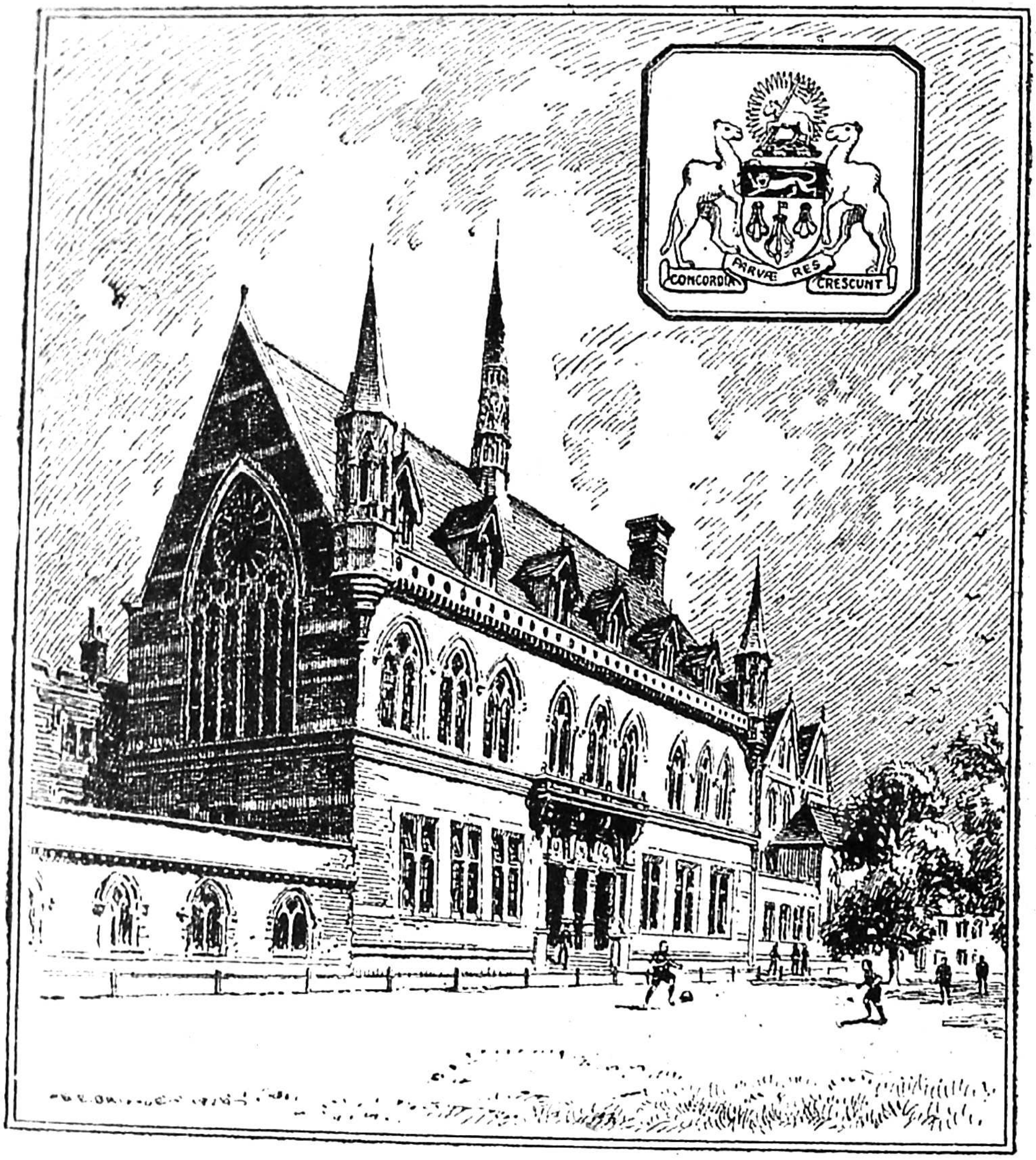
CONTENTS

OF ALL THE MAGS.—THIS NEVER FLAGS!

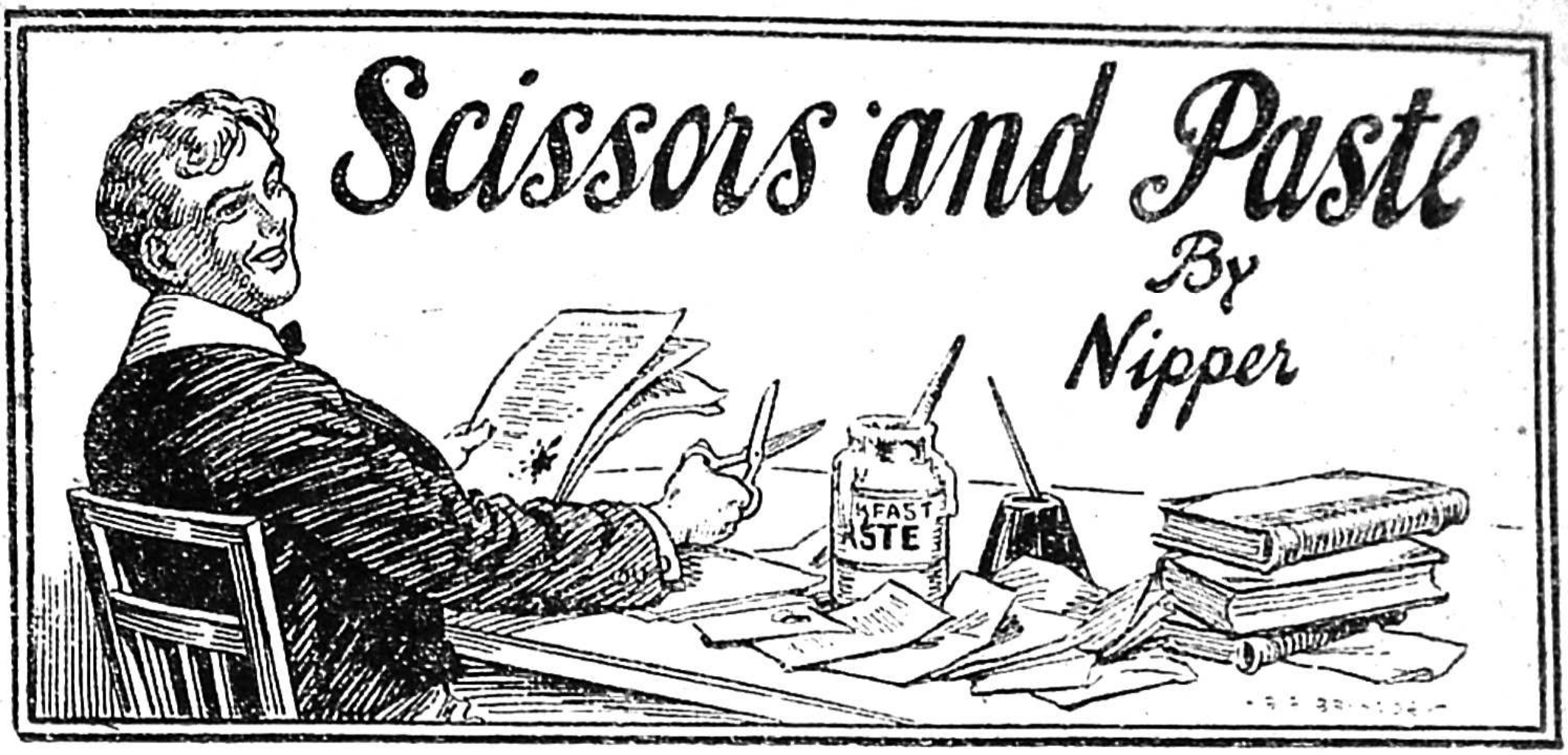
OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

SPECIAL SERIES OF ART SKETCHES BY MR. E. E. BRISCOE.

No. 15. MERCHANT TAYLORS' SCHOOL.



Founded in 1561 by the Merchant Taylors' Company, the original site of this famous old school was in Suffolk Lane, Upper Thames Street, London, near St. Paul's Cathedral. In 1873-75, the school was removed to its present quarters in Charterhouse Square, new buildings being erected to accommodate a larger number of boys on land formerly occupied by Charterhouse School before it was removed to Godalming. The school numbers about 500 day boys, and is divided into classical, modern, and special sides. The playing-fields are at Bellingham, in South London. Among the celebrities who were educated at this school are Edmund Spenser, Archbishop Juxon, and Lord Clive. 1,600 former boys served in the Great War, 200 of whom lost their lives. The governors of the school are, as is the custom, all members of the Merchant Taylors' Company.



Editorial Office,
Study C,
St. Frank's.

My dear Chums,

I am afraid that some of the fellows are taking too seriously Buster Boots' advice in his "Getting On Top" articles. Never have I seen so many fights, black eyes and other signs of the turbulent spirit in the Remove as during the last few weeks. Everyone seems to be jostling his neighbour, elbowing his way forward and consequently creating a bad feeling that is the reverse of true sportsmanship.

T. T.'S OPINION.

Timothy Tucker writes to say that he thinks that the articles referred to above are the cause of all the trouble. "The survival of the fittest," he tells me, "is admittedly a law that operates among the lower orders of animals, but with man it is brains, not brawn, that should count first." That being so, I wonder why Tucker has survived so long.

BUSTER, THE LEG-PULLER.

There is something in what he says, however, though I don't entirely agree with him that Boots' articles are to blame. It is because a few fellows like T.T. have not a very keenly developed sense of humour, or they would see that Buster was merely pulling their legs. I have discovered, to my cost, more than once that Buster is a champion leg-puller. As a matter of fact, he wanted to call these articles, "Bunkum While You Wait," but I have had to exercise my prerogative, as I thought such a title would be too obvious.

THE INDIGNANT CADS OF STUDY A.

Since the Mag. started, the Cads of Study A have been grinding their teeth in impotent rage at "the despicable way in which their good names have been brought into disrepute in this journal." At first they treated us with contempt, then they tried to interfere with the publication of the Mag. Now we receive regularly vituperative letters, threatening us with all kinds of punishment if "we continue to vilify them in our rotten rag." They complain that as a result of our persecution, tradesmen (Mrs. Hake) refuse to give them any credit, and that the other fellows will have nothing to do with them.

FULLWOOD'S NEW PAPER.

Fullwood continues to say that things have reached a pitch when retaliation is the only means of retribution. He has decided to start a paper with Gulliver and Bell, which he is calling "The Tipster." Not only will he drag our names down into the mire, but he will show us how to run a paper.

THE PENALTY OF BEING A ROTTER.

I think most fellows in the Remove have been sufficiently acquainted with Fullwood and Co. to know that their reputations could not have been affected by anything that has been said against them in the Mag. Long before the Mag. started they were looked upon with distrust by all the decent fellows, and I happen to know that Mrs. Hake refused them credit soon after their first term at St. Frank's. Such is the penalty of being a rotter. As for the new paper, "The Tipster," it should have quite a big circulation in Study A. —Yours very sincerely,

NIPPER.

St Frank's Magazine

On Anything and Everything

GOSSIP OF THE WEEK

By HUBERT JARROW

OF course, things might improve during the next week or two, but just at present matters are somewhat dull. I mean, there's hardly anything to write about, and yet something has to be done.

I have been commissioned to fill up this space, and although, personally, I think it would be better blank, tastes differ. I don't know why it is, but editors have an absolute horror of blank pages. Even when they've got a tiny bit of space left over, they'll yelp for more copy, instead of putting a pretty ornament, or something. Queer, to my mind. And it's not a bit of good me saying anything. The editor won't listen to a suggestion.

And this auto-suggestion. I mean, it's really a lot of priceless rubbish, when you come to get to the bottom of it. And yet there's something rummy about it, too. Only on Tuesday Grey had a most frightful toothache, and all the chaps were saying that he was going to be laid up. His toothache grew a lot worse, and off he buzzed like lightning to the dentist's. By the time he'd got there, the pain had gone. Now, I mean, a case like that makes a chap think there must be something in this auto-suggestion stuff. And it's an absolute fact that Grey's tooth left off aching completely.

And this Dr. Karnak, you know. He's gone now, thank goodness, but I honestly believe that he made the fellows believe rummy things by auto-suggestion. It's a sort of science, when you get down to it. It just shows the power of a chap's mind over his body and muscles.

Which reminds me that Fatty Little had some mussels for tea the other day. Nasty, ugly things, in my opinion—but, then, Fatty will eat anything. I don't mind oysters so much, particularly when they're well cooked. Oysters are strange animals, too.

Fancy finding pearls at the bottom of the sea. Chambers keeps on saying that it's a genuine pearl in his tie-pin. Nobody believes him, of course, because nowadays you can't tell a real pearl from an imitation one. Even Mary Jane, the kitchen-maid, has got a pearl necklace. I believe you can buy them in Woolworth's. But I seem to be getting off the track.

It wouldn't be a bad idea to have a proper track at St. Frank's. Cross-country running is all very well, but a track has many advantages. Besides, you can take exercise round it on your bicycle—or on somebody else's bicycle.

I think I shall have to ask my pater for a new jigger. On Thursday I was riding out of the Triangle when somebody called me, and I went head first into one of the stone pillars. It didn't hurt me much, but the old jigger's wrecked.

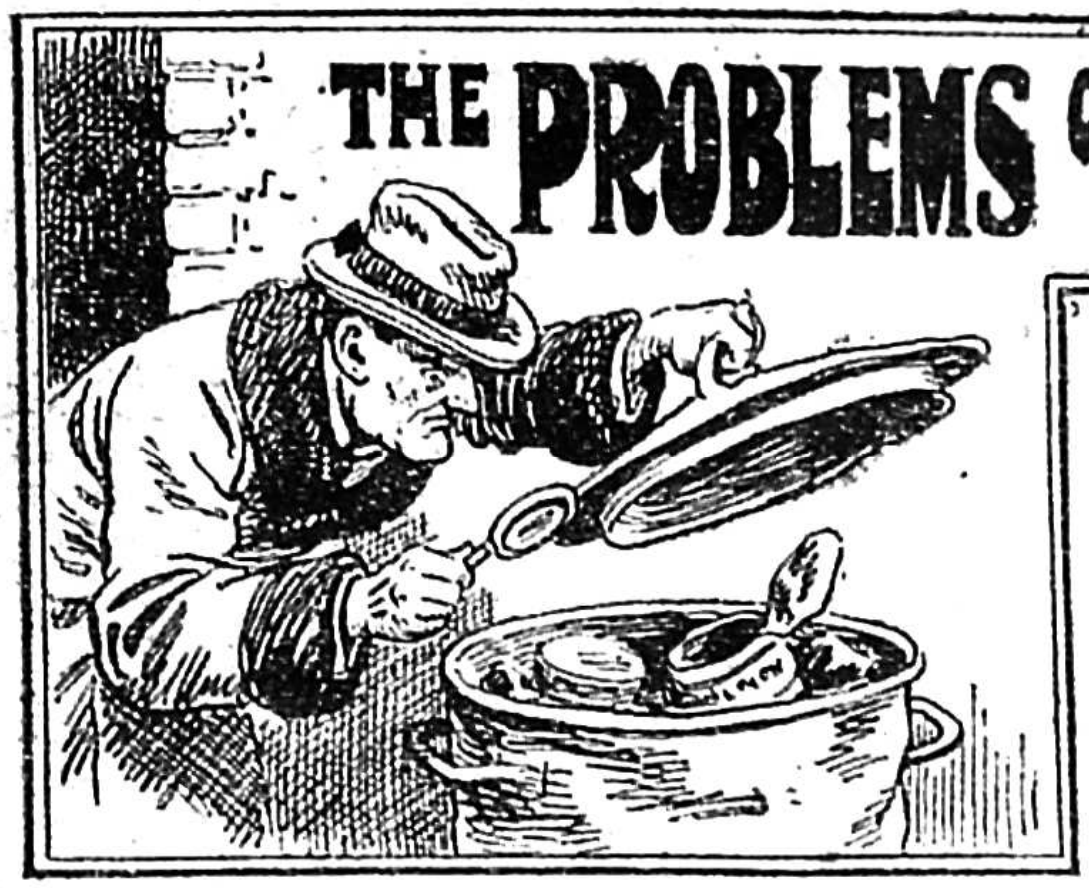
We don't often have wrecks along the coast, but that's mainly because there are so many lighthouses. And if there's one thing I do like, it's a light house. Always give me plenty of light! There's nothing worse than going into a place where everything's dim and gloomy. Some people call it artistic to live in a kind of subdued radiance, but it gives me a pain.

Handforth will have to be careful. He needs a new pane of glass in his study for the third time this term. But what can he expect, when he will throw his football boots at Church's head, and his dictionary at McClure's? That sort of thing is simply asking for trouble.

I don't want to be pessimistic, but according to all appearances, we're going to have some trouble pretty soon. What with this rumour about the River House chaps, and one thing and another, goodness knows where we shall stand by the end of another week. Let's hope there won't be anything to interfere with the Mag., and cause a drop in circulation.

The circulation is a most important point. A magazine can't live without its circulation. And, if it comes to that, neither can the editor. If the paper's got no circulation, the editor's got no job, and if the editor's got no circulation, then there's work for the undertaker. So everything works out all right for somebody. I suppose that's how the world keeps going round.

THE PROBLEMS OF TRACKETT GRIM



THE MYSTERY OF THE PURLOINED PEARLS!

Being the Exciting Adventures of Trackett Grim and Splinter.

BY

ED. O. HANDFORTH.

SIR FULLER GOWT'S APPEAL.

"CONFOUND it, sir; you've got to come!" shouted Sir Fuller Gowt fiercely. "Do you hear me, sir? You've got to come! I won't take no for an answer; never have done, never will! Why, blister me, you can name your own price!"

Trackett Grim rose to his feet, his powerful eyes stabbing into his visitor like gimlets. There was something about this red-faced, peppery old baronet that the celebrated criminal detective liked. Besides, that bit about naming his own price sounded good.

"My time is valuable, Sir Fuller," he said briskly. "I have four cases on my hands even at this moment. I am on the track of the Brixton pilferer, and I have gathered several clues on the astounding case of the Clerkenwell Coiners' Club. In addition, I am engaged on the task of hunting down the Marylebone Murderer, and I have just got a theory concerning the remarkable affair of the missing Margate monkey. However, for a fee of five hundred pounds, I will look into your case. That's my price. Take it or leave it!"

"Done!" cried Sir Fuller Gowt. "If I fail to take you back to Moregowt Hall, my wife will have a fit. Come. Get yourself ready, sir, and we will be off. Lady Gowt will die of worry if those pearls are not recovered."

"Never fear," quoth Trackett Grim. "The pearls will be recovered. Please remember that I, Trackett Grim, will investigate. I have never failed."

— —

AT THE SCENE OF THE ROBBERY.

An hour later Trackett Grim was crawling about on his hands and knees in the drawing-room of Moregowt Hall, in Westmoreland. The detective was looking for clues with his powerful magnifying lens. Outside, the sun was shining brightly on the wonderful lakes of the Lake District.

Trackett Grim had not brought his young assistant, Splinter, with him. But this mattered little. Bobby Gowt, the five-year-old son of Sir Fuller, was doing his best to help. As Trackett Grim searched for clues, Bobby raced round the drawing-room, under the impression that this was a new game.

At last Trackett Grim had finished. Lady Gowt was looking on, and she gazed at Trackett Grim eagerly and anxiously as he rose to his feet and pulled his tie round from the back of his neck.

"Well, Mr. Grim?" she asked hoarsely. "Have you found the pearls?"

"Madam," said Trackett Grim, "I am not a magician, and therefore I cannot produce the pearls out of thin air. But never fear; I am on the track. Within two hours your property will be in your hands. Although I have only had a cursory look round, my extraordinary brain has enabled me to see the whole thing, from start to finish. I know exactly what took place."

"Is it possible?" gasped Lady Gowt, stupefied.

"It is not only possible, but a fact," said Trackett Grim carelessly. "I understand that you lost the pearls in this room?"

"Yes, Mr. Grim," she sobbed. "I thoughtlessly took off the pearls while powdering my neck, and when I turned round to pick them up they had gone!"

"And nobody had been in the room in the meantime?"

"Nobody, except Margot, my maid."

"Ah!" said Trackett Grim. "And I understand that Margot is now in the hands of the police? Blockheads! They have arrested the wrong person! The girl has nothing to do with it—she is innocent. The pearls were quite small, I think?"

"Yes, Mr. Grim—a string of seed pearls worth fifty thousands pounds," replied Lady

[illegible] proudly. "And each pearl was [illegible], which made them so remarkably valuable, for it was very difficult to match them. In fact, they resembled ant's eggs more than anything else."

"Ant's eggs," said Trackett Grim slowly. "Ah, really! As I thought!"

And his eyes strayed across the room, and fastened themselves to a small table. Having finished their work there, his eyes moved to Lady Gowt.

"The matter needs concentration," said Trackett Grim shortly. "This is not one of those cases where action is required. It is not necessary for me to go rushing after criminals, or chasing crooks. It is a pure brain problem. I find it necessary to think, to think, to think! I must be alone, so that I am not disturbed. My brain is tuned to such a pitch that I can think at ten times the speed of anybody else.

TRACKETT GRIM'S STRANGE BEHAVIOUR.

The detective dismissed Lady Gowt with a gesture, and strode out into the hall. His eyes glued themselves to a fishing-rod that stood in a corner. A glad cry escaped from Trackett Grim.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "My favourite relaxation! I have been concentrating so much that I need a rest. My brain requires relaxation."

And the detective grabbed the fishing-rod, and he went outside. Ten minutes later he was sitting on the bank of the lake, fishing. And such were the powers of this marvellous man that within half an hour he had caught seven fine codfish and three haddocks.

He was just putting another worm on his hook when Sir Fuller Gowt came along, frowning heavily. He halted opposite Trackett Grim and glared at the detective fiercely.

A STAGGERING SURPRISE.

"Well, sir," he barked. "Well, sir! What is the meaning of this? Blister me, sir, what do you think you're doing?"

"Fishing," said Trackett Grim triumphantly.

"Fishing!" roared Sir Fuller. "Can't I see you're fishing? Hanged if I can catch anything, though. And yet you've caught some of the finest fish out of my lake. Poaching, by gad! That's what you're doing. And I brought you down here to recover my wife's pearls."

Trackett Grim looked up at the baronet coldly.

"Oh, dry up!" he said impatiently. "Don't jaw so much! I'm working on the case all the time. If you don't believe me, look at this. The problem of the missing pearls was childishly simple to a trained mind like mine."

The famous detective took out his clasp-knife and deliberately slit open one of the haddocks. In a moment he produced a small goldfish with a shout of triumph, while Sir Fuller looked on, stupefied.

"Are you mad, Mr. Grim?" he gasped.

"No, by George, I'm not!" shouted Trackett Grim. "Look here, you fathead!"

He cut the goldfish in half, and out dropped—a pearl. Sir Fuller uttered a cry of amazement. In a trice, Trackett Grim split up another of his catches. Three goldfish dropped out, and each contained a pearl.

"This—this is staggering!" spluttered Sir Fuller Gowt faintly.

Trackett Grim smiled calmly.

"Of course it's staggering," he said. "All my discoveries are staggering."

In the absence of Splinter, Bobby Gowt, the five-year-old son of Sir Fuller, was doing his best to help.

He was just putting another worm on his hook when Sir Fuller Gowt came along, frowning heavily. He halted opposite Trackett Grim and glared at the detective fiercely.

THE MARVELLOUS TRUTH.

"But—but how did you arrive at your conclusion?" asked Sir Fuller, gazing at the detective with awe and deep admiration. "Tell me, Mr. Grim."

"It was simplicity itself," grinned Trackett Grim. "While I was examining the floor with my lens, your little boy, Bobby, chattered away to me. He told me that he fed the goldfish yesterday. He had found some ants' eggs on the table, tied with string."

"The pearls!" shouted Sir Fuller, in a great voice.

"Exactly—the pearls," said Trackett. "I guessed that at once. Afterwards, Lady Gowt told me that the pearls looked like ant's eggs, which only confirmed my own theory. I came to the conclusion that the child had playfully given the pearls to the goldfish. And they, poor ignorant creatures, not knowing better, thought they were ant's eggs, and swallowed them."

"My heavens!" panted Sir Fuller. "And this morning Bobby childishly emptied the goldfish into the lake. Lady Gowt was quite cross with him for it."

"So I understand," smiled Trackett Grim. "Of course, I knew that the goldfish were in the lake, and I knew that these big haddocks and cod are rather fond of goldfish for dinner. So I came out fishing. So easy, you see," he added, as though his marvellous deductions were a mere trifle.

He went on fishing, and in less than twenty minutes he had caught another dozen haddocks, and all the pearls were recovered. Thanks to Trackett Grim's cleverness, the valuable collection was placed once more around Lady Gowt's neck, and Trackett Grim returned to London by the afternoon 'bus, with five hundred pounds in his pocket.

St Frank's Magazine

E. Sopp's Fables

By Edgar Sopp of the Fifth

No. 13.—The Fable of The Fellow with Big Ideals.

THERE lived in the Remove, in the Ancient House, in a Great Seat of learning known as St. Frank's, a Youth of Much Forehead. Now, this Wise Youth had read deeply, and he had delved into the Solid Works of many Illustrious Great Thinkers. And the Youth was learned beyond his years.

And the name of this Idealist was the somewhat curious one of Timothy Tucker. And he lived in a World Apart, going through his Daily Toil with little enthusiasm, and with much absent-mindedness.

And behold, it came to pass that T. T. decided that the time had arrived for the Remove to be Uplifted. Long enough had these Foolish and Thoughtless Youths given themselves over to Pleasure. Long enough had they Listened-in to Much that was really Nothing.

Now, the Wise Youth felt compassioned, and in the Greatness of his Heart, he decided to Impart to some of his fellow youths some of the Learning that was stowed away in his own Kapper.

And lo, it chanced that notices appeared upon the Board, stating in Huge Print that Timothy Tucker, Esq., would deliver a Great and Rousing Speech in the Small Lecture Hall on the following evening at Seven Sharp. All were welcome to come, and the notice particularly made it clear that there would be No Collection.

And the subject of this Great Speech was to be the Domestic Policy of the Ancient Peruvians. But it must be admitted that the Populace observed the notice, and the Populace did scoff.

Indeed, the Wise Youth was saddened and Dismayed to find his Announcement, later, pinned on the Board Upside Down. And some Ill-natured Humorist had blue-pencilled the brief and succinct word "Rats" across the Inverted Sheet.

But T. T. was not discouraged. It required Greater Blows than this to get him Down Weak. For many days and many nights had he Pored over his Subject, until his speech was a Masterpiece of Swotting. What Timothy Tucker didn't know about the Domestic Policy of the Ancient Peruvians was absolutely Not Worth Learning. And this Vast Store of Ancient and Mouldy Truth was ready to be Unleashed upon the Hapless Remove. That is, of course, if the Hapless Remove was Dotty Enough to Attend.

And it must be recorded that thrice did the Unhappy Lecturer write fresh notices, and pin them up. The second announcement was used to Stuff up a Crack, wherein a draught Whizzed Gustily. And, even as Pitt remarked, T. T. had his uses, after all.

The third announcement had a Fate which was even more Unhappy, since it was used by an Impudent Youngster named Willy, for the purpose of cleaning his bicycle lamp. But T. T. gained Much Comfort from the thought that the Remove knew All About It. Indeed, upon reflection, Tucker came to the Conclusion that the Publicity had been Excellent, my dear sir, Excellent.

And, lo, the time for the Lecture Drew Nigh, and T. T., carrying his Notes, sallied forth to face the Multitude. And as he arrived in the Lecture Hall the hour struck Seven. And, behold, the Multitude consisted of Mrs. Poulter's black cat, which had Inadvertently strayed abroad. For even T. T. did not Really Believe that the black cat was interested in the Great Subject of Ancient Peru.

The Audience, having flitted noiselessly through the window, Tucker gazed round sadly and Pensively. It occurred to him, in a Wave of Hope, that Some Fathead had spread a False Report that the Lecture was postponed.

And sadly, but with still a Faint Hope, did T. T. wander forth, and he did bend his steps towards the Common Room, in search of Enlightenment. Even now his brain was filled with Facts and Figures on his subject, for he was Richly Primed, and ready for the Fray.

And it came to pass that he entered the Common Room, and, sad to relate, his appearance was greeted by Numerous Cat Calls and Sarcastic Remarks. And Tucker gazed round, and wondered. For the Multitude was engaged upon Frivolous Pursuits that filled the Wise Youth with Foreboding.

Some were playing Chess, others were talking about Football, and it must be sadly recorded that two were even playing the lowly

game of Snakes & Ladders. And Timothy Tucker looked on and Marvelled at this Frivolity. And the Populace looked at Timothy Tucker, and Marvelled at his Optimism. For the Wise Youth did urge his companions to come forth with him, and attend the Lecture.

And he was informed, with much Unnecessary Liberty, that he was an escaped resident of Colney Hatch, a Tadpole, a Hopeless Jackass, and sundry other members of the Animal Kingdom too numerous to mention.

And, behold, T. T. had patience, and he did Plead his Cause, and even went to the length of offering to deliver his Lecture Then and There. He was obliging to a Wondrous Degree.

But his suggestion met with Violence.

For, without further ceremony, the Wise Youth was raised on high, whirled across the Common Room, and shot Unceremoniously through the Open Window into the Triangle. Which seemed to indicate that the Domestic Policy of the Ancient Peruvians was not precisely a Popular Theme.

Disillusioned, bruised, and Slightly Muddy, T. T. wended his way back Indoors, and even now he still had a Glimmering that, with luck, he might gather a few Trusting Souls around him to hear the Wonderful Speech that he had taken Ten Days to Prepare. It seemed a Dirty Trick to waste it.

And, lo, as T. T. entered the Lower Passage, he observed Pitt putting his head into the Common Room. And Pitt was cheerfully explaining that in five minutes Nipper would be Delivering a Speech in the Small Lecture Hall, on the subject of How To Improve Your Crystal Set, with some added remarks on the question of Cats' Whiskers.

And Timothy Tucker felt weak and Sold Out as he observed the Mad Rush for the Lecture Hall which followed the Announcement. For Ten Days had he prepared his Masterly Effort, and not one member of the Multitude had come to Listen. And yet, forsooth, at five minutes' notice, the Crowd had rushed along to hear a Speech on the Inane Subject of Wireless.

It was a Blow that absolutely hit Timothy Tucker amidships. The poor old chap positively Sagged, and thus did he crawl away, with Wobbly Knees, into the privacy of his own Study, there to Commune with the Empty Air.

And, meanwhile, the Wireless Lecture was an unqualified success—and this without any publicity, and without any Preliminary Preparation. But it must not be supposed that the Wise Youth was Completely Squashed.

For, behold, he thereupon set about preparing his Next Lecture—which, it must be confessed, had about as much chance of Gaining an Audience as a Pig has of Saving its Bacon.

MORAL: IF YOU WANT TO BE POPULAR—BE UP-TO-DATE!

PAINFUL PARODIES

PERPETRATED
By
Clarence Fellowe.

THE SNEAK OF STUDY B

(To be sung to the refrain of the well-known song, "The Sheik of Araby.")

— —

Along the passage full of glee
  Comes the young sneak of Study B;
His ears have heard the latest word,
  Though in private it was purred.
Under the shadow of the stairs
  He croons to wile away his cares:

"I'm the sneak of Study B,
  Your secrets come to me.
At night when you're asleep
  Into your clothes I'll peep,
To find what cash you've got,
  And if you have a lot
I'll get a loan, you see,
  To spend on Little Me!"

While chaps are talking in the gym.
  Under the window you'll find him.
There's not a sound that hasn't found
  It's way into his ears round.
Softly he creeps from door to door;
  He always wants to hear some more.

He's the sneak of Study B;
  Through keyholes he will see
All things of private kind,
  So you had better mind;
And if you swipe him one
  Straight off he'll yelp and run
And sneak to Mr. C——
  That's Long of Study B!

No. 3. The Rules of Soccer.

STILL feel that you'd like more entertainment on the subject of football rules, eh? Well, step this way and take your seats, and I'll do my best to get through the balance of the rules, which shouldn't be so very difficult, seeing that we have dismissed that obnoxious law which deals with the very awkward and involved problem of "offside." By the way, I hope you understood everything I told you in connection with that last week. If you didn't, then write to me.

I'm going to do my best this week to brush up this matter of rules, for I know that a good many of you are waiting for hints on how to play the game, and those I propose to embark upon next week. Got your books of rules in front of you? That's right. Now turn to Law 7.

Goal-kicks and Corner-kicks.

Law 7 concerns goal-kicks and corner-kicks, which we may pass, I think, with just a very brief comment, for you all know how goal-kicks are taken, and, for the matter of that, how corner-kicks are dealt with. If you happen to be on the other side to that which is taking either of these kicks, just remember to keep ten yards between yourself and the kicker and you are not likely to fall into the soup in any way.

Now for Rule 8. This is a law that should be studied very intelligently by goalkeepers, as it almost exclusively concerns them. I do not think that it calls for any lengthy explanation upon my part, and therefore I do not propose to give it. You know, of course, that in his own penalty area a custodian may use his hands as well as his feet, but that he must not take more than two steps at a time without bouncing the ball. He must not handle the ball OUTSIDE his penalty area, however, otherwise he is liable to be penalised for infringement under Law 9, which we shall deal with next.

What the Ref. Did.

Players must remember this—that unless they are holding the ball or interfering with play, i.e. saving a shot, he must not be charged. In the case of a goalie being injured or taken ill during the game a substitute may be appointed to fill his position from among the remaining ten members of the team, but a notice of this substitution must be given to the referee. Watch that, for failure to comply with this clause of the rule may mean a penalty kick against the offending side.

I once was present at a match in which this very error occurred. Another chap was substituted for the regular goalie, who was carried off the field injured, and this other man immediately went into the net and handled the ball. The ref, gave a penalty against his side, and there was a great to-do about it, until it was discovered that a breach of rules had been committed by the failure of the captain of the substitute's side to notify the official of the alteration.

Things You Mustn't Do.

Now we come to Law 9, which tells us many of the things we must not do during a game, and which is likely to run away with a fair amount of space before we have exhaustively discussed it. It is a law which provides against rough play, for in its first sentence we read that we might not trip, kick, strike, or jump at an opponent without earning a free kick against our side. Tripping, as you know, is deliberately bringing down a man by unfairly thrusting out a leg; kicking, striking, and jumping are terms which explain themselves. We are also told here that we may not intentionally handle the ball—this does not apply to goalies in their area—on pain of being penalised; that we must not hold or push an opponent, by which is meant that you must not grab your opponent with your hands, seek to stop him by holding him back, or use your elbows or your knee against him. Pay particular attention to those last two facts. I have seen players ordered off for failing to observe them before now.

Now a few words about charging—another

abused and much misunderstood phase of the game which has caused a whole heap of trouble. You can charge as much as you like, providing that you do it fairly. The real good shoulder-to-shoulder stuff is the charge that should be used. Jumping at a player is not charging, and is likely to earn for the offender's side a heavy penalty.

You may not charge a man from behind except in one circumstance, and that if the opponent is intentionally obstructing you in your play; but remember you can do this as fairly as you can in a shoulder-to-shoulder charge.

How and When to Take a Free Kick.

That's all, for the present, about Rule 9. And now for Rule 10, which deals with the question of free-kicks, which, as I have already explained, are given against the offending side for breaches of rule. The kick should be taken from the spot where such an infringement occurred, and in no circumstances should an opposing player move within ten yards of the kicker until the ball has been played.

A kick of this nature is left to the kicker's own discretion. He may take a pot-shot at goal, if there seems an opportunity of scoring, and if, of course, the offence for which the kick was awarded allows it. More often than not, however, it is wisest to pass to the next man of your own side, who is better positioned than you. There is nothing very difficult to understand in this law, and as far as I can see it requires no further explanation, so now for Law 11.

This tells us when a goal may be scored direct from a free-kick, and briefly boils down to this: A goal can be scored from any kick given for the following offences: tripping, kicking, striking, and jumping at a player; handling the ball, holding or pushing, and dangerous charging. There are other offences for which free-kicks are given, of course, but in those cases it is not possible for a goal to be scored direct from the kick. I am not going to tell you what those are here, but I am going to ask you to tell me. That is the reason why I have made this subject the basis of one of this week's examination paper questions.

Watch Your Footwear!

Law 12 deals with your footwear. You must not have any nails in the soles of your boots which are not flush with the leather, and the bars or studs that you may wear in them must not project more than half an inch from the soles. This law also provides against the use of metal bars or clips and buckles on boots, which in no circumstances must be used.

Rule 13 is the referee's rule, and Rule 14 was framed specially for the benefit of linesmen. As, later on, I propose to devote a whole article to referees and linesmen, and shall go into the matter fully there, I do not intend to discuss these laws at the moment. Instead, let us pass on to Law 15.

Here again we have nothing of great interest to dwell upon. This rule simply tells us that "in the event of infringement, the ball shall be in play until a decision has been given." The ball, of course, is always in play until the referee's whistle sounds for the infringement and then remains "dead" until another blast from the ref.'s whistle proclaims that it is "alive" again.

Restarting the game after a temporary stoppage is the basis of Rule 16, and this needs no great deal of explanation from me.

Sometimes it happens that a game has to be stopped apart from an infringement—such as a player being taken suddenly ill, or meeting with an accident, for instance. In this case the referee simply picks up the ball and drops it to the ground again, and the match continues. All that you must remember in connection with this rule is that you must not play the ball until it has touched the ground.

A Question of Penalties.

Now we come to the last of the laws—a fact for which doubtless you are grateful. It deals with free-kicks and penalty-kicks. To discuss the free-kick clause would only be to go over much the same ground as I have gone over before, therefore I vote we plunge right away into the question of penalties. A penalty-kick, of course, is awarded for an intentional infringement of the laws in the penalty area, and the offences I mentioned in my discourse upon Law 11 are the offences for which penalties are awarded. Except for the kicker and the goalie, all players must take up positions outside the penalty area and remain at least ten yards from the kicker until the ball has been kicked and therefore is in play again. The opposing goalie is not allowed to advance beyond his goal-line, and the kicker must propel the ball forward, not backwards or sideways. That is all we need say about this rule, I think, and that, too, completes our pow-wow on the subject of Soccer rules. Next week we'll get on to the subject of actual play, and meantime you can amuse yourselves by answering the following questions.

1. What position should a goal-kick be taken from?
2. On what side of the net would a corner-kick be taken?
3. To what penalty is a goalkeeper liable who has been guilty of "carrying"?
4. May a player take a free-kick while the ball is moving?
5. Name five or more offences for which a free-kick may be awarded, but for which a goal cannot be directly scored.
6. May a footballer wear boots whose lace-holes are protected by metal clips?
7. When is a ball "dead"?
8. What would happen if, in restarting the game after a temporary stoppage, the referee dropped the ball over the touch-line?

GETTING ON TOP

Helpful Advice by Buster Boots

No. 3—SUCCESS AT SCHOOL.

MANY KINDS OF SUCCESS.

Those of you who were lucky enough to read my last article will remember that I proposed this week to write about success at School.

It is a subject that cannot fail to be of interest to all those at St. Frank's, especially the juniors. There are all kinds of success, of course. Success at Work, success at Games, success at Japing. For instance, there is Fatty Little. He is a success at Eating. And there is Archie. He is a success at Sleeping. And Timothy Tucker. He is a success at Talking.

But this is not the kind of success I want to speak about.

It is something far better. It is the kind of Success I have achieved myself.

SELF-CONFIDENCE.

It is Making a Reputation. I have Made a Reputation. Without boasting, I can say that on the best kind of success I am an Expert.

How have I done this?

Principally because of two things. They are Self-Confidence and Attention to Detail.

To succeed at School you must have confidence. For instance, when Dr. Stafford gives me a hundred lines to do, what is my position? I refuse to do them. What follows?

I am sent to the Doctor's study. Most boys in that study Lose their Nerve. They are Overawed. I am not. No.

TALKING TO THE HEAD.

I simply stand up to him. He will say, "Have you done those lines?"

I reply, "No, sir; and I do not intend to do them."

The Doctor frowns terrifically, but I never falter. Without being rude, I point out that I have not come to school to do lines, and do not intend to be browbeaten by anybody.

"Dr. Stafford," I tell him, "you are a very worthy fellow. I admire and like you. But your methods are old fashioned. I am a believer in Live Wire Methods. (See my last Article). Giving lines is bad for the temper, and has a bad effect on the boy's handwriting. I shall have to refuse to do them."

METHODS THAT WIN.

That's the way to talk. It shows you have Confidence. When I spoke to Dr. Stafford like that it showed I had Confidence.

It showed him other things, too, though I have no room to mention them here.

What did he do? He let me off doing the lines.

It's hardly believable, but it's a fact. It only shows what Confidence can do for you.

"I quite understand your point," he said. "There is a lot of truth in it. You need not do the lines. Will you please go to the cupboard and get me that thick stick. And then will you be good enough to bend over that chair?"

I saw that my Methods had Won. So I did not mind doing what he asked.

Though after it was over I was sorry I had. If only all the juniors would follow my example, we might get rid of the iniquitous system of lines altogether. I cannot do any more this week as it is rather difficult to write standing up. I shall be able to sit down in a day or two, I hope.

Everybody Wonders—

WHY Study D is not used more frequently by CHURCH AND McCLURE?

AND WHY the two mentioned are suffering from black eyes.

ALSO if HANDFORTH could tell anything about it?

AND IF he has not some strange ideas upon the subject of friendship.

WHY FATTY LITTLE had to leave the Remove Form-room so suddenly?

AND IF it had any connection with the six new tins of sardines which disappeared from the Tuckshop?

WHY the word GOLD should make FULLWOOD'S face turn green?

AND if it possibly has some connection with the word FLAKE?

AND IF SO, when someone in authority is going to pay Study A a visit?

IF ARCHIE GLENTHORNE is quite the soft goods some people think?

AND IF those people had a rare shock when they tried to sit on him in the Remove passage?

WHETHER there is any truth in the rumour that the DUKE OF SOMERTON was seen visiting his tailor?

AND IF SO, WHETHER it caused that man to take to his bed for a week, and call in a London specialist?

WHO was the junior who received the contents of a syringe of red ink in his ear?

IF it will not make him more careful of keyholes in future?

AND IF he has not been LISTENING-IN for a very LONG time?

WHETHER the Mag. has not been more successful than ever this year?

AND IF THERE IS ANY TRUTH in the rumour that it may have a new Editor, if a certain junior with a loud voice is to be believed?

Hallo Everybody

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