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HANDFORTH SEES THE EDITOR ABOUT IT !

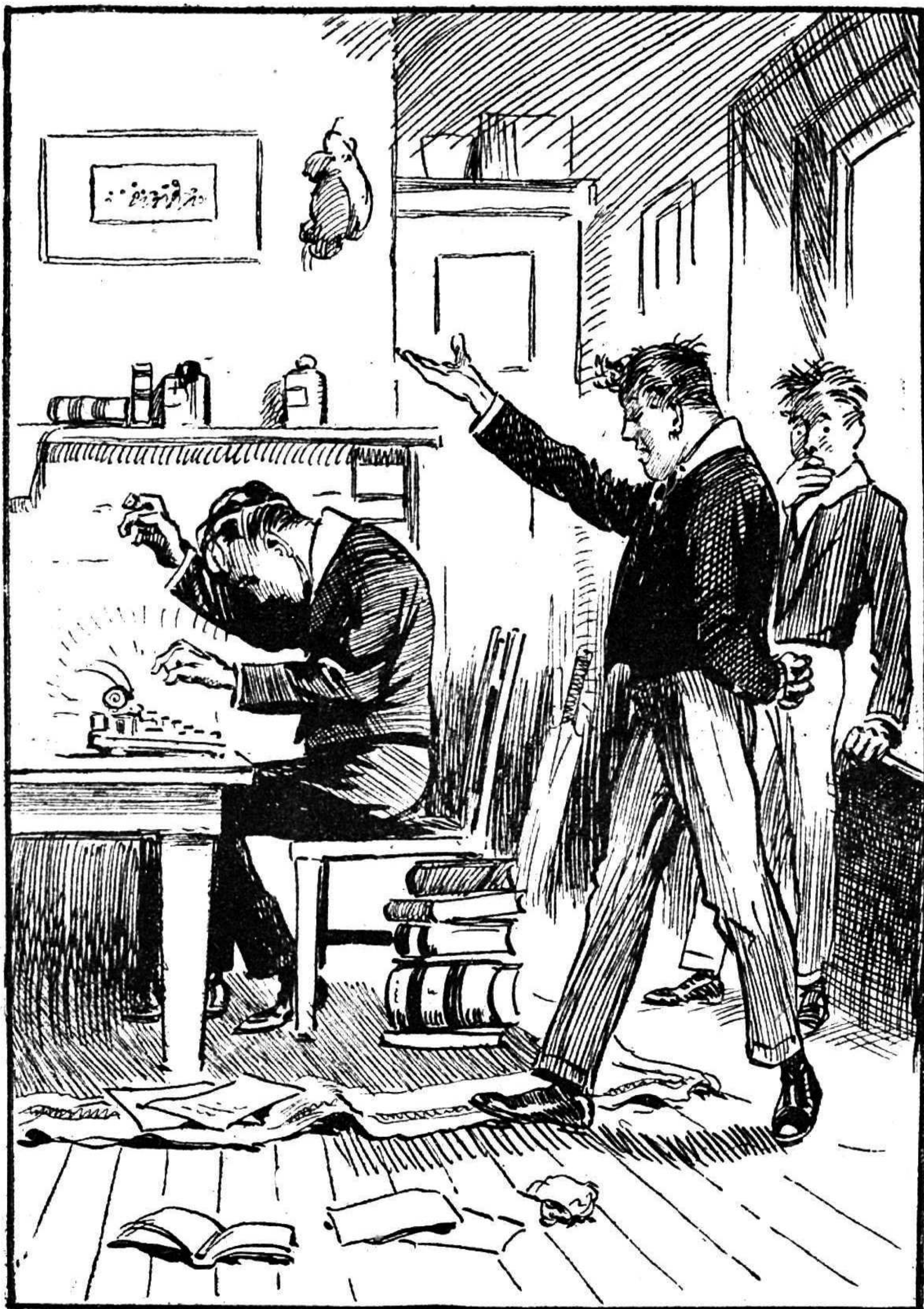


The Return of Jim The Penman !
New Series Begins To-day !



The SCHOOLBOY REPORTERS;
Or, The Haunted Editor.

Don't Miss This Week's Adventures of the Boys of St. Frank's in Fleet Street !



"What is this Fourth Form?" dictated Handforth. "Who are these extraordinary schoolboys who have done such tremendous things? They are the Fourth! The Fighting Fourth! Led by a chap named Handforth —"

THE SCHOOLBOY REPORTERS!



or,
THE
HAUNTED
EDITOR.

A LIVELY SCHOOL STORY
OF THE BOYS OF ST.
FRANK'S AND THEIR AD-
VENTURES IN FLEET
STREET.

Last week you read how the famous Fourth of St. Frank's covered themselves with glory when they salved the Trident, a valuable cargo steamer, from destruction off Shingle Head, near Caistowe. It was a deed that should have made the whole of England ring with loud applause for these brave lads. Yet no mention of their heroism was made in any of the newspaper accounts of the salvage of the Trident, while not many weeks ago a tremendous sensation was made out of an unfortunate tragedy at the school, and St. Frank's was brought to the verge of ruin by mischievous and exaggerated accounts of the affair. Pitt, the Leader of the famous Fourth Form, means to get justice done by the Old School, and how he sets to work to do this will be told in the absorbing story below.

THE EDITOR.

By E. SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

HANDFORTH ON THE JOB.

"DISGRACEFUL!" said Handforth fiercely.

He brought his fist down with a thump on the study table, and Church and McClure looked up in surprise. Their leader was glaring at them ferociously.

"Scandalous!" said Handforth hotly.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Church.

"In fact, it's a downright shame!" said McClure indignantly. "Just when we decide to run down to the village this rain starts. I've never known such rotten weather——"

"Who's talking about the weather?" roared Handforth.

"Eh? I thought you said——"

"I say it's disgraceful!" interrupted the leader of Study D. "But I don't mean the rain—and I don't mean the weather at all! I'm talking about the way we've been treated by the London newspapers."

Both Church and McClure nodded in unison.

"Hear, hear!" said Church. "But there's no need to worry, old man—Reggie Pitt's looking into the matter, and we can trust him to set things right. When Reggie gets really busy, he's a volcano. He simply goes on until he arrives at his destination!"

McClure grinned.

"It's the first time I knew that volcanoes travelled about," he remarked. "Still, we'll

let it pass. Reggie's the chap for the job, so we can feel comfortable."

"And what about me?" demanded Handforth grimly.

Church and McClure didn't quite know what to say. For the moment they had overlooked their own leader—and when Handforth liked he could be rather volcanic on his own account. And he liked very frequently.

The three Fourth Formers were just finishing tea, and Study D in the Ancient House of St. Frank's had been rather quieter than usual. This was because Handforth was in a thoughtful mood. His chums hadn't dared to disturb him. They rather revelled in the unwonted peace, and didn't wish to bring it to an end. They secretly believed that Handforth was exercising his master mind over a new Trackett Grim plot. But apparently this was not the case.

"What about me?" repeated Handforth fiercely.

"Oh, you!" said Church. "Of course! About the newspapers, you mean? Well, Pitt's the Form skipper, you know."

"And he's the man for the job!" agreed McClure. "You can't monkey about with the junior captain, old man—"

"This matter is on a higher plane than junior captains and all ordinary precedent," retorted Handforth curtly. "It calls for action, and I've suddenly had a brain wave. In fact, I've got a great idea. I'm going to become a journalist!"

Church and McClure looked interested.

"Jolly good!" said Church. "You ought to do better as a journalist than as a detective, old son. A detective needs marvellous ability to succeed—but a journalist doesn't want anything but a pencil and a note-book. Any fathead can be a journalist."

"Hear, hear!" agreed McClure.

Handforth failed to notice the sarcasm.

"Piffle!" he said impatiently. "A journalist needs more brains than a detective—that's why I've come to this decision! Besides, I can be both! My idea is to write a full report of what happened, and then force the London newspapers to print it. In that way justice will be done, and St. Frank's will hold up its head with pride."

"And that's your idea?" asked Church mildly.

"Yes!"

"Well, I'm glad you've told me," said Church.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing! Only— Well—"

"Only what?"

"Pitt was saying something about writing up a report," remarked Church carelessly. "He also said that he was going to force the London newspapers to print it. And I believe he mentioned something about justice being done to St. Frank's. A mere coincidence, of course."

"Oh, rather!" agreed McClure promptly.

Handforth frowned.

"Blow Pitt—and blow his giddy report!" he exclaimed. "This one of mine is going to be different—it's going to be like no other report in the whole history of journalism!"

"I believe it!" declared Church.

"It'll be unearthly!" said McClure, shaking his head. "I—I mean, it'll be so fine that it'll cause an unearthly stir!"

Handforth waved his hand, and rose to his feet. He paced the study once or twice, cleared his throat, and coughed.

"This is too important to be written!" he exclaimed. "In fact, I can't be bothered. As I dictate, you chaps take it down. All the best authors dictate their work."

"But journalists aren't authors," argued McClure. "And reporters aren't even journalists. They've got notebooks and write their stuff down in shorthand. Might as well do it properly, Handy."

"I can't write shorthand, you duffer!" roared Handforth.

"That's nothing—you can learn."

"Learn!" howled Handforth. "And the Press is absolutely waiting for my copy! Get some paper and pencils, and don't argue! I'm bursting to begin! Now then—ready? Good!"

Church and McClure exchanged hopeless glances, and pulled out their pencils. It was quite obvious that Edward Oswald Handforth was in one of his most determined moods.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT JOURNALIST.



"FIRST of all, I'll go into a few details about the scandal," said Handforth.

"I'll point out the injustice of the whole beastly affair. Then I'll explain how marvellously the Fourth battled against fearful odds, and won the day!"

"All right—got that!" said Church desperately. "But don't go quite so fast—"

"You lunatic!" roared Handforth. "I haven't started yet!"

"But I've written it all down!" snapped Church. "What's the good of messing about like this? First you tell us to begin, and then you say you haven't started!"

"Dry up!" commanded Handforth firmly. "I can't be bothered with your interruptions. Now then—begin! Ladies and gentlemen, I—er—"

"It isn't a speech, you chump!" interrupted McClure.

"Great pip! I'd forgotten that!" gasped Handforth. "Oh, all right—begin again! St. Frank's is the finest school in the world! St. Frank's has been libelled! Is it fair that everybody should be saying rotten things about St. Frank's? No, it isn't!"

St. Frank's is the finest school under the sun! Got that?"

"Is that the beginning?" asked Church, licking his pencil.

"Yes, you ass!"

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to mention St. Frank's?" asked Church casually.

"If you're trying to be sarcastic, Walter Church, I'll biff you through the window, and refuse to let you come back into this study!" roared Handforth. "Where was I? Lemme see!"

"I think you were talking about St. Frank's," said McClure.

"Oh, yes—that's right!" agreed Handforth. "Weeks ago some awful cads held a boozing party, and poor old Wallace of the Fifth pegged out. And just because of that all the London papers printed the story, and St. Frank's got a bad name."

"My hat! That's ancient history!" said Church impatiently.

"Don't interrupt—keep on writing!" ordered Handforth gruffly.

Church started, and scribbled with frantic haste. He hadn't realised that he was supposed to be taking it all down. He wrote from memory, and the result was rather painful.

"St. Frank's has been humbled in the dust!" continued Handforth, pacing up and down. "Not only humbled in the dust, but absolutely ground down and trodden on! Hundreds of chaps have left the school——"

"Not hundreds!" interrupted McClure.

"Hundreds!" repeated Handforth firmly. "This is a newspaper report, don't forget! Journalists are never accurate in their figures! Hundreds of chaps have left St. Frank's, dragged away by their parents because the school is supposed to be rotten to the core! And at the end of this term the famous old pile is to be closed up! Unless the school regains its name the disaster will be absolute——"

"Here, steady!" gasped Church. "We can't write at that rate!"

"Haven't you got it all down?" demanded Handforth.

"About a quarter of it," said McClure.

"A quarter!" hooted Handforth. "All my lovely dictation wasted! You rotters! You incompetent fatheads!"

"We're not typewriters!" snapped Church tartly.

"Hold on!" said Handforth, coming to a halt. "By George! I've just got an idea! A typewriter! Chambers has got one—and he's out this afternoon! Buzz along to his study and borrow that machine!"

"What for?" asked Church.

"I'll dictate my stuff straight on to the typewriter," said Handforth triumphantly. "That's what real authors do! They can't be bothered with writing—they dictate their work and have it typewritten all in one go! Go and fetch that machine in here!"

Church opened his mouth to speak, and

then closed it again. He looked at Handforth, and he looked at McClure. There was an expression of dawning hope in his eyes.

"You want me to use that typewriter?" he asked firmly.

"Yes, fathead!"

"In fact, you insist?"

"I insist!" repeated Handforth magisterially.

Church didn't say another word. Instead, he dodged out of the study, and returned after a short absence carrying a small portable typewriter. Fortunately, he had found Chambers' study empty, and it had therefore been a simple matter to borrow the machine.

"Good!" said Handforth briskly. "Now we look like business! I've got all my thoughts in tune! We'll start right away! St. Frank's has proved itself to be a school to be proud of! The Fourth Form, in particular, has covered itself with glory——"

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to put a piece of paper in the typewriter?" interrupted McClure, as Church started rattling away. "I believe it's generally done!"

"My goodness! I forgot!" gasped Church.

He put some paper in the machine, and Handforth continued—being hardly aware of the brief interruption.

"What is this Fourth Form?" he dictated. "Who are these extraordinary schoolboys who have done such tremendous things? They are the Fourth! The Fighting Fourth! Led by a chap named Handforth——"

"That won't do!" interrupted Church. "Pitt's the captain—so he's the leader. Besides, it sounds swanky."

"Are you calling me a swanker?" roared Edward Oswald.

"Nunno! I was only just pointing out——"

"Well, perhaps it does sound a bit like bragging," admitted Handforth thoughtfully. "We'll alter it. Led by a chap named Reggie Pitt, the Fourth has done astounding things. Guided by Handforth, Pitt led the Fourth into thrilling perils and dangers. The famous liner, Trident, went aground off Shingle Head, on the cruel Sussex coast——"

"Hold on!" interrupted McClure.

Church ceased typewriting abruptly. At least, he ceased jabbing at the keys, and the machine became silent. Handforth paused in his stride, and frowned.

"What's wrong now?" he demanded.

"In the first place, the Trident isn't a liner at all—she's a cargo boat," said McClure. "And she isn't famous, either. Although this is being prepared for the Press, it's necessary to have a slight resemblance to the truth, you know."

"A slight resemblance?" repeated Handforth. "This report is true in every detail! Don't take any notice of this ass, Church! Carry on!"

And Church carried on.

But he had an idea that when Handforth saw the full result, Edward Oswald would carry on in quite a different manner!

CHAPTER III.

NOT QUITE A SUCCESS.



"WHAT did the Fourth Form do on that famous Sunday afternoon?" demanded Handforth fiercely. "What, I repeat, did they do?"

"Are you asking a riddle?" said Church.

"You babbling idiot! I'm dictating!" roared Handforth.

"Oh, sorry!" gasped Church. "All right—I've got it!"

He gave a few jabs at the typewriter, and Handforth seemed satisfied.

"The steamer Trident went aground, and was abandoned by her drunken captain!" said Handforth dramatically. "In spite of the rough sea, and the deadly dangers, the Fourth Form of St. Frank's went on board, and acted like heroes! These boys, unaccustomed to heavy work, turned themselves into stokers and sailors. They pumped the water out of the ship, and stoked the fires! And the proud vessel was safely brought into harbour! And this was done by the boys who are supposed to be cads and rotters! Was ever such injustice known in the whole history of the world? Isn't it right that these chaps should get the credit for their marvellous courage? Got all that?"

"I heard every word!" said Church truthfully.

"Good! There's nothing like a typewriter!" said Handforth approvingly. "This ship was saved by the Fourth! But for the efforts of the Fourth, the vessel would now have been a total wreck. And I demand that the full truth shall be printed far and wide, and the whole story broadcast throughout the land. St. Frank's is the best school in the world—and this proves it! The juniors, at least, are absolutely marvellous! It's up to the whole country to rally round, and to back the school up through thick and thin. In other words, we've got to keep the flag flying and lift St. Frank's out of the mass of mire in which she is at present smothered. I conclude by repeating that no other school in the universe can hold a candle to St. Frank's."

Handforth beamed as he finished. He considered his dictation to be rather good. Church and McClure, who had heard it all, vaguely wondered how on earth their leader could give voice to such drivel. In the main, the story was true, but Handforth had scarcely made the most of it. Not that this matters much—for Church and his typewriter had made nothing of it at all.

The Fourth had only just recovered from the effects of its terrible ordeal. It was

Tuesday now, and during the whole of Monday the juniors had remained in a Caistowe hotel, recovering from the effects of their labours.

Handforth had not exaggerated.

The entire Form had taken part in this great feat—the juniors had saved the big steamer from certain destruction. With only one man—the vessel's chief engineer—to lead them, the fellows had brought the Trident safely into port, and there would be an enormous sum in salvage.

The fellows had been fired to an extraordinary effort by the thought of this money. But there had been nothing greedy or grasping about their behaviour. The money was required, not for themselves, but to save the old school.

It had been a noble effort—a fine, glorious piece of work, which clearly proved the Fourth's loyalty to St. Frank's. And the great school was once again honoured and respected by all in the district.

But the country in general knew nothing.

The London papers had been ready enough to print the story of the scandal, some weeks earlier. But now that the boys of St. Frank's had done something worthy of the highest praise, the great dailies did not even mention a word about the affair.

And the Fourth, quite reasonably, was infuriated.

"This is going to wake some of those editors up!" exclaimed Handforth grimly. "This article of mine will state the whole position in a nutshell, and the newspapers will be fighting to get hold of the copy! By the way, we shall need four or five copies of it."

"I don't think so," said Church, shaking his head.

"Don't think so!" snapped Handforth. "You silly ass! I'm going to send one to every newspaper in London. Let's have a look at it, and I'll make a few corrections, and then you can type it all out again."

"Thanks awfully!" said Church.

He edged away from the typewriter rather hastily as Handforth approached. Edward Oswald took the page of paper out of the machine and frowned.

"I thought my article was longer than this!" he exclaimed. "I shall have to lengthen it—add a few details here and there—Why, what the—This—this isn't—"

Words failed him. He had expected to see sheets of neatly typewritten stuff, and instead he gazed upon a fearful mixed-up jumble of characters which were utterly confused.

There was not even a single word on the whole sheet—nothing but lines of random letters, exclamation marks, commas, quotation marks, and other similar characters.

"What—what's this?" asked Handforth huskily.

"That?" said Church. "It's a piece of paper!"

"Is—is this my article?" demanded Handforth, his voice becoming hoarse.

"Well, it's hardly your article—but I can't help that," said Church indignantly. "You told me to get the typewriter, and to use it—and there you are! I did the best I could!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled McClure.

Handforth reeled back, staggered.

"My article!" he murmured, in a hollow voice. "All my beautiful words—all my lovely sentences! My eloquence—my wonderful description! Gone—lost for ever!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Church and McClure roared with keen appreciation.

ought to thank me! You don't know how hard I worked——"

At this point Church considered that it was necessary to work a little harder still. The way he dodged out of the study was a miracle of agility. Handforth didn't even have time to get across the study.

McClure thought it just as well to stroll off, too—for Handforth was quite capable of meting out drastic punishment to the wrong culprit. He wasn't at all particular over small details like that. For his purpose, McClure would serve just as well as Church!

Handforth's masterpiece of journalism had fallen rather flat!

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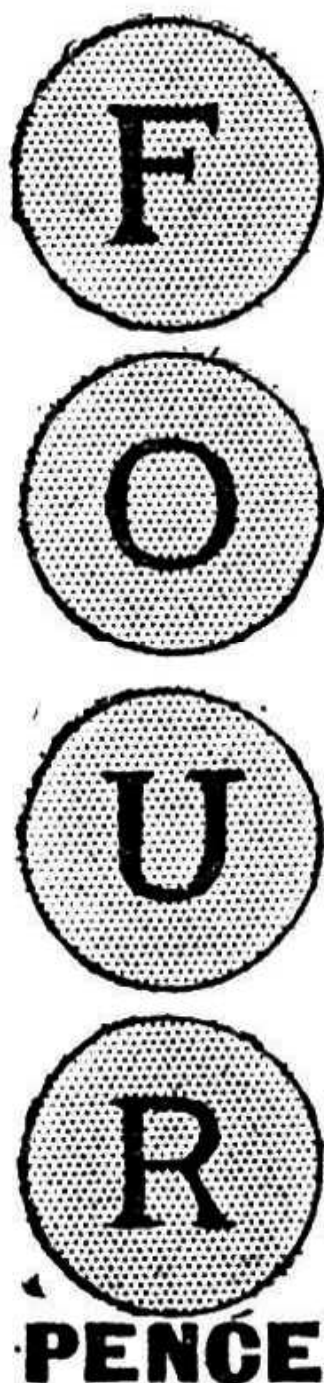
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"You did this deliberately!" hooted Handforth wildly.

"Of course I did!" said Church. "You told me to typewrite, and I simply jabbed away at the first keys I could see! It's not my fault if the result's a bit disappointing! You shouldn't be so unreasonable!"

"Unreasonable!" howled Handforth.

"Yes," said Church. "You know I can't use a typewriter—and if you go and forget things like that, you can't blame me! Goodness knows, I've done the best I can!"

"You—you traitor!" said Handforth feebly.

"I like that!" snorted Church. "You

CHAPTER IV.

THE FORM MEETING.



JACK GREY, of Study E, ran into Church and McClure just as they were turning the corner of the Fourth-form passage.

"Good! The very chaps I wanted to see!" said Grey briskly. "You're wanted, my lads! There's a Form meeting in the Common-room—everybody's got to be there. Skipper's orders."

"Good! We'll buzz off at once!" said Church hastily.

He cast an anxious glance over his shoulder, but the coast was still clear.

Jack Grey gave an understanding nod.

"Trouble with Uncle Edward?" he said sympathetically. "All right—I'll soothe him down a bit. You fellows go along to the Common-room, and I'll send Handy along after you. You'll be safe there—he won't be allowed to kick up a shindy."

Church and McClure hastened off gladly, and Jack Grey went along to Study D, and paused in the half-open doorway. He caught a glimpse of Handforth. The latter was standing in the centre of the room, gazing sadly upon a crumpled sheet of paper in his hand.

"Wasted!" he murmured tragically. "All my efforts thrown away! I shall never get a flow like that again! By George! When I get hold of that rotter, I'll——"

"Bad news from home?" asked Jack, pushing open the door.

Handforth turned, and stared.

"Mind your own business!" he said tartly.

"Oh, sorry! I was only——"

"I'll tell you what you can do!" interrupted Handforth. "Pop down to the post-office, will you? I want you to send a telegram to Church's pater."

"What for?" asked Jack, mystified.

"Tell Church's pater that Church has met with a horrible accident!" said Handforth deliberately. "Say he's smashed all up, and in the sanitorium."

Jack Grey stared.

"But he isn't!" he exclaimed. "I met him two minutes ago in the passage, and he's as sound as I am."

Handforth nodded.

"I know that. But by the time you've sent off the telegram he'll be unrecognisable!" he replied coldly. "It's a good thing I haven't lost my temper—otherwise there'd be an assassination! Go down to the post-office, and send that wire at once!"

Jack Grey grinned.

"I don't think I will!" he replied. "We don't want to give Church senior a scare for nothing. Now I can understand why he was looking so flustered just now. Come along with me, and I'll lead you to him."

Handforth gazed at Jack suspiciously.

"You mean that?" he asked.

"Absolutely—honour bright!"

"Good man—lead the way!" said Handy gruffly.

Jack chuckled inwardly as he walked briskly down the passage towards the Common-room. He didn't think it necessary to explain that the Common-room was so packed that Handforth would have no opportunity of committing his premeditated assault.

"Here we are!" said Jack crisply. "Fact is, old man, there's a Form-meeting—and I've had instructions from the skipper to fetch you along!"

"You—you awful fibber!" roared Hand-

forth. "You told me that Church was here!"

"So he is—over in the corner!" grinned Jack, and they pushed into the Common-room. "But he's got about a dozen chaps round him as a kind of bodyguard, so I shouldn't try any larks if I were you."

"This isn't a lark!" roared Handforth. "It's going to be a tragedy!"

"Sorry, old man—but tragedies are barred!" said Reginald Pitt, coming forward and holding up a warning finger. "This meeting is important—vital. We can't allow any interruptions."

"It's not my fault!" protested Church, pushing forward. "The fathead wrote an article to send to the London papers! He dictated it to me, and I've never heard such awful drivel in all my days!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Handy!" grinned Pitt. "Not content with being a detective, and a famous story-writer, you've got to turn your hand to journalism! You can't excel in everything, old son."

Handforth remained deadly calm.

"Blow detective work—blow story-writing—and blow journalism!" he said curtly. "Just at present I'm a fighter! And by the time I've done with Church he'll be a ruin—he'll think he's been bombarded!"

Reggie Pitt shook his head.

"Only the Huns bombard churches and turn them into ruins," he said solemnly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth vainly attempted to speak, but he couldn't make himself heard. Pitt's sally had put an end to the matter, and Church, for the time being, was saved. Edward Oswald certainly attempted a little strategic flanking movement, but he was seized and held.

"Are we all here?" asked Pitt, looking round. "Good! There's no need for me to go into any details about this meeting. You all know the facts. The London newspapers have let us down."

"Yes, and something's got to be done."

"We won't stand it!"

"Never!"

"My idea exactly," agreed Pitt. "And this meeting has been called for the purpose of coming to a settled, fixed decision. By the time we disperse, the Fourth's plan of action will be cut and dried."

CHAPTER V.

THE BALLOT.



ARCHIE GLEN-THORNE adjusted his famous monocle.

"A dashed snappy speech, laddie!" he said approvingly. "I mean to say, here we are, all to-

gether, and things have got to be done, what? These frightful newspaper chappies

must be bearded in their dens, and all that sort of rot!"

Reggie Pitt looked thoughtful.

"Bearded in their dens!" he muttered. "By Jove! Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings—"

"Oh, I say!" protested Archie. "I mean, I trust you are not referring to me, old cucumber?"

"Beard the editors in their dens," said Pitt. "We don't need to go any further for ideas—that's the very one! I was going to suggest going to London to kick up a fuss, but there's nothing like going to the top. If we can convince the editors, we are safe."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Bob Christine. "It's about time somebody explained. We've been dragged over here from the Modern House, and we can't hear anything—"

"Peace, child—peace!" interrupted Pitt. "There's only one thing to be done—we must send a deputation to London, a committee of Fourth-Formers, who will represent the entire junior school. The task of the committee will be to get the full story of the Trident published in all the papers. In other words, we've got to turn ourselves into reporters."

"Jolly good idea!" said John Busterfield Boots approvingly. "I'll go!"

"So will I!" said Handforth.

"Same here!" agreed Bob Christine.

"It's all frightfully interesting, and so forth, but what about the good old Head?" asked Archie mildly. "I mean to say, don't you think the Head ought to be consulted, or some priceless thing like that?"

"We'll talk about the Head afterwards—when we've fixed everything up," replied Pitt. "First of all, we've got to decide on the committee. You can trust me to get the Head's permission. It may want a bit of wangling, but I'm an optimist!"

And there wasn't a single member of the Fourth who doubted Reggie's word. He was a fellow who inspired confidence by his very coolness and composure. Reggie was always calm and cheerful, and time after time he had proved himself to be thoroughly capable.

"What about this committee?" asked Buster Boots. "It ought to consist of six Modern Fourth chaps, and six Ancient Fourth chaps—"

"A dozen's too many," objected De Valerie.

"Well, I was thinking of eight," said Pitt. "I think eight'll be quite sufficient. And as I'm the junior captain, I think I'm the right fellow to lead the delegation."

"Rather!"

"You're the fellow for the job, Reggie."

"As for the rest of you, there's going to be some trouble," said Pitt. "Naturally, you all want to come, but as we only



Handforth burst open the door and entered the office like a whirlwind.

need seven the matter will need delicate handling."

One glance at the crowds of excited juniors made it clear enough that Pitt was right. Most of the juniors were talking at once, and Handforth's voice boomed out above all the others like a rising gale.

"There's one thing settled, anyhow—I'm booked to go!" he roared. "If any fellow likes to dispute—"

"Wait a minute, old man," interrupted Pitt. "At first I thought about naming the chaps to come with me. It's my privilege to do that, as I'm the captain. But I've thought of a better method, and one that will make it fair for everybody. We'll hold a ballot!"

"Ballot!"

"A draw," explained Reggie.

"Yes; that's fair enough," agreed Cecil De Valerie, nodding. "It's just the same chance for all of us then. But how are we going to manage it?"

The ballot was soon arranged. An exercise book was torn up, and dozens of blank squares of paper were prepared. Seven of them were marked with a cross. There was one piece of paper for every junior in the twin Forms. And then the papers were thrown into a big open vase and the ballot commenced.

One by one the juniors filed by and took out a square of paper. Pitt, being the

leader, naturally did not participate in the draw. Everybody admitted that this was wise. It would have been foolish to risk leaving the captain out, for Pitt was needed.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie, as he glanced at his paper.

"He's drawn a cross!" yelled Alf Brent. "Good old Archie! You're booked for London!"

"Really!" said Archie. "I mean, that was pretty swift, what? I can't absolutely be booked, old lad—we haven't got to the station yet."

There was intense excitement as the draw proceeded.

The next fellow to obtain a crossed paper was Jack Grey, and then Buster Boots. De Valerie was the next lucky one, and at this point there was a slight commotion on account of Handforth. The celebrated leader of Study D had drawn blank, and the expression on his face was well worth looking at. He appeared to be in a daze.

"There's a mistake somewhere!" he gasped. "There's no cross on this piece of paper!"

"Hard luck, old man," said Church sympathetically.

"Clear off! I hate the sight of you!" hooted Handforth. "Look here, Pitt, I'm not going to stand this! If this deputation goes to London without me there'll be nothing done at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The draw went on, and the next two chosen ones were Bob Christine and Len Clapson—both of the Modern House. This left only one delegate on the list, and there was a general yell of indignation when Teddy Long triumphantly waved his paper aloft.

"Got it!" he yelled excitedly. "I'm booked to go!"

Handforth tried to speak but failed. His face went red and mottled, and a curious thick sound came from his throat. Teddy Long, the sneak of the Fourth, was going to London on this all-important mission. And he, the great Edward Oswald Handforth, was left out in the cold!

CHAPTER VI.

A MATTER OF BUSINESS.



TEDDY LONG strutted about with arrogant self-importance.

"Of course, I knew I should be one of the lucky ones!" he said loftily. "I've always fancied myself as a

reporter!"

"You're nosey enough to be anything!" growled Armstrong. "Look here, you rotter, I'll give you a tanner for your chance!

You don't want to go; you'd only be in the way. Come on—sixpence!"

Teddy Long sniffed.

"Keep your mouldy sixpence," he replied. "I'm not for sale! Not for sixpence, anyhow," he added cunningly. "Of course, if somebody likes to make a reasonable offer——"

"Is this allowed?" demanded Church, turning to Pitt.

"Can't very well prevent it," replied Reggie. "There are eight of us chosen, and on the whole I'm jolly satisfied. I've got seven ripping lieutenants—well, six, anyway. If Long likes to sell his place, that's his own concern. The same applies to anybody else; but I don't fancy they're open for business."

"Rather not!" said Buster Boots promptly.

"But what about me?" yelled Handforth. "I'm going—you can't go to London without me; it's impossible! It's out of the question! You're doomed to failure if I don't go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth was very excited. He had taken it for granted that fate would be kind to him, and to find himself left out in the cold was a dreadful shock. But the ballot had been perfectly fair, so Handforth had nothing to grumble at. Not that he didn't grumble.

"Of course, I'm jolly keen on going to London," said Teddy Long casually. "In fact, I don't think I shall sell my place. I've got a right to go, and I'll go!"

"That's it, stick to your guns!" said Hubbard, nodding.

Handforth swallowed hard, and turned to Long.

"I'll give you five bob for your place," he said thickly. "Five bob, my lad! You've got two seconds to decide. If you refuse I'll smash you to pieces——"

"None of that, old man," interrupted Pitt. "Long's got a right to refuse if he wants to. Be a sportsman, you know."

"Five bob!" repeated Handforth. "Hear that, Long? I won't touch you if you refuse. After all, there's not much pleasure in biting a worm. What's your answer?"

Teddy looked at Handforth disdainfully.

"Five bob?" he repeated. "You can jolly well keep it! My place is worth a lot more than that, you chump!"

Teddy was feeling unusually important, and the way in which he expanded was remarkable. Instead of being the usual cringing sneak, he became a very bold fellow indeed.

"Look here," said Armstrong. "I'll make it seven-and-six!"

"Ten bob!" roared Handforth.

"Fifteen!" said Solomon Levi briskly.

"A quid!"

The bidding went up like a rocket, and everybody became intensely interested. None of the fellows had imagined that an impromptu auction was to be held. Teddy Long himself was rather swept off his feet. His brain couldn't quite stand the strain.

"A quid!" he repeated faintly.

"Twenty shillings!" said Fullwood, who had made the offer.

Teddy Long gulped. His pocket-money usually arrived in the shape of sixpences and shillings, with an occasional half-crown. If he ever possessed five shillings it was a kind of field-day for him. The prospect of getting a whole pound at once dazzled him.

"No fear!" he said cunningly. "My place is worth more than a quid!"

He had his wits about him sufficiently to realise that he had a fine chance of making money here. He hadn't met with such a piece of luck for terms. He didn't care a snap about going to London, but he certainly wanted to make some quick money.

"Twenty-five bob!" said Handforth thickly.

He made a swift calculation. It was unusual for him to be short of money, but just at present he possessed no more than fifteen shillings. But he happened to know that Church had received a remittance of two pounds that morning, and the notes were still unchanged. And McClure was good for a few odd shillings, at a pinch. And as the funds of Study D were a common pool, Handforth felt justified in splashing.

"Twenty-five bob!" he repeated.

"Not enough!" said Teddy Long disdainfully.

"You—you greedy, swindling rotter!" roared Handforth. "If you don't accept twenty-five bob I'll drop out altogether! Who wants to go to London, anyhow? Rats to it! I won't go another penny!"

"Thirty shillings!" offered Levi. "My life! It's a lot of money, but I can get it back from my dad when I see him in town."

"Look here, I'm not going to stand this!" snorted Handforth indignantly. "Thirty-five bob, blow you, and nothing more!"

The rest of the juniors were looking on with keen enjoyment. But the auction was at an end. Solomon Levi shrugged his shoulders, and turned away.

"I'm finished!" he declared. "Thirty bob was my top figure."

"Two quid!" said Handforth eagerly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled. Handforth had grown so accustomed to bidding that he raised himself five shillings, and Teddy Long proved himself to be sharp by closing instantly with the offer.

"All right—two quid!" he said promptly. "Done!"

CHAPTER VII.

PUTTING IT BEFORE THE HEAD.



REGINALD PITT chuckled.

"Well, that's settled, thank goodness!" he said. "I'm glad you're coming, Handy—we shall need you. There might be some trouble, and you're always useful when it comes to a scrap."

"They won't play any tricks with me!" said Handforth grimly. "By the time I get into those editorial offices they'll know a thing or two! Church, come here a minute, old man!"

Church appeared from behind half a dozen other juniors. But he made no attempt to advance. He regarded Handforth with extreme caution.

"I say, chuck it, Handy!" he said. "It wasn't my fault about that rotten typewriter—"

"Blow the typewriter!" interrupted Handforth genially. "We'll forget all about it, old son. There's just a little confidential matter I want to discuss with you."

"Confidential?" repeated Church suspiciously.

"Yes—something absolutely private," replied Handforth. "Do you think I want all these chaps to know my business? Lend me that two quid you've got. And don't flash it out openly, or you'll be seen."

Church looked a bit startled, but there was a slight expression of relief in his eyes, too. He understood the reason for Handforth's sudden change. His money was safe enough—it would be returned at the first opportunity. And it was good to know that Handforth was no longer after his skin.

But it was quite pointless to keep up any pretence of privacy after Handforth had shouted his demand across the Common-room. Church produced the money, and Handforth thrust the currency notes into Teddy Long's hand.

"There you are, you swindling rotter!" he said gruffly. "When you go out into the world to earn your living, you'll end up in Dartmoor! You'll come to a nasty finish one of these days!"

"A bit rash, handing that money over now, old man," said Church. "You don't even know that you're going to London yet. You ought to have waited until—"

"Why, you ass, it's all fixed—we've settled it!"

"You may have settled it, but sometimes the Head has a way of unsettling these things," argued Church. "It's quite on the cards that he'll bring the chopper down on the whole scheme. And then I shall be two quid out of pocket, and Teddy Long will be cackling over the joke."

Handforth started.

"Your two quid's safe!" he growled. "I'll pay it back, and if we don't go to London I'll jolly well force this worm to hand back the cash! He doesn't get our money for nothing!"

Teddy Long slithered out of the Common-room hastily. He decided that it would be better to convert the cash into non-transferable securities in the shape of tuck, chocolates, and so forth.

In the meantime, Reggie Pitt was serious again.

"Well, that's one thing settled," he said briskly. "Now we'll go along to the Head and fix everything up. If he agrees, we'll pop off to London by the first train in the morning, and get there bright and early."

The eight juniors forming the delegation decided to march to the Head's house in a body. It would look more impressive to present themselves to Dr. Stafford in this way. Pitt was a fellow who believed in getting things done swiftly, and he lost no time.

Thus, Dr. Malcolm Stafford was astonished, five minutes later, to see eight juniors troop into his study. He had heard a knock, and he had invited the caller to come in, never suspecting such an invasion.

"We're a deputation, sir," explained Pitt firmly.

"Indeed!" said the Head. "I rather suspected something of the kind, my lad. Well, what do you want? And how are you feeling this evening? Plenty of aches and pains, no doubt?"

"Just a few, sir—but nothing to speak of," replied Reggie.

The Head regarded the juniors kindly. Knowing all the facts, he was exceptionally well disposed towards the Fourth. The fellows had proved themselves to be heroes, and they had risked their lives purely for the sake of the old school. So the Head's admiration was natural.

And he was in a pliable mood. Pitt had known this from the first, and had counted upon it. Under ordinary circumstances, he would never have had the nerve to make such a request as this.

"The fact is, sir, we're all very upset about the London papers," said Reggie quietly. "Weeks ago, when poor Wallace died, the big London dailies ran St. Frank's down to the lowest depths. They revelled in the scandal, and gave it huge publicity."

The Head looked rather sad.

"Yes, I am aware of that," he replied. "A sorry business, Pitt—a highly unfortunate affair. But I do not blame the newspapers. The whole incident was disgraceful in the extreme, and we cannot expect to escape the consequences."

"But that's not the point, sir," said Pitt quickly. "Without boasting, I can safely say that the Fourth has proved itself to be true blue. The fellows acted like Trojans, and performed wonders. And yet

the London papers don't say a word. They're willing enough to run us down, and give the school a bad name, but they'll do nothing to repair the damage."

The Head nodded.

"There is something in what you say," he agreed. "It is distressing that the papers should ignore the Fourth's noble and magnificent behaviour of Sunday. I fear the reports were so trivial as to be almost non-existent."

"That's why we want to go to London, sir," said Pitt quietly.

"Good gracious! You want to go to London!"

"Yes, sir—by the first train in the morning," put in Handforth. "We're going to raid these editors, tell them the story about the Trident, and make them print the truth! We want the day off so that we can do it, sir."

"It's only half a day really, sir," said Pitt quickly. "We've got the afternoon, anyhow, to-morrow being Wednesday. Do you think you can grant us leave, sir? We want to put this thing right, and clear the name of the school in the eyes of the whole country."

Dr. Stafford stroked his chin.

"Well, boys, I admire your spirit," he replied simply. "You assure me that you desire to make this trip for no other purpose than to interview the newspaper editors?"

"No other purpose whatever, sir," chorused the juniors.

"Very well, you have my permission," said the Head. "You may regard to-morrow as a whole holiday, and I wish you the best of luck in your enterprise."

CHAPTER VIII.

IN FLEET STREET.



"OFF at last!" said Buster Boots happily.

The train steamed slowly out of the little station at Bellton. It was very early in the morning, and the October day was raw and chill. A mist lay over the countryside, and there were signs that winter would soon be laying its cold grip upon the land.

"Ugh! They ought to warm these giddy carriages!" said Jack Grey, as he buttoned his overcoat. "Well, we're on the way—and I must say the Head's a brick. He agreed to us going without a murmur. No beating about the bush at all."

"That was because he knows we're in earnest," said Pitt. "And don't forget, my lads, we've got to justify this trip by bringing about some good results. All the big papers, to-morrow morning, have got

to come out with glaring headlines about St. Frank's. We're going to Fleet Street to cause a few explosions. That's our programme."

"Leave it to me," said Handforth. "This deputation idea is all very well, but you chaps needn't have come at all. I'm quite capable—Hullo, what the dickens—There's something under this seat!" he added with a gasp.

"Let's hope it's a heater," said Bob Christine. "There ought to be a tap somewhere—"

"It's not a heater at all—it's a body!" panted Handforth.

"Don't you call me a body!" said Willy indignantly, as he appeared from beneath the seat. "Just like you to find me out in the first five minutes, Ted. You were born to be a detective, so it's no good hiding the fact."

Handforth minor, of the Third, rose to his feet and dusted himself down. The eight Fourth-Formers regarded him grimly.

"What's the meaning of this?" demanded his major thickly.

"Oh, don't be dense!" said Willy. "I'm coming!"

"Coming?"

"Going, if you like—I don't care!" said Willy. "What's the good of quibbling over a word? I thought it would be just as well to keep my eye on you chaps, in case you get into trouble."

"You cheeky young beggar!" roared Boots. "We don't want any Third Form kids with us!"

"Sorry—you've got me, and you'll have to stick it now!" said Handforth minor cheerfully. "Of course, you can chuck me out of the window if you like, but I don't think you'll be so hard and cruel as all that. Anybody got any chocolates or biscuits or something? I sneaked out without any breakfast, and I'm half-starved!"

"But—but you didn't get permission to come!" roared Handforth.

"My hat! I know that," sighed Willy. "But why should I bother about permission? The fact is, I couldn't bear to think of being parted from my loving brother! The very thought brought tears to my eyes, and I had to obey the summons. Blood is thicker than water."

Reggie Pitt chuckled.

"You're a young beggar, but it's no good scalping you now," he said. "You'd better come along with us, and we'll try and get you excused when we arrive back. But it's like your nerve to count yourself as one of us."

Willy took everything in quite a matter of fact way. He had decided to come—and there was an end of it. His major was the only fellow who really objected. But it made no difference. Willy was the most tenacious fellow in the Third, and he had a cool way with him that nobody could quite

stand up against. Reggie Pitt realised that Willy's presence might, indeed, be a great asset.

Pitt had all his plans made out. To begin with, the deputation would invade the offices of the "Daily Sun," the biggest, and most important, of all the London morning journals. With a circulation mounting to millions, the "Daily Sun" was enormously powerful. Moreover, it was the paper that had made such sensational copy out of the St. Frank's scandal, and which had made no report whatever of the recent noble doings.

"We can't make many plans beforehand," said Reggie. "We'll try to see the editor, and once we've got him we shall be able to talk him round. No violent methods, remember, unless everything else fails."

Handforth grunted.

"The best way is to use violent methods to start with, and make certain of everything," he said gruffly. "My idea is to grab the editor, and duck him in the nearest pond!"

"Of course, Fleet Street's full of ponds, isn't it?" said Christine sarcastically. "And even supposing it was I can't quite see the editor publishing the article we want after we've given him a ducking. We've got to give a good impression. It'll be fatal if we do anything rowdy, and get a lot of bad publicity."

The juniors continued the discussion, and the journey to London was soon over. It was still comparatively early when Victoria was reached. Willy suggested a visit to the buffet, and the rest of the fellows were by no means averse to a cup of coffee and a sandwich.

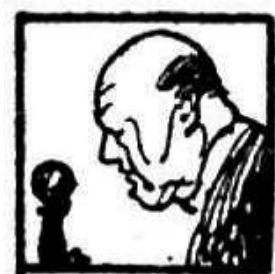
After that, Archie Glenthorne insisted upon chartering a couple of taxicabs. As he pointed out, it was just as well to do the thing in style. Besides, it wasn't half as much lag as bothering about with 'buses.

So the St. Frank's party travelled city-wards by taxi, and at last Fleet Street was reached. And the deputation found itself tumbling out of the taxicabs before the vast, imposing building which was the home of "The Daily Sun."

The schoolboy reporters had arrived!

CHAPTER IX.

NOTHING DOING!



FLEET STREET was humming with activity

The traffic was continuous, and at this busy hour in the middle of the morning the pavements were thronged with people, all bent upon hurried missions, judging by the way they moved swiftly to and fro.

Nobody took any particular notice of the

schoolboys as they collected on the pavement, preparatory to invading the "Daily Sun" office. It was a little unusual to see youngsters in Etons and school caps, but Fleet Street is too matter of fact to take much notice of such a circumstance.

"Remember, we've got to remain seated and well-behaved," said Reggie Pitt warningly. "And leave all the talking to me."

"All right—go ahead," said Boots briskly.

"The chap we want to see is Mr. Stephen Cross," went on Reggie. "He's the managing editor, and the big noise of this show. It's no good seeing anybody of lesser importance. Once we've got Mr. Cross, we'll put it to him straight from the shoulder."

"Good egg!" said Handforth heartily. "Biff him, you mean?"

"No, I don't mean biff him, you dangerous ass!"

"But you said straight from the shoulder—"

"Not in that way, fathead!" interrupted Pitt. "If we start any biffing we shall ruin everything."

Handforth growled, and they all marched into the big, imposing outer office of "The Daily Sun." One or two clerks looked up in surprise as the schoolboys crowded in. And a polite, middle-aged gentleman stepped forward and inquired their business.

"We want to see Mr. Cross, please," said Pitt firmly. "Mr. Stephen Cross—the managing editor."

The polite gentleman raised his eyebrows.

"You have, I presume, an appointment?" he asked.

"Well, no—not exactly."

"Ah, then I'm afraid there will be a little difficulty," said the other. "However, if you will give me your names, I will have them sent to Mr. Cross's office, and perhaps he will see you. Will you please accompany me into this waiting-room?"

The juniors, highly hopeful, passed into a comfortable, spacious waiting-room, and the door was closed upon them. They had the apartment to themselves, and they looked at one another.

"Looks pretty good," said Buster Boots. "Of course, we shall probably be kept waiting a bit. These big pots are so jolly independent—they don't care how much time they waste, as long as it isn't their own. But I expect Mr. Cross is a busy man."

"Busy isn't the word," said Pitt. "He's the editor-in-chief, and if we can only get his ear we shall click. We've got to deliver a full report of what happened on Sunday and make it into a thrilling story. That's what these newspapers want—something big."

The door opened, and a young man in his shirt-sleeves appeared. He looked at the juniors questioningly.

"What's the joke?" he asked.

"There's no joke," replied Pitt. "We want to see Mr. Cross—"

"You wouldn't care to see the proprietor himself?" interrupted the young man in shirt-sleeves, with heavy sarcasm. "Mr. Cross has sent me down to ask what you want. Do you think he's got time to waste on a parcel of schoolboys?"

Handforth didn't like the young man's tone.

"Won't the editor see us personally?" he asked grimly.

"No, he won't—and it's like your nerve to expect it," retorted the other.

"You seem to have got hold of it wrong," said Pitt. "There's nothing nervy about our visit—we've just come here to get justice. And we want to see Mr. Cross himself. We shan't speak to you about our business—because you wouldn't be able to help us. Do you mind taking a note to Mr. Cross?"

The young man frowned.

"I'll take a note, but I can give you my word you'll be disappointed," he replied curtly. "What's all the mystery about? This paper hasn't got time to waste on schoolboys! Besides, you're from St. Frank's, aren't you? It's a wonder you youngsters have got the face to show yourselves in London at all."

Reggie Pitt flushed.

"So you remember that scandal?" he asked quietly. "Well, we've come— But it's no good discussing the matter with you. Please take this note."

He quickly scribbled a few lines, folded the paper, and handed it to the messenger. The young man departed with a bad grace, and the juniors looked at one another uncertainly.

"Not so hopeful now," said Bob Christine. "What did you write?"

"Nothing much—just asked him to see us personally, on a matter of vital importance," replied Pitt. "I added that we've got a wonderful newspaper story—and that ought to help a bit."

But it didn't.

The young man in the shirt-sleeves returned a minute or two later, and the expression on his face told its own story. He was looking impatient and important.

"Mr. Cross has sent word that he can't possibly see you under any circumstances," said the young man grimly. "As for that story of yours, it's not required. Mr. Cross has instructed me to show you off the premises."

The juniors exchanged startled glances again.

"But look here, that's not fair!" protested Pitt. "If we can't see Mr. Cross, we'll see one of the other editors. We're not leaving this place until we've—"

"Confound your cheek!" snapped the other. "You're leaving now! You won't see anybody else, and I can tell you so flatly! I'm just about fed up with your sauce! Clear out, the whole gang of you!"

CHAPTER X.

TRYING IT ON.



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH clenched his fists.

"Who the dickens are you?" he roared. "I'll bet you're nothing but a junior clerk! You've got no right to order us out of the building! We're going to see Mr. Cross, or there'll be trouble!"

"There'll be trouble without you seeing Mr. Cross!" retorted the young man. "I'll give you just two minutes to make yourself scarce. You infernal young scamps! Clear out of here!"

The young man was unnecessarily violent—and perhaps this was because Handforth had hit the nail on the head by describing him as a junior clerk. The young fellow had certainly exceeded his order in an unwarrantable manner.

"Clear out, eh?" roared Handforth. "I'm going to see Mr. Cross!"

He made for the door, and the clerk grabbed at him. Pitt and the other juniors looked on without moving. Even Reggie was beginning to think that nothing but violent methods would succeed.

"Look here, you'd better not—" began the clerk.

Crash!

Handforth, completely out of temper, delivered one of his famous biffs, and the young man in the shirt-sleeves sat on the floor with considerable swiftness. Handforth charged out of the waiting-room, and made a bee-line for the big staircase. Before anybody could stop him, he was half-way up, and he fairly leapt into the wide corridor at the top.

A double array of glass-topped doors confronted him, and one at the end immediately caught his eye. Painted upon it were the words "Managing Editor." Handforth gave a yell, and rushed along the corridor and burst open the door. He entered the office like a whirlwind.

It was a big room, well furnished, but untidy. Papers were littered about on the big desk, and in a comfortable swivel chair sat a large-sized gentleman with a semi-bald head.

He was middle-aged, and under ordinary circumstances he would probably have been very jovial-looking. But at the moment he was too surprised to look jovial. He gazed at Handforth in amazement.

"Are you Mr. Stephen Cross?" demanded the junior breathlessly.

"Yes, I am!" retorted the other. "But what in the name of— Confound it, boy, are you one of those St. Frank's youngsters?"

"You sent some fathead down to say that you couldn't see us!" snorted Handforth. "So I've come along to show you that we're not going to be treated like that! You've

done St. Frank's enough harm—and now you've got to set things straight."

"You infernal young rogue!" exclaimed Mr. Cross furiously. "Get out of this room at once! Here, Robinson! Jenkins-Smith! Take this young fool and throw him out!"

Mr. Cross was enraged. And two or three of his subordinates came from the other end of the room, decidedly flustered, and they advanced upon the junior. The managing editor was in no mood to be argued with.

"Out with him—straight into the street!" he snapped. "I'll teach these young idiots to force their way upon me like this!"

"Stand back—don't you touch me!" yelled Handforth. "I've come here to tell you the truth about St. Frank's! There are eight of us—"

"Better get out quietly, young fellow," interrupted one of the others.

Handforth was seized, but he wrenched himself free.

Biff! Crash! Slam!

He let fly with deadly effect. One after another the managing editor's subordinates felt the weight of Handforth's famous right. They staggered back, gasping with surprise and pain. Even Mr. Cross himself was at a loss.

An incident of this sort was unprecedented in the offices of "The Daily Sun." The place was already in an uproar. Clerks, reporters, and other gentlemen were crowding out in the corridor, wondering what all the commotion was about.

"Shall—shall I fetch the police, sir?" gasped one of the victims.

"No, certainly not!" snapped Mr. Cross. "Take that boy, and throw him outside! Good heavens! You're not afraid of a schoolboy, are you?"

Thus taunted, the office staff turned upon Handforth, and seized him. He tried to fight, but the odds were too great. And he was propelled swiftly through the doorway, along the corridor, and down the stairs.

The other juniors were in the big lobby, and they saw Handforth's swift descent with consternation. Reggie Pitt was startled. This was the very thing he had wished to avoid more than anything else.

"My hat! Now we've put the lid on it!" he muttered. "Mr. Cross wouldn't see us now, if we begged on our hands and knees! Oh, Handy, haven't you got any sense at all?"

Handforth was taken straight across the lobby, and propelled outside. And while this little affair was going on, Willy boldly marched upstairs, and took his bearings. He had thoughtfully removed his school cap and buttoned up his overcoat, so that his Etons were hidden.

Rap-rap! Rap-rap!

He knocked loudly and urgently upon Mr. Cross's door, and walked in. The managing editor was just sitting at his desk again, still bubbling with anger.

"Mr. Cross?" said Willy briskly. "Shan't keep you a minute, sir—you've got a kind, nice face, and I know you won't be cruel. Don't take any notice of my major—he's a bit touched, you know."

Mr. Stephen Cross regarded Handforth minor fiercely.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"Well, before you go into any details, I'd like to explain that I'm here on a peaceful mission," replied Willy calmly. "I'm afraid there's a bit of a misunderstanding, Mr. Cross. I'm the son of Sir Edward Handforth, M.P., and I want you to——"

"I don't care if you're the son of the Caliph of Baghdad!" interrupted the Editor curtly. "You're one of those infernal St. Frank's boys—and you'll get out of this office within ten seconds, or I'll——"

"Wait a minute—keep your hair on!" interrupted Willy. "I mean—— Sorry, sir—I didn't quite notice——"

Willy broke off with a cough. He realised that he had put his foot in it. Mr. Cross was nearly bald, and for anybody to urge him to keep his hair on was an unhappy injunction.

"Only a figure of speech, sir," said Willy hastily. "The fact is, we've been libelled; and it's up to you to wipe out the stain, and make amends. If you'll give me just five minutes, I'll convince you that St. Frank's is the finest school in the kingdom."

Mr. Cross sat back in his chair, and stared.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he ejaculated helplessly.

CHAPTER XI.

NO LUCK.



"FIVE minutes!" repeated Handforth minor. "In fact, I think I could do it in four. All you've got to do is to sit there and listen. I rather like you, sir—you seem to be a decent sort."

Mr. Cross nearly exploded.

"Get out of this office!" he burst out volcanically.

"Certainly—in four minutes!" said Willy. "I don't want to be a bother, sir, but this is a matter that needs attention. The whole thing cries out for justice. We St. Frank's chaps feel a bit hurt, you know. The 'Daily Sun' was the worst offender over that scandal. I mean, your paper told the most frightful stories about us; and I'm here to set things right."

"Oh, you are?" said Mr. Cross thickly.

"Naturally, it's a misunderstanding—and, being a fair minded man, you'll give me a hearing," went on Willy calmly. "All I want you to do is to—— Oh, well, perhaps I'd better leave it for the moment."

Out of the corner of his eye he had observed the advance of several grim-looking journalistic gentlemen, and Mr. Cross himself was now on his feet. His expression was by no means friendly.

"Yes," said Willy calmly, "I think I'd better postpone the interview. But one last word, sir——"

"Throw this young rascal outside!" thundered the editor.

"One last word, sir," repeated Willy hurriedly. "In fact, it's a warning. Unless you give me a hearing now, we'll make your life a misery."

"Get out of here!" roared Mr. Cross.

Willy got out—performing several strategic movements which completely foiled his would-be captors. None of them knew exactly how he executed the movements. Willy had seemed to be in their grasp, and yet the next second he had vanished.

And while Mr. Cross' staff were looking for him in the upper corridor, the fag was breathlessly joining his companions outside. Handforth was just recovering from his indignation.

"It's no good," panted Willy. "I've had a shot at the rotter, but he's pig-headed. I spoke to him as sweetly as a dove, yet he wouldn't listen. There's no pleasing some people!"

Reggie Pitt grasped Willy's arm.

"What have you been doing, you young sweep?" he demanded.

"Nothing—I didn't have a chance!" replied the fag. "I tried to make Mr. Cross good-tempered, but he only got angry. I think he's a decent chap, but we've been rubbing him the wrong way."

The juniors wandered off, until they were at a safe distance from the "Daily Sun" office. They were disappointed. They were just beginning to realise that it isn't such a simple matter to gain an interview with a managing-editor. And it was quite useless to place their story before any lesser individual.

Mr. Cross was the one man they had wanted to please, for he was the editor of the biggest of all the dailies. And it seemed quite evident that he was lost to them for ever. After what had happened, he had no use for St. Frank's or anybody belonging to it.

"Well, it's no good standing still," said Pitt briskly. "We're here to wake up the newspapers, and we've got to do it. But it's a big proposition. We're labouring under a terrific handicap."

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie Glenthorne. "I mean to say, I feel somewhat slighted,

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dear old warrior. These editor chappies regard us as small fry. Just schoolboys, what? And the bounders won't even cast a glance at us, or allow the old vocal chords to get busy."

"That's just it!" agreed Pitt. "If I could get my pater to interview some of these editors, it would be a different thing—"

"Or my pater!" said Handforth eagerly.

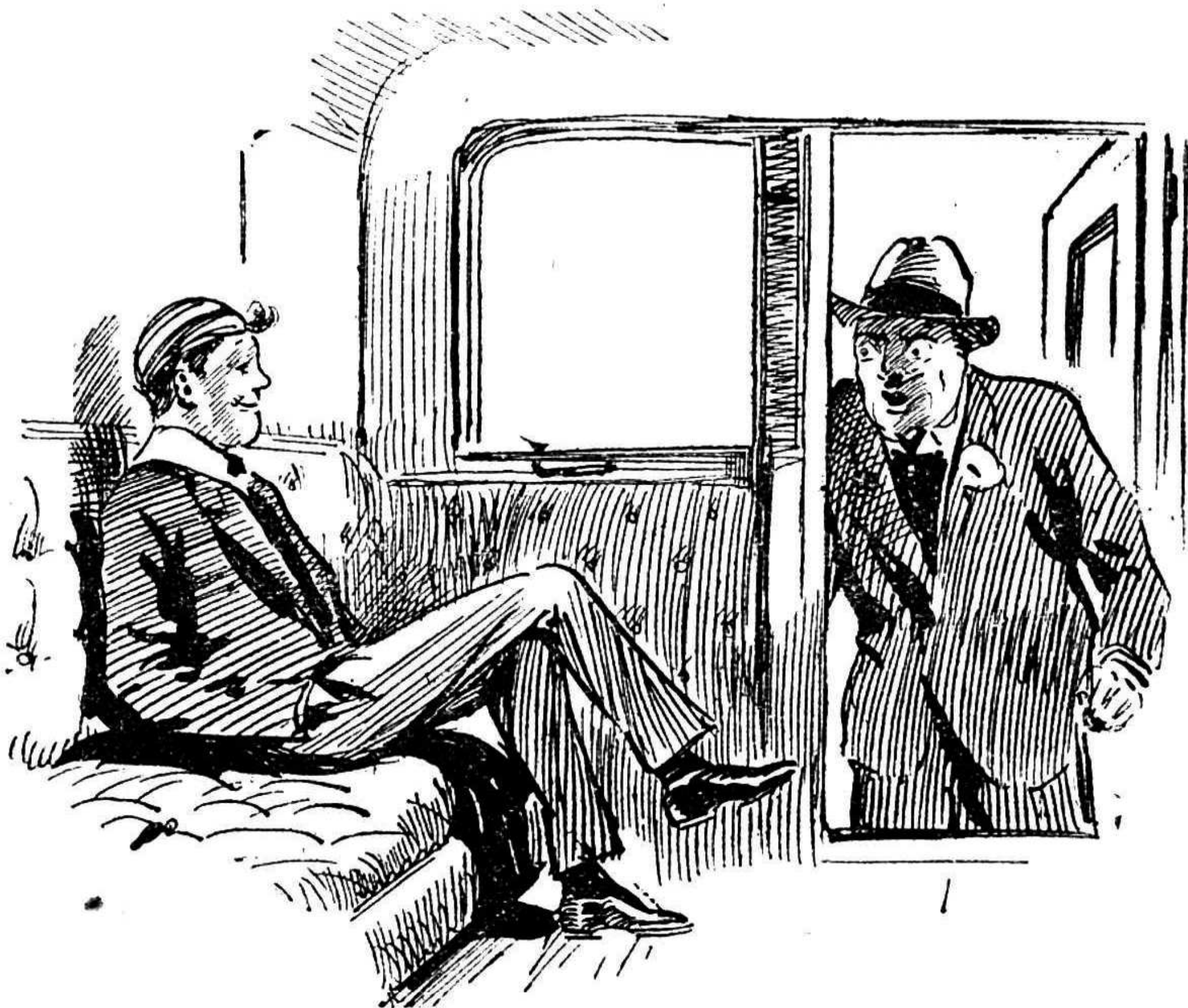
"Nothing doing!" said Pitt, shaking his head. "We're not going to admit ourselves beaten, my son. We've come to

so forth, and somewhere to go—but the dashed beggars won't see us!"

"We've only just started," said Pitt. "We'll divide ourselves up into four parties, and meet later, at a fixed time, and at a fixed place. We'll go to four of the other newspapers and try our luck."

"That's the idea," said Bob Christine.

And so the party was divided. And the juniors went off, searching for other newspaper offices. They felt certain that they would meet with success in two or three of them at least. They had justice on their



He opened the door of the car, and Willy Handforth was calmly sitting back among the cushions.

London on this job, and we'll carry it through ourselves—or fail. We're not dragging in any of our parents."

"Good man!" agreed Buster Boots heartily. "This is a Fourth Form affair, and we'll stick it. Is the Fourth Form downhearted?"

"Never!"

"This is a Fourth Form affair, but here we are, absolutely stranded," said Archie wisely. "I mean, all dressed up, and

side—their cause was an honest one, and they only wanted the truth to be told.

St. Frank's had, indeed, been grossly libelled by the London papers. There had been a scandal, but it had been a mere trivial affair compared with the highly-coloured story that the papers had printed. And now that the Fourth had covered itself so completely with glory, it was felt that the newspapers should make amends.

But the schoolboy reporters met with no luck.

The handicap they suffered from was enormous. The men of Fleet Street were too busy to grant interviews to mere junior schoolboys. It was the same at every office. Under no circumstances could the fellows get beyond the barrier of the outer office.

It was impossible to penetrate into the inner recesses of the editor's sanctum. And everywhere they were treated the same—with scant attention, and indifferent interest.

An hour was spent in this quest—a heart-breaking, agonising period. The fellows had come to London so full of hope and enthusiasm; but this enthusiasm was being smothered and killed.

By the time they joined forces once more and made their various reports, the Fourth Form deputation was gloomy and miserable. They had drawn blank. They could get nobody to listen to their story.

And the situation appeared to be hopeless.

CHAPTER XII.

WILLY'S BRAINWAVE.



REGINALD PITT glanced at his watch. "Lunch-time," he announced. "What about some grub?"

"Grub?" repeated Handforth bitterly. "Who wants

grub at a time like this? I couldn't eat a scrap of food! I'm choked up to the neck with disappointment and rage. I hate the sight of food!"

"All the same, we'd better pop into a restaurant, and have a bite or two," said Pitt. "We can discuss the situation, too, and decide what to do next. Can't stand here in the street."

"Kindly allow me to do the good old honours," said Archie gracefully. "The Troc., what? Or the jolly old Carlton? My pater's a member of a lot of clubs, and we might be able to dash in—"

"Lyons!" interrupted Pitt firmly. "Or the A.B.C. We're here on business, and not on pleasure. We'll pop into the nearest tea-shop, and have a snack."

Handforth growled, but the rest of the fellows were determined. They were in the neighbourhood of Ludgate Circus, and a tea-shop was soon located. The rush hour for lunch had not yet commenced, and so the juniors were able to collect together in a bunch at three tables in a corner.

"Oh, well—might as well have a bite, I suppose," said Handforth grudgingly. "But I don't want much—I'm full up. Where's the menu? I shan't need more than eggs and bacon, and a cup of coffee, and a rump steak and potatoes, and some pudding to finish with."

Pitt grinned.

"And you didn't want to come in!" he chuckled. "The fact is, Handy, we're all a bit fed-up. After we've had a feed we shall be more cheerful, and perhaps we can think of some plan of action."

Accordingly, for the next twenty minutes the juniors were busy. And Reggie's statement proved to be correct. The food made the party more cheerful, and their worries seemed less acute.

"As far as I can see, there's only one thing to be done," said Handforth. "We'll write out a full report of the Trident affair, and get it printed! We'll publish the giddy thing ourselves."

Willy gazed at his major pityingly.

"Is that what you call an idea?" he asked, in a sad voice.

"You cheeky young rotter! It's the only thing to be done!" retorted Edward Oswald. "We'll start a newspaper of our own—we'll have thousands of copies printed, and we'll give them away—"

"I'm afraid you've overlooked one or two small details, my son," interrupted Pitt. "In the first place, it'll take days to have a thing like that printed—and it'll cost a small fortune. And if we give the things away nobody will read 'em; and at the very best we couldn't distribute more than ten thousand. We might as well do nothing."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Boots. "The one paper for us is the 'Daily Sun.' It's got a circulation of millions, and goes all over the country. What's the good of us distributing a few thousand handbills?"

Handforth grunted.

"If you've got a better idea, suggest it!" he snapped tartly.

"There's only one thing to be done," said Willy thoughtfully. "We've got to concentrate on Mr. Cross. He's our man—and we've got to wear him down!"

"Wear him down?" repeated Pitt.

"That's the idea," said Willy coolly. "It's simple. We'll put the rotter through a kind of torture. We'll haunt him. And sooner or later he's bound to knuckle under and give us a hearing."

Pitt looked thoughtful.

"By Jove, there's something in that!" he said slowly. "I'm not sure it isn't a brain-wave."

"All we have to do is to place ourselves near the 'Daily Sun' office," explained Willy. "We'll be like detectives shadowing a suspected crook. And whenever Mr. Cross appears, we'll surround him, and make his life a burden. We'll follow him home, and keep it up without a stop until he throws up the sponge. And when we've got him down weak, we'll make him promise to publish the full story. How's that?"

"It sounds good to me," said Buster Boots.

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "I mean, even a man of iron would quail under such

an ordeal. Kindly accept a few dozen congratulations, Willy, old lad. You're a dashed brainy cove."

All the juniors were in favour of Willy's suggestion. It promised to be interesting. After all, a settled policy had to be adopted—and Mr. Stephen Cross was the one man who could put everything right, if he chose. For if the "Daily Sun" published the story, the other newspapers would at once follow suit. There was nothing like going straight to the top.

The juniors had found that ordinary, straightforward methods were hopeless. None of the editors would even see them, let alone listen to their story. And the Fourth was not accustomed to knuckling under without a fight.

Mr. Stephen Cross was the Big Man. If they could only conquer him, their whole object would be achieved. For it was the "Daily Sun" they needed more than any other paper.

And for the next hour the juniors were busy.

Reference books were consulted, and every available fact concerning Mr. Stephen Cross was gleaned. Pitt took charge of the situation smartly, and he gave his instructions in businesslike tones.

The idea was Willy's—but the planning was left to Reggie Pitt. And by the time the juniors started on their newly-formed campaign, there wasn't a single loophole left.

It seemed highly probable that Mr. Stephen Cross would receive a bit of a shock in the very near future.

CHAPTER XIII THE HAUNTED EDITOR.



MR. STEPHEN CROSS drew the telephone towards him as the bell sharply rang.

He was in the thick of work—clearing up a number of important matters before leaving the office.

"Hallo!" he said sharply. "Who is it?"

"That you, Mr. Cross?" came a cheerful voice over the wires. "I'm De Valerie, of St. Frank's. Can you spare me a few minutes—"

"Confound your impudence!" snapped the editor, slamming the receiver on its hook.

He pushed the instrument away from him and glared at it. Mr. Cross was not usually a difficult man to get on with—but these St. Frank's fellows had exasperated him so acutely that everybody in the office had been feeling the length of his tongue.

"Impudent young scoundrels!" he exclaimed fiercely. "There's no getting rid

of them! I'll make them sorry for this impertinence before I've done."

He drew a piece of paper towards him, with the object of drafting out a paragraph. It was in his mind to publish a scathing column in the next issue of the "Sun." But after a few seconds he cooled down, and changed his mind.

After all, it would be too undignified. Far better to ignore these boys altogether, and treat them with the contempt they deserved. But when he continued his work he was in a more impatient mood than ever.

Mr. Cross was a very able editor, and he conducted his great paper with conspicuous success. But he was a man who liked everything to proceed smoothly, and in orderly fashion. Anything out of the usual routine exasperated him. And to-day he had been thoroughly upset.

He was disinclined for work, and ten minutes later he made up his mind to leave the office at once. So he called in several of his assistants, and gave them some curt instructions. Then he rang up for his car.

He had just finished this task when one of his subordinates entered with a sealed letter.

"Just come by District Messenger, sir," said the assistant.

Mr. Cross took the envelope, and tore it open. He withdrew a sheet of notepaper, and glanced at it keenly. Then he went red in the face, and his breath became laboured.

"Good heavens!" he muttered thickly. "This is nothing more nor less than persecution! These young idiots are an absolute danger!"

He gazed at the letter again, and re-read it in a fascinated kind of way:

Dear Sir,—As Captain of the Fourth Form at St. Frank's, I should greatly appreciate the privilege of a brief interview. My object is to set certain facts before you which will doubtless cause you to change your opinion concerning St. Frank's College.

"May I call at 4 o'clock for this purpose? Five minutes after you receive this message I shall ring up for my answer. And I trust you will be good enough to comply with my request.—Yours respectfully,
"REGINALD PITT."

Reggie himself had had no hope of gaining the interview—but this letter was just part and parcel of the campaign. Mr. Cross screwed it up, and hurled it violently into the waste-paper basket. As he did so, the telephone bell rang. The editor nearly burst a blood-vessel.

"Robinson, answer that 'phone!" he exclaimed harshly. "If it's one of those St. Frank's boys tell him to—tell him to—Say I've left the office!" he concluded desperately.

"Yes, sir!" said Robinson.

He answered the telephone, and Mr. Cross was left in no doubt as to the identity of the caller. Robinson was quite brief and polite. And he was rather startled when he hung up the receiver and turned to his superior. Mr. Cross was looking positively dangerous.

"It was a youngster named Pitt, sir—" began Robinson.

"I don't want to hear any more!" shouted Mr. Cross. "These boys are an absolute nightmare! If there's any more of this persecution I'll demand protection from—"

Mr. Cross was going to say that he would apply to the police—but he pulled himself up short, realising how absurd it sounded. For him—the managing editor of the "Daily Sun"—to apply for protection from a handful of mere schoolboys!

He left the office five minutes later, and found his big limousine waiting for him outside. It was a superb car, for Mr. Cross was not only a man of tremendous importance, but he was exceedingly wealthy.

"The club!" he snapped, to his chauffeur.

He opened the door of the car, and Willy Handforth was calmly sitting back among the cushions.

"Good afternoon, sir," said Willy cheerily.

"Upon my soul!" gasped Mr. Cross in a helpless voice.

"Thought I'd give you a bit of a surprise, sir," explained Willy. "I had to be careful, sneaking in, but don't blame the chauffeur. He was fixing up the radiator, or something, and I just nipped in. The fact is, I want a few words, sir."

Mr. Cross could hardly believe the evidence of his own eyes. This business was becoming maddening. He simply couldn't form the words that rushed to his lips. Willy recognised the signs, and held up a warning finger.

"Keep calm, sir—no need to get excited!" he said earnestly. "Of course you're wild—I expected that. But if you'll just let me explain the position you'll realise that we're in the right."

The editor of the "Sun" made no reply. Words were impossible. He grabbed Willy and held him.

"Oh, well—I suppose I'd better be going," said Willy regretfully. "It's a pity you can't be a bit more sporty, sir. So long for the present—see you later."

Considering that Willy was firmly held, his words seemed to prove that he was an optimist. But he knew what he was about. Coolly and calmly he placed one knee swiftly on the second button of Mr. Cross' waistcoat. Mr. Cross gave a loud gasp and released his grip. And in a flash Willy had the door open, and was on the footboard. In a twinkling he was on the pavement and speeding away.

The haunting campaign had started well!

CHAPTER XIV.

BEYOND ENDURANCE.



THE editor of a great London daily necessarily has some remarkable experiences—but to-day's happenings were different from any that had previously occurred to Mr.

Stephen Cross.

Since the arrival of the Fourth Formers in his office he hadn't had a moment's peace. And this final incident was just about the last straw. Mr. Cross didn't know that the torture was only just commencing!

"The impudent young puppies!" he breathed, as he sat back in his car and composed himself. "Not content with forcing their way into my office, they even have the audacity to enter my car! Thank heaven I've got free of them! When it comes to tenacity, these infernal schoolboys are worse than bloodhounds!"

Mr. Cross was much more composed when the limousine glided up to the imposing club in Piccadilly, and came to a standstill. The great man prepared to open the door, but he had no time.

Two figures nipped briskly forward, and had the door open in a flash. Mr. Cross made a curious sound in his throat. Beaming at him were John Busterfield Boots and Christine of the Modern House of St. Frank's.

"Here we are, sir," said Boots briskly. "Thought we'd just have a word as you stepped into the club. About St. Frank's, you know—"

"I'll have the police on you for this!" interrupted Mr. Cross furiously. "This is nothing more nor less than persecution—"

"Not at all, sir," interrupted Boots. "You refuse to listen to us—and we refuse to admit defeat. That's all. We're going on until we win. Why not give in at once, sir?"

"I'll thrash you within an inch of your life!" shouted the editor.

"That wouldn't be fair, sir—we haven't done anything wrong, and all we want is fair treatment," said Buster quickly. "Please don't think we're doing this in a ragging spirit. We don't mean to be impertinent, either. Don't misunderstand us, sir."

"I won't listen to you—I won't put up with this confounded nonsense for another minute!" exclaimed Mr. Cross fiercely. "Unless you get away from that door at once, I'll call the nearest policeman and hand you in charge."

The two juniors politely raised their caps. "We wouldn't dream of annoying you, sir," said Christine. "Our whole policy is to prove that we're in the right all along the line. Good afternoon, sir. We'll hope for better luck next time."

With charming smiles the two juniors walked away. And Mr. Cross felt strangely

helpless. It was absolutely impossible for him to take any action. As for giving the boys in charge for annoying him—the very thought was ridiculous. No policeman would believe him.

He entered his club in a kind of stupor and hid himself away in an obscure corner. Then he sat down, ordered a stiff drink, and soothed his nerves with a cigar.

It was just dawning upon him, with great force, that these schoolboys were something out of the ordinary. They were not to be lightly disregarded. And somewhere in the back of Mr. Cross' head a dim sense of admiration was awakening.

There was nothing he admired more than tenacity in his reporters. And the way these boys were persisting in their task appealed to his business instincts. But never for a moment did he admit it. Indeed, he didn't even know that he had any such feelings. They were too obscure to be recognised.

His chief sensation was one of unutterable exasperation—mingled with a sense of helplessness. He was convinced that other St. Frank's juniors would confront him as soon as ever he set foot in the street again. He had a feeling of being haunted.

Yet he couldn't remain in the club indefinitely.

He had guests for dinner this evening—and had, indeed, promised his wife that he would be home from the office early. Certainly, he had left his desk sooner than he had planned, but he couldn't afford to remain at the club for very long.

Mr. Cross wandered to the window and inspected the street. There was no sign of the enemy. Piccadilly was busy, but St. Frank's juniors were conspicuous by their absence.

Again and again Mr. Cross told himself that he was a fool for taking the thing so seriously. The whole affair was ludicrous. He couldn't even discuss it with a fellow member of the Club. If he did so, he would certainly be laughed at. It was this sensation of utter helplessness that affected him more than anything else.

He finished his cigar, and then decided to leave.

His car was still waiting outside, but he hesitated before going out to it. He had that same feeling of certainty that he would be buttonholed before he could even reach the pavement.

And Mr. Cross weakly succumbed to a sudden impulse.

He remembered there was a side exit. He would leave the club by this doorway, hail a taxi, and go to another of his clubs. There he would use the telephone, and have his car sent on. It wouldn't take more than ten minutes, and these infernal schoolboys would be finally shaken off.

The managing editor buttoned up his overcoat, donned his hat, and sallied out. He emerged from the side exit with a sense

of freedom. But this feeling only lasted for a moment.

Two figures emerged from an opposite doorway, and hurried across the road towards him. They were Archie Glenthorne and Jack Grey, of St. Frank's. There was no escaping these juniors!

CHAPTER XV.

GETTING HIM DOWN WEAK.



“WHAT-HO!” said Archie cheerfully. “What-ho, old bean! I mean to say, greetings, and all that sort of rot! In other words, how goes it?”

Mr. Cross regarded the two juniors blankly.

“If you dare to pester me any more, I'll have you horsewhipped!” he said, with a kind of feeble desperation.

“Horsewhipped—what?” repeated Archie. “Oh, come! I mean, come! Somewhat steep, what? In fact, jolly near the old bone, as it were. We merely need a few moments' bring and chirpy conversation, old toff! Just a few fruity remarks, and everything will be absolutely fixed. Kindly realise that we are positively on the job.”

Mr. Cross had realised this long since, but he was far from giving in. Without a word, he turned his back on the juniors, and hurried round to the front of the building. He didn't look behind him, but he had a horror that the boys were following.

He was exceedingly glad when he reached his car. He entered tentatively, wondering if Willy would turn up again. Of all the juniors, Mr. Cross feared Handforth minor the most. There was something so calmly deliberate about Willy's methods that Mr. Cross actually feared him. The very absurdity of the affair was painful.

“Thank Heaven!” murmured the editor of the “Sun.”

He was alone in the car, and he was homeward bound. At last he would be at peace. He lived at Hampstead, and he couldn't imagine the juniors appearing at his own home. Yet he had no sense of complete security. After what had happened, he wouldn't be particularly surprised if a couple of St. Frank's juniors popped out of his bed-room wardrobe, upon his arrival home. He couldn't seem to get rid of them at all.

He arrived home in a state of nervous tension. His house was a big one—a great, modern mansion standing in its own grounds, high up on Hampstead Heath, commanding a grand view of London.

To Mr. Cross's great relief, he was allowed to enter his own house without interference. No dim figures lurked among the bushes—no mysterious forms emerged from the cover of the shrubbery. Mr. Cross let himself in, and retired to his library. He decided that he wouldn't tell his wife anything about it.

She wouldn't understand. The awful thought struck him that she might be amused. And he was quite certain that his fifteen-year-old daughter would be positively tickled by the story.

No, it was far better to keep his own counsel.

Mr. Cross was feeling almost happy. The sense of oppression had left him, and he marvelled that he could be so affected by the attentions of these schoolboys. At the same time, he realised that these boys were nothing short of unholy terrors.

He was in the act of lighting a cigarette, when his wife entered the room.

"Why, I didn't know you were home, dear!" she exclaimed, in surprise. "Is anything wrong, Stephen? You look unusually worried."

Mrs. Cross was a pleasant, youthful woman, and she regarded her husband with concern.

"Worried?" repeated Mr. Cross lightly. "Nonsense! There's nothing the matter—rather a busy day at the office, that's all. With so little news these days, an editor hardly knows where to turn."

"Well, I'm glad you've come, Stephen," said Mrs. Cross. "There are three young gentlemen in the drawing-room—"

"What?" gasped the editor of the "Sun."

"Stephen!" protested his wife. "What in the world—"

"Three young gentlemen?" repeated Mr. Cross huskily. "What do you mean, Ethel? What sort of young men? Who are they? What are their names?"

"They belong to St. Frank's College, and they've called to see you," said Mrs. Cross. "Such charming boys, too! I'm sure you'll be pleased to meet them."

"Oh, very pleased—delighted beyond measure!" interrupted Mr. Cross furiously. "Of all the infernal impudence—"

He didn't finish his sentence. Instead, he strode out of the library, and burst into the drawing-room like a hurricane. Mrs. Cross followed him in alarm. She couldn't quite understand her husband's abrupt fury.

"You confounded young rascals!" shouted Mr. Cross fiercely.

He stood in the doorway of the drawing-room, quivering with rage. Reggie Pitt and Buster Boots and Bob Christine had risen, and were advancing towards him politely and smilingly.

"I hope we haven't intruded, Mr. Cross—but our business is so urgent that we took a liberty," said Pitt steadily. "We weren't coming in, but Mrs. Cross insisted—"

"Get out of this house!" thundered the managing editor.

"But look here, sir—"

"Get out before I lose control of myself!" roared Mr. Cross. "I've had as much of this nonsense as I can stand! I won't listen to you—I won't hear a single word! Get out!"

"Stephen!" protested Mrs. Cross, horri-

fied. "What is the matter? These boys are here at my invitation—"

"I'll explain after they've gone!" said Mr. Cross thickly. "They've deceived you, Ethel—they're the most impertinent young rascals under the sun! It's a wonder I don't knock them down!"

Pitt and his two companions wasted no time in leaving. They had expected to get the order of the boot. But they had given Mr. Cross a further shock, and that was all to the good.

The climax was near at hand!

CHAPTER XVI.

VICTORY!



HANDFORTH grinned. "We haven't done so bad, on the whole," he remarked gleefully. "We've haunted him until he's nearly off his head with worry. The poor chap's absolutely haggard."

"Worse than that!" grinned Boots. "His eyes are a bit bloodshot, and there's a hunted look in 'em. In my opinion, this is the very moment to bring things to a head."

"Don't worry—we're going to act at once," said Pitt grimly.

The full deputation was present—all the juniors crouching beneath some bushes in the garden of Mr. Cross's house. The October evening was already drawing in, and lights were twinkling in the windows of the mansion.

By a prearranged scheme, the juniors had joined forces. Mr. Cross was run to earth. He was under his own roof, and there could be no escape for him. Exactly what he had told his wife the juniors didn't know—but he could hardly have gone into full details.

Pitt was just a little disappointed.

He had expected the victim to succumb before this. He had rather counted upon Mr. Cross giving in upon finding the three juniors in his drawing-room. But it seemed there was still a little fight left in the managing editor. One more effort was required.

And Pitt was determined that this final effort should be the climax. Within the next half-hour the matter would be settled, one way or the other. The deputation had to get to Victoria in order to catch the last train within an hour, and so the need was desperate.

"The only thing now is to take him by storm," said Pitt. "We'll ring the bell, and then risk everything on one rush. We'll sweep indoors, and—"

"I say, hold on!" interrupted Willy quickly. "Look there!"

He pointed, and the rest stared. Across the lawn some lights had appeared in a big lower window.

"His library!" muttered Pitt. "By jingo! It's a French window, too—and I believe it's partly open! Come on—while we've got the chance!"

It was a sudden opportunity, and the juniors seized it. Padding silently across the lawn, they obtained a clear vision into the library. Mr. Cross was there, alone—pacing up and down with impatient strides.

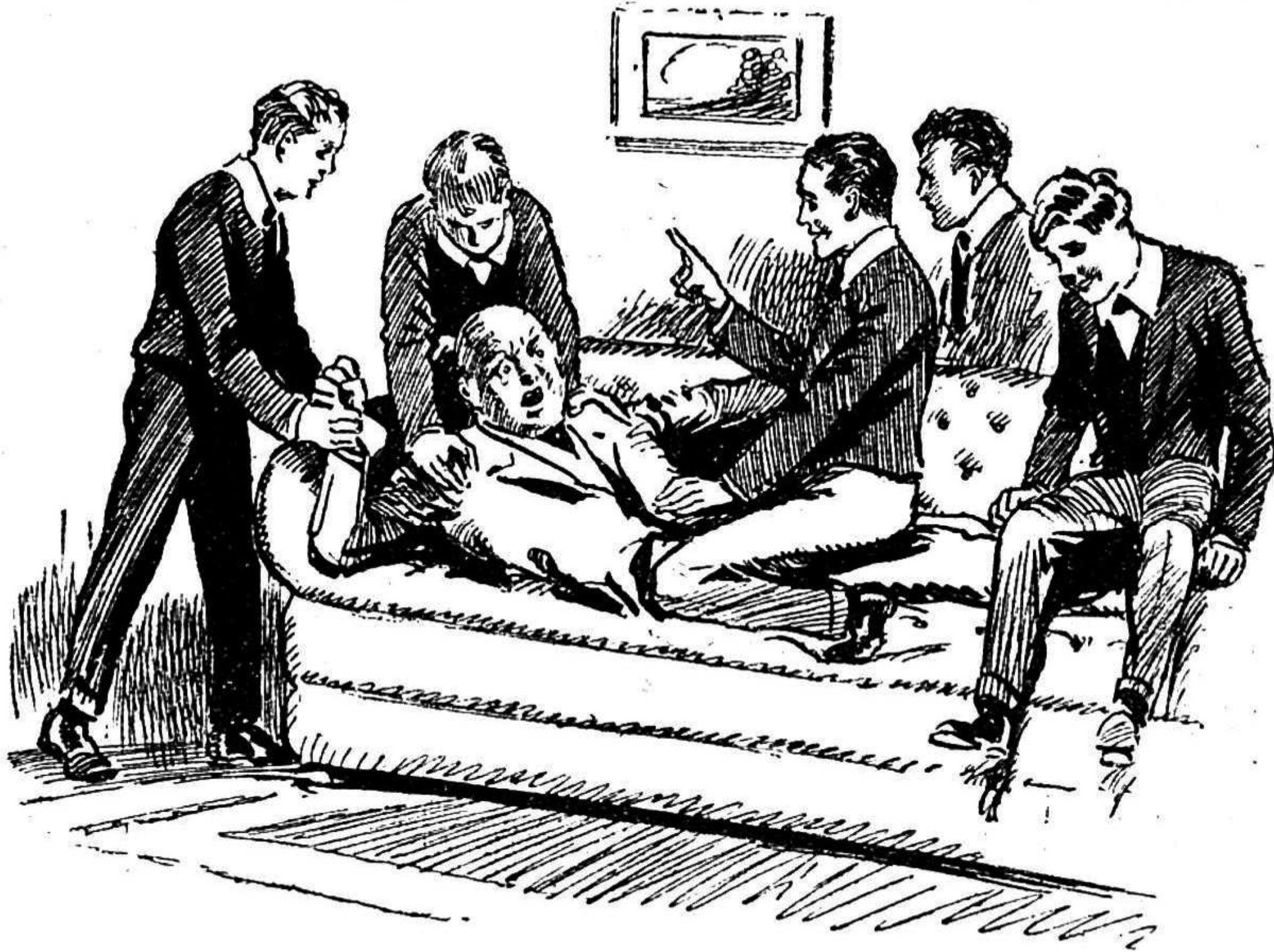
"Come on—it's now or never!" muttered Reggie.

They swept up to the window, wrenched it open, and poured into the room like a flood. Mr. Cross had utterly no chance of

"It's up to you, Mr. Cross—if you like to be nasty, I dare say you can make things very hot for us," interrupted Pitt quietly. "But you can't say we haven't tried our best. All day we've been attempting to tell you our story—and you wouldn't listen. And now you've got to."

There was no way out of it for the unfortunate editor.

Quietly, tensely, Reggie Pitt told the story. He went into every detail. He explained the full facts of the original scandal. He told how St. Frank's had suffered—how the old school was in danger of extinction.



Mr. Stephen Cross lay on the lounge with juniors swarming all over him. His legs were held down, his arms were grasped, and Reggie Pitt straddled his chest, and sat there triumphantly.

defending himself. He was swept off his feet, and deposited upon the wide Chesterfield. The juniors were in grim earnest this time, and risked everything on one throw.

Mr. Stephen Cross was down at last.

He lay on the lounge, with juniors swarming all over him. His legs were held down, his arms were grasped, and Reggie Pitt straddled his chest, and sat there triumphantly.

"Now, Mr. Cross—you've got to listen!" said Pitt grimly.

"I'll have you expelled in disgrace for this—"

Proudly, he described Ernest Lawrence's great effort in the boxing ring—a noble attempt to obtain money to save the school. And then Pitt told the story of the Trident—that epic narrative of bulldog endurance which had thrilled the entire Sussex coast on the previous day.

Pitt described how the St. Frank's Fourth had salved the ship after she had been abandoned by her captain. The other juniors listened with sheer fascination. For Pitt was fiercely eloquent. He told the story with a wealth of detail, and a simple earnestness that held his listeners enthralled.

"That's what we've been trying to tell you

all day, sir," concluded Reggie at length. "Every word I've uttered is true. Do you consider that St. Frank's has been treated fairly? Do you think the school is full of loafers and blackguards? If so, we'll go, without another word."

Mr. Stephen Cross was released.

He had heard the tale now, and there was no further object in holding him down. He was dishevelled, trowsled, and unkempt. But, instead of fury raging in his eyes, there was now an expression of keen appreciation.

"I deserved it!" he said quietly. "I'm not grumbling at the way you've treated me—I admire you too much for that!"

"You—you mean it, sir?" asked Pitt joyfully.

"If you've been telling me the truth—yes."

"It's all true, sir—honour bright!" chorused the juniors.

"You can set me down as an obstinate fool for refusing you a hearing," said Mr. Cross gruffly. "And, by gad, you're youngsters after my own heart! If my own reporters were half as enterprising as you, I'd be a happy man. The way you've stuck to me is an education in itself."

"Then you're not wild, sir?" asked Willy cheerfully.

"Ten minutes ago I was ready to thrash every one of you within an inch of your lives!" replied Mr. Cross. "But you've converted me—and I'm going to shoot straight back to the office, and that story of yours will be on the front page of the 'Sun' tomorrow morning—with a headline across the whole sheet! That's what I think of St. Frank's!"

The Fourth-Form deputation flushed with happiness. By sheer tenacity they had won the day! The saving of the old school was an accomplished fact at last!

THE END.

By Your Editor:



My dear Readers,

It was only to be expected that a certain number of readers would sadly miss the familiar personalities of Nelson Lee and Nipper from the St. Frank's stories. Most of us are conservative at heart, and take none too kindly to changes from the old order of things. When Nelson Lee and Nipper left their old headquarters in Gray's Inn Road and came to St. Frank's a few years ago, I was constantly receiving letters from readers asking me when these popular characters would return to their former life. Now that the wish of these old readers has been gratified—and I am glad to find that there are still a good number of the Old Brigade left—I am requested by other readers to send Nelson Lee and Nipper back to St. Frank's.

PATIENCE, MY CHUMS!

What is your poor old editor to do? Clearly, one cannot please everyone at once. I must ask those readers who want Nelson Lee and Nipper to return to St. Frank's to be patient for a few weeks. After that time, I am sure most of them will prefer to read about the famous detective and his assistant in their more perilous and thrilling investigations in the great metropolis than in the bizarre atmosphere of a public school.

JIM THE PENMAN.

In this number we have begun a new series of Nelson Lee stories, introducing that extraordinary personality, Jim the Penman. As most of my readers know, Jim the Penman, a forger of astonishing skill, is not merely a character in fiction. He was a living personality, whose amazing record of crime may be found in the archives of Scotland Yard. You will read more about Jim in another exciting story next week, entitled, "THE CASE OF THE VANISHED K.C.!"

SAVED BY THE FOURTH!

The triumph of Pitt in the splendid St. Frank's series, concluding next week in the story "SAVED BY THE FOURTH," established conclusively the sterling qualities of leadership possessed by this junior. His task has been a most difficult one, and he has emerged triumphant. The school will reassemble next week, with all the boys back again in their respective Forms. There will be a tremendous ovation for Pitt, and the fireworks display will not only commemorate the "Fifth," but there will be the burning of another "guy," which attempted and all but failed to destroy St. Frank's.

With very best wishes,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.



A NEW SERIES OF COMPLETE DETECTIVE STORIES, FEATURING THE CELEBRATED DETECTIVE, NELSON LEE, AND HIS CLEVER ASSISTANT, NIPPER.

This is the opening story of a splendid new series, introducing Jim the Penman, the prince of forgers, and as elusive a criminal as ever Nelson Lee has had to contend against. These stories are entirely new, and are specially written for **THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY**, although old readers need no introduction to the chief characters around whom the narratives are woven.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

OUT OF THE FOG.

FREE! After five years of torture in Portmoor Prison, I am free once more—free to do what I like!”

The words surged exultantly through the mind of Douglas James Sutcliffe, the master-forgery who was known throughout the length and breadth of the land as Jim the Penman.

Sutcliffe, attired in the blue uniform of a Naval seaman, was standing on the beach of a tiny island on the Essex coast. It was night, and the darkness was rendered uncomfortably dense by the presence of a thick, swirling mist—a white fog which covered the island like a blanket.

But Jim the Penman experienced no sense of discomfort owing to the state of the elements; on the contrary, he blessed the presence of the fog with a whole-hearted thankfulness which was unusually fervent.

For he knew that the mist was to be his salvation.

In its enveloping folds he was safe. No human eye could penetrate the murky darkness which surrounded him, and Sutcliffe intended to make the best possible use of the weather conditions to evade his enemies.

His eagerly-breathed words regarding his freedom were scarcely correct in a strict, literal sense; but Jim the Penman swore to himself that he would make them so during the next few hours.

“The opportunity was altogether too good to be missed!” he told himself determinedly. “It was a chance in a million, and I simply had to take it. It ought to be easy enough to get away from here—in spite of Nelson Lee and Lennard and the sailors!”

Sutcliffe’s muttered words indicated, plainly enough, that he was not alone on the barren, rocky island—and this was only too true. For in a near-by cavern a large number of men were actively engaged in a very curious occupation.

The island, as a matter of fact, had been—until a few minutes ago—the secret stronghold of Professor Cyrus Zingrave and his notorious League of the Green Triangle. But, solely owing to the famous crime investigator of Gray’s Inn Road, Zingrave and his men had been surprised in their lair, and were now safely captured.

In spite of all the cunning professor’s cleverness, he had been beaten by Nelson Lee just at the very moment when he had hoped to launch out into a stupendous campaign of fraud—a campaign which would have made him and his gang rich men for the rest of their lives.

For Professor Zingrave had installed the most amazingly complete equipment for the manufacture of base currency upon the island, and had fitted up an elaborate electric-lighting plant and various other machinery. Everything, down to the last detail, had been made ready within the

interior of the rock-bound island, and Zingrave's final act had been to effect the escape of Jim the Penman from Portmoor Prison.

Douglas James Sutcliffe had been amazed when members of the Green Triangle had appeared at the prison, and had—by means of a green-ray apparatus of the professor's—managed to get him safely away. But Jim the Penman had been perfectly willing to seize the chance thus offered, and had accompanied the Triangle men to the island.

Upon arrival at the stronghold of the league, Professor Zingrave had soon made it clear to Jim that he was required for a very definite purpose—nothing less than the engraving of plates for the manufacture of false banknotes and Treasury notes. And Sutcliffe had at once fallen in with Zingrave's plans, only too glad of the chance to again participate in criminal activities.

But Nelson Lee, meanwhile, had been extremely active, and had now struck a fatal blow at the league—a blow which was destined to break up the Green Triangle for good and all.

The rocky island, it had been found, was Navy property. And a torpedo-boat destroyer—the Challenger—had been placed at the disposal of the police and Nelson Lee for the purpose of rounding-up the professor and his gang.

The great detective's plans had been carried out without a hitch, and every member of the Green Triangle was now a prisoner. There had been a short, sharp fight in the underground caverns between the bluejackets of the Challenger and the criminals, and the results had been eminently satisfactory—with the exception of one significant occurrence.

Nelson Lee and Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard, of New Scotland Yard, had soon discovered that Jim the Penman was missing from the cavern, and a brief search had revealed the manner of Sutcliffe's going.

One of the bluejackets had been discovered in the cave, stripped of his uniform and almost knocked unconscious. This state of affairs made it quite clear that Jim the Penman, with his usual astuteness, had seized the only chance he was likely to get. By knocking out the sailor, and helping himself to his uniform, Sutcliffe had been enabled to mix with the other bluejackets without the slightest suspicion, and his total disappearance made it quite clear to Nelson Lee that Jim had slipped out of the cave, and had vanished in the fog.

And this is precisely what Sutcliffe had done.

Jim the Penman had acted exactly as Nelson Lee had surmised, and he was now at the water's edge, wondering what steps

to take next. He knew well enough that an immediate search would be made over the entire island, and he also knew that it would never do for him to remain there if he wished to retain his liberty.

And liberty was what Sutcliffe wanted more than anything else in the whole world.

There were no boats available on the island. Professor Zingrave's submarine was the only craft in the vicinity, and that was now in the hands of the police. It was impossible for Jim to help himself to one of the boats from the Challenger, for they were guarded by bluejackets.

"No," Jim muttered to himself, "there's only one way for me to get away from here. I shall have to swim for it, and chance my luck."

Sutcliffe was undaunted by the unenviable prospect before him—a prospect from which many a brave man might have flinched. But Jim the Penman was determined to evade capture at all costs, and he preferred to face the risks of the fog-bound sea rather than to attempt hiding himself in some out of the way spot on the island. In the latter event, he argued, discovery was bound to come sooner or later, for Nelson Lee was not the man to do his work in a haphazard manner, as Sutcliffe was fully aware. With the coming of daylight and the lifting of the fog, his chances of concealment would vanish, and he would then be captured.

Such an eventuality was not to be thought of, and without hesitation Jim the Penman commenced to unlace his boots and to throw them into the sea. After he had completed this operation, he listened intently for a few moments, straining his ears to catch the partially-deadened sounds which came eerily through the fog from the direction of the cavern-mouth.

What he heard caused him to set his lips grimly, for he now knew that the order had been given for a thorough search of the island to commence. The voice of one of the Challenger's officers came plainly through the mist, but Jim had no intention of waiting another second.

Silently he waded into the icy-cold water, and a few moments later he was swimming strongly through the enshrouding fog—swimming towards the open sea and the liberty which lay there.

For Jim the Penman was fully determined—come what might—to again enter the world of free citizens, and to once more devote himself to the pursuit of his professional career.

Portmoor had deprived him of five years of his life; but captivity had by no means dampened his ardour or his spirit.

And the intrepid Sutcliffe fully intended to let the world know it!

CHAPTER II.

JIM MAKES PLANS.



THORNTON stared at the telegram in his hands with excited eyes.

"Great Scott! It's from Jim!" he muttered, looking at the flimsy form as if he was unable to believe his own sight. "Jim's free, and is waiting for me at Gravesend! Well, I'm dashed!"

Thornton, up to Jim the Penman's capture five years ago, had been one of the master-forgers' most trusted accomplices. He had seen the announcements of Sutcliffe's sensational escape from Portmoor Prison a day or two previously, and Thornton had been half-expecting to learn some news of his chief. But he had scarcely anticipated anything of this sort.

Thornton looked at the telegram again.

It was clear and concise, and its instructions were unmistakable. Sutcliffe wired just as if no big lapse of time had occurred—just as if the five-year slice had never been cut out of his career.

"Bring car Gravesend Docks immediately. Very urgent. Also bring usual suitcase and bag. Waiting.

"JIM."

Thornton grinned to himself as he re-read the wire, and thought how thoroughly characteristic it was of Jim the Penman to coolly send him such a message. After a clear five years of inactivity, Sutcliffe was calmly "coming back," and was evidently relying upon his old associates to assist him precisely as they had been wont to do in former days.

Well, Thornton, for one, was not averse from again working actively with Jim the Penman, for he knew from past experience that Sutcliffe was exceedingly generous to those who served him faithfully.

And Thornton, without a moment's loss of time, proceeded to carry out Jim's instructions. Within ten minutes he had got his closed car from the garage, and had stowed within it the "usual suitcase and bag," according to Jim's request. These contained everything necessary for Sutcliffe's complete transformation—clothing, wigs, beards, and all the paraphernalia of the make-up artist.

There were very few men—either on the stage or otherwise—who could beat Jim the Penman at the art of disguise. On several occasions Sutcliffe's masterly impersonation had even succeeded in deceiving Nelson Lee himself! And in order to accomplish a feat of that sort it was necessary for the make-up to be absolutely perfect in every detail.

And Sutcliffe was always painstaking and thorough in everything he undertook. When it was necessary for him to wear a dis-

guise, he threw his whole soul into the personality he adopted—not only in appearance, but in tone of voice, mannerisms, walk, and gestures. His own identity was completely and absolutely sunk in his new individuality, and to all intents and purposes he became another person entirely.

These traits—added to his own especial powers of penmanship—made Jim a particularly dangerous criminal, and went a long way to explain why he had had such a long spell of liberty before he had finally been run to earth five years ago. Before his ultimate capture, Sutcliffe had enjoyed many a hard-fought tussle with Nelson Lee—the one man in the whole world whom he feared most.

Thornton knew all this, and his thoughts were busy as he piloted the closed car towards Gravesend. He found himself looking forward with great keenness to a renewed association with Jim the Penman, for he concluded that Jim, now that he was free once more, intended to re-enter his old life where he had left it off.

Such an event would mean a "good thing" for Thornton financially; and the prospect of the profits to come went a long way towards inducing Thornton to fly to Jim's aid with such alacrity. It was not very often that Sutcliffe made use of his accomplices, but occasionally their help was essential, as in the present instance. And he invariably paid exceedingly well for any services rendered—thus ensuring absolute faithfulness and security. Not one of Jim's associates would have dreamed of "giving him away," for, apart from the monetary losses this would entail, they knew well enough that they would have to reckon with the master-forgers' wrath.

Upon arrival at the Gravesend Docks, Thornton was met by a rough-looking, seafaring individual of extremely unkempt appearance; but he had no difficulty in recognising Jim the Penman. Sutcliffe scarcely spoke a word, but got into the car, and curtly ordered Thornton to drive back to London. The car, in fact, did not stop more than ten seconds at the docks, and Thornton drove back to his own house in record time.

The passenger who alighted seemed to be a totally different type of person to the man whom Thornton had taken aboard at Gravesend, and anybody who saw him would have sworn that he was a bluff, good-hearted colonel, with a somewhat peppery temper.

"A splendid run, my dear fellow—splendid!" he exclaimed, as he stepped to the ground. "If it wasn't for the confoundedly bad roads I should have had a dashed pleasant time!"

Thornton grinned.

"Well, come in and have a nip of whisky, colonel!" he said invitingly, taking his cue from Jim's new personality at once.

"Nothing like a drink to put you right after a jolting."

Two minutes later Jim the Penman and Thornton were closeted together in the latter's private sitting-room, and Sutcliffe extended his hand in a warm greeting.

"Thanks, old man!" he said fervently. "Your quick response to my telegram has got me out of an infernally bad situation; but I knew that I could rely on you, Thornton!"

The other nodded, and listened eagerly while Jim related his recent experiences. Within five minutes Thornton was in possession of all the facts—how Sutcliffe had been rescued from Portmoor by the League of the Green Triangle; how he had been taken to the island, and how the island had been raided by Nelson Lee and the sailors.

"Professor Zingrave and his gang are all captured," concluded Jim grimly, "and I should have been in the same boat if I hadn't taken the one chance. But I won't deny that I had luck, Thornton—infernally good luck, too! I was picked up by a tramp steamer on its way to Gravesend, and my sailor's uniform was as good as the visiting-card of a millionaire. The captain swallowed my yarn about falling overboard from the Challenger without any hesitation whatever, and he gave me a change of clothes and some food without question. We got into Gravesend this morning, and the first thing I did was to telegraph to you—with some money I happened to find in the sailor's uniform. And now I'm here, back in London, ready for business!"

"Business!" repeated Thornton curiously.

"Yes!" said Jim the Penman savagely. "The business of revenge, Thornton. By thunder! Do you think I'm going to let Nelson Lee and the rest of 'em alone? Now that I'm out of that cursed prison I'm going to devote my attention to the judge who sentenced me, and to the counsel who prosecuted me—to all those who had a hand in my imprisonment, in fact! And I'm going to start with Nelson Lee—in a small way at first, just to get hold of a little cash! Just you wait, Thornton! I'll show 'em!"

Sutcliffe now spoke in a menacing, revengeful tone, and Thornton knew that he meant every word he uttered.

Jim the Penman was out on the warpath once more!

CHAPTER III.

LEE RECEIVES A MESSAGE.



NIPPER sliced the top off an egg neatly and looked at his master. "Anything in this morning's paper about last night's exploits, guv'nor?" he asked.

The great detective nodded.

"Just a line or two in the stop-press, young 'ur!" he replied. "I scarcely expected to see that, to tell the truth; but some enterprising reporter managed to glean a few of the essential facts. There are no details, however; just the bare statement that Professor Zingrave and his gang have been captured in their island stronghold, and that they are now safe in custody."

Nipper nodded.

"Jolly smart work to get even that scanty information in the paper," he commented. "Considering that the raid only took place last night, I think it's amazing that any mention was made of it at all."

Nelson Lee and Nipper were just sitting down to a somewhat belated breakfast, for they had not arrived home until the small hours of the morning. They had, of course, left the rocky island off the Essex coast by means of the destroyer, in company with the batch of prisoners, and they had hurried to Gray's Inn Road immediately upon being put ashore. Professor Zingrave and his league members had been left in the care of the police, and they no doubt were now safely housed in cells.

Both Lee and Nipper were highly elated at the success which had attained their unceasing efforts in their long campaign against the League of the Green Triangle, and it was a source of great satisfaction to the detective to know that Professor Zingrave would no longer be a menace to society.

"I think old Lennard is about the most satisfied man in London this morning, guv'nor," said Nipper with a grin. "The Triangle has been a thorn in his side for a terrific time— Well! Talk of angels, and they appear!" Nipper broke off, and looked at the door in a listening attitude. "I'll bet that's the inspector's number nineteen's coming up the stairs now," he added, with another grin. "I'd know his step in a thousand!"

He was right, for the next moment the door was opened and the cheery face of Chief Detective-inspector Lennard looked into the room. He nodded genially to Lee and Nipper, and then walked in with the familiarity of a privileged guest.

"Morning, Lee—morning, youngster!" he exclaimed, closing the door and advancing into the room. "Sorry to intrude in this disgraceful fashion, but I just happened to be passing and dropped in for a few words—"

"Good!" interrupted Nipper, pausing with a spoonful of egg halfway to his mouth. "Any news of Jim, Mr. Lennard?"

The chief inspector shook his head.

"I was just about to ask your respected guv'nor the same question, Nipper," he answered. "No; we've heard nothing of him so far, and I don't fancy we shall yet awhile. How on earth he managed to slip

away from that island beats me; but his escape only goes to show what a resourceful chap he is. I fully expected to rope him in with Zingrave's gang, and I shan't sleep easy in my bed till he's safely under lock and key again."

Nelson Lee chuckled.

"Then I'm afraid you're booked for an unenviable time, Lennard," he said. "I fancy that Jim will find his liberty much too sweet to endanger it at present, and you needn't hope that he'll place his head into a noose for some time to come. But he won't remain idle, my dear fellow; you can rest assured on that point."

Lennard snorted.

"No, Lee," he agreed; "and you can rest assured that we'll be after him the very instant he shows his hand!"

After a little further talk the chief-inspector took his departure, promising to inform Nelson Lee the very instant he received any news of Jim the Penman. Lennard, naturally, was extremely anxious to effect the recapture of the notorious criminal, but he frankly admitted that there appeared to be very little hope of doing so at present.

Nipper looked at his master when the inspector had gone.

"You seem to think that Jim will soon get busy, guv'nor, by the way you spoke?" he suggested.

"He will, without a doubt, my lad," declared Nelson Lee. "Sutcliffe must be penniless at the present moment, and it is obviously impossible for him to remain long in such a state. No, Nipper; Jim will soon show his hand, unless I am greatly mistaken. And we must be prepared for him when he does become active."

Nipper nodded, and relapsed into silence. And for the next twenty minutes both he and his master were engaged in finishing their breakfast and in perusing the morning's news.

At the end of that time Nipper jumped to his feet in order to answer the telephone, and within a few seconds of placing his



Jim passed the cheque over to the waiting clerk without a tremor.

ear to the receiver he turned an excited face to Nelson Lee.

"It's Lennard again, guv'nor!" he exclaimed quickly. "Says he's got some news of Jim—"

The detective was at the instrument in a trice, and he took the receiver from Nipper's hand.

"Hallo, hallo! That you, Lee?" came Lennard's well-known tones eagerly. "We've got news of Jim sooner than we expected. I've just heard that he is mixed up in a motor-car accident at Dartford, and I'm going there at once. Thought I'd let you know—"

"Thanks, Lennard," returned Lee keenly. "I suppose your news is genuine—"

"No doubt of it, Lee," interrupted the chief-inspector's voice. "The Dartford police 'phoned the Yard direct!"

"All right; Nipper and I will get off at once!" said Nelson Lee crisply. "We'll probably see you in Dartford, Lennard."

The detective rang off, and within five minutes he and Nipper were seated in their great racing car, en route for the Kentish town of Dartford.

But on this occasion Nelson Lee had been deceived, as events were soon to prove.

CHAPTER IV.

AN AUDACIOUS MOVE.



JIM THE PENMAN chuckled.

"Good!" he murmured, in a tone of great satisfaction. "Lee's taken the bait like a green-horn, and it's up to me to

make the most of my opportunities before he discovers that he's been tricked!"

Douglas James Sutcliffe had just stepped from a telephone call-booth, and he seemed to be highly amused at the easy manner in which he had disposed of the famous detective. For it was Jim the Penman himself who had telephoned to Nelson Lee, and who had given him the "news" over the wire. He had found no difficulty in imitating the tones of Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard, and he had succeeded beyond his expectations.

For Sutcliffe had a scheme in hand, and it was necessary for him to have a clear field in order to carry it out.

He was disguised, of course; and with his usual fearless audacity he had made himself into an exact counterpart of the famous investigator of Gray's Inn Road. If Nipper himself had met Jim at this moment, it is doubtful if the astute lad would have detected the imposture, so astoundingly complete was it in every detail. He was Nelson Lee to the life, and he had no fear of his disguise being penetrated.

After leaving the telephone-box, Jim hurried towards Gray's Inn Road—walking exactly as the detective would have walked and imitating Nelson Lee in every particular. He reached his destination within two or three minutes, for he had telephoned from an office quite near to Lee's residence.

Upon arrival at the front door, Jim the Penman coolly took a skeleton-key from his pocket and inserted it in the lock with the utmost calmness, opening the door with quite as much ease as if he had taken the correct latchkey from his pocket. He entered the hall, re-closed the door, and then mounted the stairs to the consulting-room.

He felt no qualms as he reached the top of the stairs—for he knew well enough that Lee and Nipper were by this time speeding towards Dartford upon their fruitless errand. But Jim gave an imperceptible start as he observed that Mrs. Jones, the detective's worthy housekeeper, was busily dusting the furniture of the consulting-room, and she looked up sharply as he entered.

"Oh! I'm sorry, sir—" began the housekeeper apologetically.

"It's all right, Mrs. Jones—you can carry on!" said Jim, nodding to her coolly. "I shall only be here a few moments, and there's no need for you to be disturbed!"

He spoke in a voice which was uncannily similar to Nelson Lee's, and Mrs. Jones smiled and nodded—completely deceived. Jim chuckled to himself as he crossed over to Lee's desk, and sat down before it, his keen gaze taking in every detail. After opening two or three drawers, he gave a little sigh of satisfaction, and grasped Nelson Lee's pass-book, which he proceeded to open and examine.

As he had anticipated, there were several returned cheques in the pocket of the book—all of them, of course, bearing the detective's signature, duly cancelled by the bank officials. Jim withdrew one of the cheques, and looked at it intently for a few moments.

Then he took a fountain-pen from his pocket, together with a notebook, and proceeded to write two words. He wrote the two words without a single pause or hesitation, and then compared them with the signature on the cheque. "Nelson Lee," in each case, appeared to be identical, and Jim the Penman gave another inward chuckle.

"No need to practise this!" he muttered. "I can do it right off without a hitch! I can see that the whole thing's going to be child's play!"

Jim's back was towards Mrs. Jones, of course, and the woman seemed to be taking very little notice of her "master's" activities at the desk. She scarcely glanced at Jim at all as she busied herself with her work.

Sutcliffe, satisfied with his experiment, replaced the cheque in the pocket of the book, and laid the book down. Then he picked up Nelson Lee's cheque-book, put it in his breast-pocket, and rose to his feet, nodding affably to the housekeeper as he left the room.

Ten minutes later he entered the bank where the detective kept his account, and boldly approached the counter, producing the cheque-book and fountain-pen as he did so. One of the cashiers came up to attend to him at once, at the same time greeting the pseudo-detective in a respectful tone.

"Good-morning, Mr. Lee!" he exclaimed deferentially. "What can we do for you to-day?"

Jim the Penman nodded and smiled in return.

"Well, I require rather a large sum in Treasury notes, if you can oblige me," he said, bending over the cheque-book as he spoke. "Five thousand, to be exact! Can you let me have them at once? If so, I'll make out a cheque right away."

"Five thousand, eh?" repeated the clerk. "Yes, I think we can manage that, Mr. Lee. As it happens, we've got rather more cash than usual this morning, and you can have what you require immediately!"

"That is extremely fortunate," said "Nelson Lee" affably. "Thanks!"

He took off the cap of his fountain-pen as he spoke, and proceeded to write upon the cheque-form—making it out for the payment

of five thousand pounds, and signing it in full sight of the cashier. He carried out his task without the slightest hesitation, and the signature he produced from the mental photograph in his retentive brain was an exact facsimile of the famous detective's own. Not a curve or line was out of place, and Jim tore it out of the book, and passed it over to the waiting clerk without a tremor.

In return he received five bundles of Treasury notes, each containing a thousand pounds. These Sutcliffe carelessly stuffed into his pockets, and then calmly wished the clerk good-morning, and took his departure. He had succeeded in obtaining this huge sum of money without the sign of a hitch, and he had done so without arousing the slightest suspicion in the mind of the bank clerk!

Jim the Penman, without a doubt, was the cleverest forger who had ever wielded a pen, and he had just proved that he had lost none of his old cunning.

CHAPTER V.

FIRST BLOOD TO JIM!



SUPERINTENDENT CODY, of the Dartford police, looked at Nelson Lee with a puzzled frown on his face.

"There must be some mistake, Mr. Lee," he declared.

"I've heard nothing of any accident here. Neither have I seen anything of Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, or of Jim the Penman! Wish I had! There's nothing I'd like better than to have a hand in nabbing that fellow!"

Nelson Lee nodded absently. He and Nipper had arrived in Dartford a few minutes ago, and had found everything in a normal condition. The superintendent was plainly at fault to account for the detective's sudden arrival—but Nelson Lee was beginning to see daylight. He asked permission to get through to Scotland Yard, and within a very few minutes he was engaged in an earnest conversation with Lennard himself.

The Chief Inspector was even more amazed than the Dartford official had been, and he declared emphatically that he had not telephoned to Nelson Lee after leaving Gray's Inn Road. Further, Lennard stated that he had heard no further news of Jim the Penman.

When Lee rang off there was a grim glint in his eye, and he chided himself roundly for being such a simpleton. Obviously, he had been made the victim of a hoax—and there could be no doubt that Jim the Penman was responsible! The whole thing was a trap to get himself and Nipper out of the way—that much was now certain. And, if the detective accepted this fact, it meant

that Sutcliffe had had a very good reason for his actions.

Lee and Nipper hurried back to Gray's Inn Road with all possible speed, and soon learned of "Lee's" previous return, and of his activities in the consulting-room from the housekeeper. A few questions to Mrs. Jones soon made the position clear to Nelson Lee, and the fact that his cheque-book was missing convinced him that Jim had designs upon his bank balance.

"Well, upon my soul!" exclaimed the detective, in a half-admiring tone. "I scarcely anticipated that Sutcliffe would commemorate his return to freedom by the execution of such a daring and rapid coup as this, young 'un! It is really astounding!"

"But the colossal nerve of the chap!" exclaimed Nipper. "Within fifteen hours of his escape, he has committed a forgery, guv'nor—and he's made you the victim, as sure as the sun's shining at this moment! I'll bet you'll find that Jim's played Old Harry with your bank balance, sir!"

Lee and Nipper went round to the bank without delay, and soon learned exactly how Jim—disguised as the detective himself—had obtained the £5,000 in Treasury notes. The clerk who had handed over the money was flabbergasted when he learned of the fraud which had been perpetrated upon the bank; but no blame could be attached to him whatever. He had acted in good faith, and had merely—as he thought—cashed a cheque for one of the bank's most distinguished customers.

Nelson Lee was thoughtful as he and Nipper walked back to their house, and there was a certain look of grimness in the detective's eyes as he spoke.

"This means first blood to Sutcliffe, young 'un," he murmured. "There's no getting away from the fact that Jim the Penman has brought off a wonderful coup. Moreover, he has achieved his object in the most simple manner possible. His methods were masterly, in spite of their elementary nature—for the whole success of this particular exploit depended upon its very simplicity. It was characteristic of Jim to commence operations by victimising me, Nipper, and I take my hat off to him! At a single stroke he has, to some extent, revenged himself upon me, and at the same time he has lined his pockets in readiness for the furtherance of his future plans. He is now a man of capital once more, and you may be sure that we shall hear of him again in the very near future. I am looking forward to the next tussle with him with the keenest anticipation, my lad!"

The great detective spoke in a calm voice, but Nipper knew well enough that he was inwardly impatient to come to grips with the audacious forger who had so coolly and contemptuously robbed the famous criminologist.

THE END.

OUR AUTHOR'S PAGE

Mr. EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Chats With His Readers and Comments on Their Letters.

(NOTE.—If any readers care to write to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon any remarks that are likely to interest the majority. If you have any grumbles—make them to me! If you have any suggestions—send them along! Remember, my aim is to please as many of you as I possibly can. All letters should be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4.—E. S. B.)

Well, that deluge arrived. Many thanks, all of you, for your welcome and interesting letters—and special congratulations to Peter Setford, of Leytonstone, as his letter was the very first I received. Such a jolly nice letter, too! As for handwriting, I have seldom seen any so perfect.

How on earth do you do it, Reginald Rushworth? When I first looked at your letter I thought it was printed. I should need a microscope to write such tiny characters. You must have good eyesight in Gateshead. I don't know about having Handforth Fourth captain in place of Reggie Pitt. Handforth is a character with plenty of push and forcefulness, but he lacks the essential qualities in a good leader—patience, diplomacy, and coolness.

Quite a lot of you have criticised me severely for dropping Nipper out of the St. Frank's stories in such a hurry. Perhaps I had better deal with this point rather fully, as it seems to worry you so much. Needless to say, I considered the question very carefully before acting. And, after weighing all the pros and cons, I decided that it would be the wiser course to cease all reference to Nelson Lee and Nipper in the school stories as soon as possible.

The reason may seem obscure to some of you, but it is really quite simple. My object, remember, is to please everybody—and although I can't do this, I try to. And there are plenty of new readers to consider, in addition to you old-timers. All regular readers know the circumstances of the departure of Nelson Lee and Nipper

from St. Frank's, and their regular appearance in the weekly detective story shows you exactly where they are and what they are doing. New readers can therefore start taking the old paper any week, and there is no danger of these newcomers being confused.

If I continually referred to Nelson Lee and Nipper in the chronicles of St. Frank's, new readers would be rather puzzled, and therefore I think the course I have adopted is the one which had the most chance of pleasing the majority.

Now, about all your nice letters. I'd like to answer them individually, especially as they are so intelligent and helpful. And I've got a kind of fear at the back of my mind that I may offend some of you if I don't. But I've got to take the risk. It isn't a big one, because I know you're all sporty. The fact is, this page is only a certain size, and I can't stretch it. And if I ran on to another page, you'd probably get fed up, and wish me in Jericho.

I'm quite frank, and I mean to take your letters each week, read through them, and then deal with the points that are most pressing—from your collective point of view. For example, this week I have given you an explanation concerning Nelson Lee and Nipper.

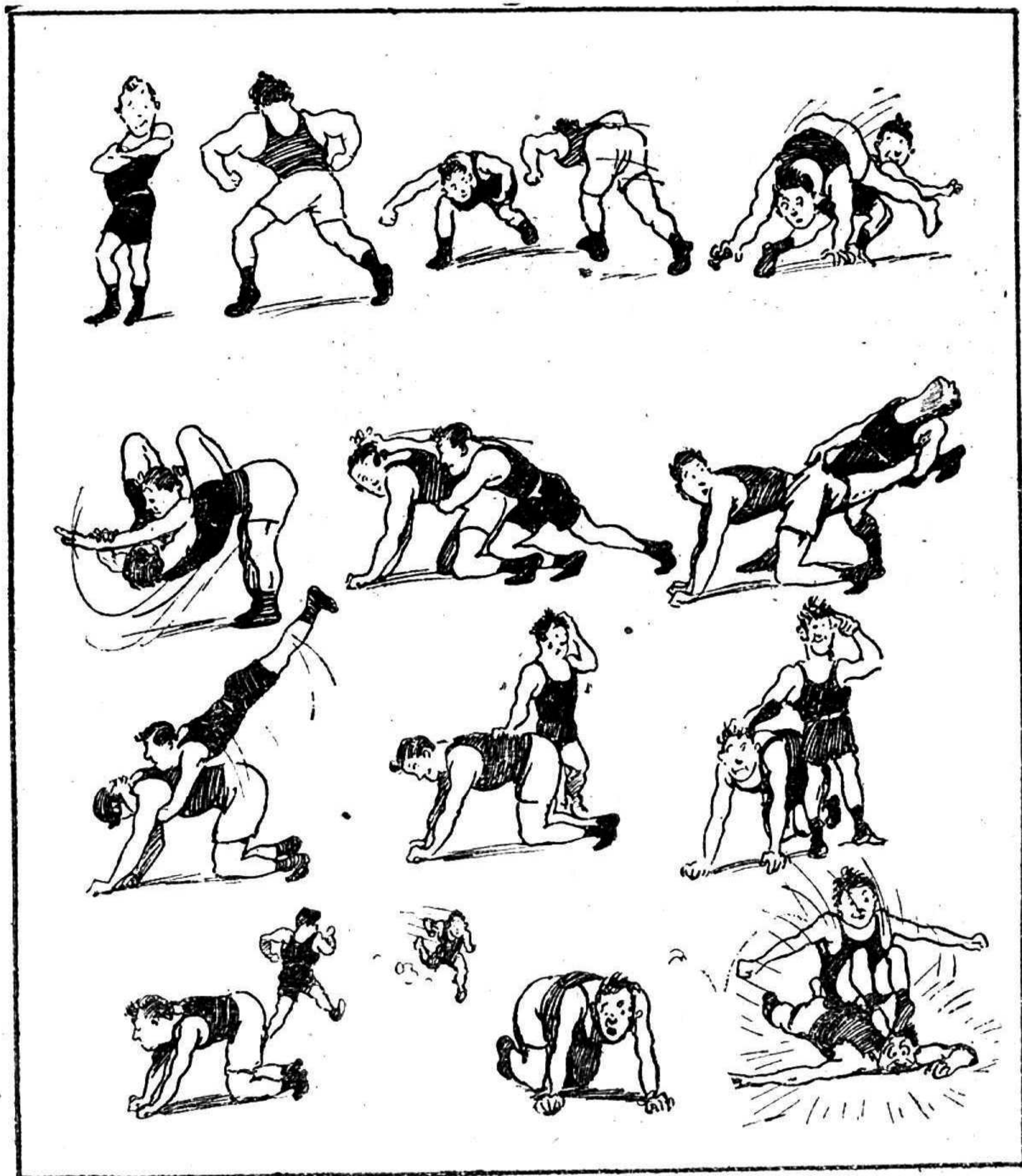
I'd particularly like to thank "A Tomboy of Brixton" for her frank and delightful letter. Another special word of thanks from me is due to G. G. Lugg, and John Williamson, and Ada—of Stratford, Silvertown, and Glasgow respectively—for their cheery letters. With such staunch and enthusiastic readers as these I should be less than human if I did not feel impelled to put forth greater efforts than ever.

By the way, what's wrong with your geography, R. Pearson? A Liverpool boy, and you don't even know that Cherbourg is just on the other side of the English Channel—and not across the Atlantic! I'll admit I make mistakes, but not such glaring ones as all that!

ADVENTURES OF THE HANDFORTH BROTHERS

:: **WRESTLING** ::

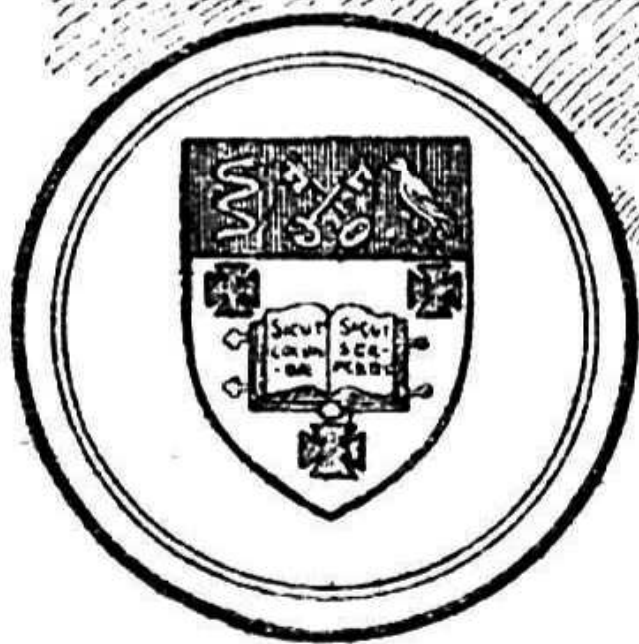
A Story Without Words



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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

No. 51.—RADLEY COLLEGE.



Radley College, also known as the College of St. Peter, is situated at Radley, two miles from Abingdon and five miles from Oxford, and is in the county of Berkshire. Opened in 1847, the college was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1890. Education is given according to the principles of the Church of England, including all the branches of study required in a public school. The college buildings include chapel and hall designed by Sir T. G. Jackson, R.A., schoolrooms, dormitories, science laboratories, etc. The number of boys at the college is about 250,

and they are divided into three houses, in addition to the college. Swimming is taught without extra charge, and boys are required to pass a swimming test of a considerable distance before they are allowed to enter for rowing. Boys are admitted to the college between the ages of 12 and 14, after they have passed the entrance examination. There are about ten entrance scholarships and exhibitions, open to boys under the age of 14. There are also a number of scholarships endowed by the War Memorial Fund for the sons of Old Radleians killed or disabled in the war.



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

My dear Chums,

In the note published at the end of last week's "Replies in Brief," Handforth had the awful nerve to imply that I am to blame for the fearful muddle into which he found himself over the correspondence. He actually apologises for me for the disappointment caused to readers by his failure to answer their letters individually. It is very kind and considerate of Handy to offer apologies for me. It is one of those supreme acts of kindness I really cannot pass unnoticed. Of course, I need not have published such an impertinent note attacking myself. I had already explained how Handy, through his own pig-headed obstinacy, had refused to turn in his "Replies" when they were required, and my only reason for allowing the note to go through was because I thought it would amuse you as much as it amused me, for it is a perfect masterpiece of cool, unadulterated cheek.

HANDY'S EXCUSE—SHEER NONSENSE!

You have only to turn to the October 11th issue of the Mag., and you will find merely a column length of "Replies." This was all that Handy had answered that week, and he must have had fully a hundred letters in hand at the time. Had he turned in enough "Replies" to fill three pages, I would have published them instead of "Facts Let Loose," and Lord Dorrimore's Travel Tale. To talk of "Who's Who" and "Portrait Gallery" crowding out his "Replies" is sheer nonsense. If it came to the push, I would sooner leave out the Trackett Grim serial. As it is, I have cut down the instalment this week to the bare minimum of a single page. I don't suppose it will please his Lordship, but it will, at all events, give Handy less excuse for not keeping up-to-date with his "Replies."

THE VINDICATION OF ST. FRANK'S.

Our little trip to Fleet Street has not been in vain. We have been heard at last, and soon the whole of England will know the truth. No less a person than the Editor of the "Daily Sun" has promised to vindicate our name, and to publish a full account of the part St. Frank's played in the salvage of the Trident. Other papers will probably follow the example of the "Daily Sun," and then once more St. Frank's will fill the high place it formerly held among the front rank of English public schools.

BRAVO, THE FOURTH!

We, of the Fourth, have had a difficult task to perform, and now that it is all over and we have weathered the storm successfully, we can rest assured that posterity will not soon forget how the Fourth saved St. Frank's from that most devastating form of destruction—the ruin of a bad name. Schools have been razed to the ground by fire, they have in the past suffered from political suppression, or they have closed down from lack of financial support and other causes, yet they have risen and flourished again. But a school that falls into decay through evil repute is nearly always doomed to complete annihilation. Thanks to the splendid fight put up by the Fourth, and the way they stuck together, we have been able to clear ourselves and to prove to the world that St. Frank's was more sinned against than sinning.

THE COMING "FIFTH" CELEBRATIONS.

Thank goodness, our troubles are now all over bar the shouting, and there will be a lot of that next week, and I have a feeling that the "Fifth" celebrations, which come about the same time, will be more elaborate than we have witnessed for many a year.

Your sincere chum,
REGGIE PITT.



OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY. *And WHO'S WHO.*



SOLOMON LEVI

No. 21.—SOLOMON LEVI.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Slim, straight, well-proportioned. Refined, clean-cut features, with only very slight indication of his Jewish blood. Keen, alert expression. Eyes, deep brown. Hair, dark and curly, with natural wave. Height, 4 ft. 11 ins. Weight, 8 st. 12 lb. Birthday, January 3rd.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Is always quick-witted and business-like. Generally on the look-out for opportunities to indulge his commercial propensities. Light-hearted and witty by nature, and exceedingly particular about the cut and quality of his attire. A genuine sportsman.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Enjoys football more than any other game. An excellent half-back, and figures on the reserve list. Hobby: Exchange and barter, or any kind of buying and selling.



JACK GREY

No. 22.—JACK GREY.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Well set-up, and evenly proportioned. Frank, honest, good-natured face. Small nose, rounded chin, and plump cheeks. Eyes, clear blue. Hair, light brown. Height, 5 ft. $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Weight, 8 st. 5 lb. Birthday, November 21st.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Quiet and unobtrusive. Inclined to be studious. A tenacious worker, whether at sport or lessons. Sunny-tempered, but quick to resent a slight. Staunch and true, and unusually reserved. Has a habit of running his fingers through his hair when deep in thought.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Plays inside-right for St. Frank's junior eleven. A consistently good footballer. Hobbies: Reading, fret-work, and banjo-playing.

THE FOURTH At ST. FRANK'S.



No. 23.—GEORGE BELL.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Slim and aristocratic, with drooping, narrow-chested figure. Well-cut features, but supercilious expression. Sallow complexion. Eyes, close-set, watery blue. Hair, chestnut. Height, 4 ft. 10 ins. Weight, 7 st. 12 lb. Birthday, May 28th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

A languid, simpering dandy. Weak and characterless. An arrant coward in any emergency. Eager to follow an evil lead. Thinks an enormous lot of himself, but is actually dull-witted and obtuse. A fop. Everlastingly fingering his tie to satisfy himself that it is straight.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Takes no interest in sports—except horseracing. Bets, gambles, and thinks he is being clever. Hobby: Trying to pick out winners.



GEORGE BELL

No. 24.—WALTER DENNY.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Broad, squarely-built, and squat, with thick neck and large features. Ruddy complexion. Broad, flat nose. Wide mouth, prominent teeth. Eyes, hazel. Hair, brown and coarse, with a mop-like appearance. Height, 4 ft. 7 ins. Weight, 8 st. 10 lb. Birthday, July 1st.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Rather domineering, and, left alone, would probably develop into a bully. Follows the lead of Buster Boots, and is influenced for the good by Buster.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Good at wrestling and swimming. Takes a keen interest in cycling. Makes a hobby of his bicycle, always adjusting it and touching it up. Spends all his spare cash on new accessories.



WALTER DENNY

NOTE.—The ages of Fourth Form boys vary between 14 and 16, but for obvious reasons no more definite information on this point can be given.

NEXT WEEK: Nicodemus Trotwood, Harry Oldfield, Cornelius Trotwood, Billy Nation.

FACTS LET LOOSE

Our Allsorts Page

By **EUGENE ELLMORE**

DINOSAUR SKELETONS.

Red Deer Valley, Alberta, Canada, abounds in dinosaur skeletons. More have been found there than in any other place in the world. Twenty-five expeditions have been sent to this valley in search for the fossils of these giant lizards. Over three hundred of the skeletons have been hewn out of the rocks, among them dragons quite new to science. There are no less than fifteen skeletons in the Toronto Museum. Dr. A. P. Coleman declares, on the evidence of some two hundred fossil plants dug up near Toronto, that between the great ice ages that part of Canada had a climate as mild as that of Pennsylvania. He contends that the Toronto district was the most extensive and important inter-glacial formation in America.

THE POACHER.

Poaching, like smuggling, is not what it used to be. Still it goes on. Hares and rabbits are chiefly sought after, pheasants now being scarce. There is little shooting, ferrets and nets being chiefly relied on. A long net is fixed up alongside a wood while the rabbits and hares are feeding outside. When they return, often driven in by dogs, the poacher is waiting to dispatch them as they tumble into the net. Another method is to use a drag net, made of silk, by drawing it over the ground, two men being employed. The thorn bushes dotted about cleared harvest fields are intended to thwart these drag-net poachers. And they do it, for the poachers shun these fields. Once the net is entangled in these bushes, the poacher is beaten. Of course, the game-keepers protect coverts in the same way, by placing prickly bushes and barbed wire along the margins. Dummy pheasants were used at one time, and many a poacher was fooled by them. When he went to pick up the "game" he found a wooden dummy. On the whole, poaching is a game that is now hardly worth the candle.

THE BILLINGSGATE PORTER.

Some of these fish porters have acquired an almost perfect carriage by carrying parcels of fish on their heads. The weights they will carry thus are astounding. It is not uncommon for a box of fish weighing three hundredweights to be carried in this way. Perhaps it is still more wonderful that the man carrying it can, by a slight nod of the head, scarcely perceptible to the onlooker, slide this heavy trunk off his head on to the top of another box, as neatly as a bricklayer sets one brick on the top of another. Women who carry heavy weights on their heads in savage countries develop physical beauty and strength to a degree that the flabby civilised woman may envy, but cannot imitate. Some of the Billingsgate fish porters might be models for the Apollo Belvedere.

BIRD MYSTERIES.

Why the birds come and go as they do, and how they can fly such enormous distances, are things beyond human understanding. Before summer has ended the swift and the cuckoo leave us—for Africa. In early autumn swallows and martins assemble on barn roofs, telegraph wires, and so on, and give every sign of uneasiness. Then suddenly they're off. Some migrating birds make a flight of five thousand miles! Think of it! Lighthouses attract them when they are in flight, and thousands of them are dashed to pieces. On the top of one lighthouse they have fixed perches, so that the weary little creatures may rest. Swallows ringed in Berkshire have been found in South Africa. And starlings ringed in the North of Europe have been found in England. They come here to winter. So do fieldfares, redwings, plovers, rooks, crows, and various kinds of ducks and geese. Their chief point of arrival is the Norfolk coast. A North wind brings them in multitudes.



THE SIGN OF THE SCARLET SHADOW!

A Startling New Serial of Mystery and Thrilling Adventure, introducing Trackett Grim and Splinter.

By EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH

IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN:

Trackett Grim and Splinter are down at Quiver Castle trying to find out why Sir Makeham Quiver's shadow has turned scarlet. They are investigating a secret passage at dead of night, when the ground opens before them, and they shoot down into the abyss. Fiendish laughter cackles out on the quivering air. **BEFORE READING ON, HOLD YOUR BREATH AND GRIP YOUR CHAIR!**

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN IN THE STEEL MASK.

DOWN—down—down! Trackett Grim and Splinter went hurtling into the depths. It was just like going down a lift shaft. Then suddenly Grim reached the bottom, and plunged headlong into a pool of murky water.

Splinter followed in due course, and pushed Trackett Grim under again just as he had come up for the third time.

"Sorry, sir!" gasped Splinter. "Good heavens! We've dropped into a well! It was an attempt to murder us, sir!"

Trackett Grim clung to the side of the shaft, and nodded.

"Undoubtedly, Splinter!" he agreed, his keen eyes searching the place with the power of a telescope. "Ah! Some loose bricks! Leave it to me, and we'll soon be out of this!"

As calm and imperturbable as ever, Trackett Grim filled his pipe and lit it. He could see that the well was an old one, and many of the crumbling bricks were falling away.

Splinter dashed the water out of his eyes, and peered round. But it was impossible

to penetrate the inky darkness. This mystery was growing deeper and deeper.

Without warning, a lot of bricks fell into the water, and Trackett Grim uttered a triumphant yell as he bored a hole through the wall. He stepped into an underground cavern, and Splinter followed. At last they were about to discover some tangible clues!

The cavern was a rummy-looking place with a low roof, and up one corner were some bits of machinery. Trackett Grim sprang over to them with a keen cry. In a trice his magnifying lens was whipped out, and he examined the relics with all his eyes.

"My hat!" he gasped. "Coiners!"

"Coiners!" repeated Splinter, aghast. "But—but—"

"At last we are getting on the track of the mystery!" cried Trackett Grim, his voice ringing clear and true. "See, Splinter! These pennies are duds! Some rotten cad is using this place to make squiffy pennies! We've only got to collar him, and—"

With a clang of metal, a trap-door in the floor shot open, and a figure burst into view. He was a man dressed in chain mail, and his face was villainous and awful. His teeth stood out like fangs, and his eyes had a nasty sort of gleam in them. And he was wearing a glittering steel mask which completely concealed his features.

"Got you!" he roared triumphantly.

He pressed a button somewhere, and two long flashes of electricity darted out of the wall, and enveloped Trackett Grim and Splinter in zig-zag flashes of blue flame!

(If you miss next week's instalment, you'll miss the finest chapter of detective fiction that has never been thought of!—AUTHOR.)

IN REPLY to YOURS



Correspondence Answered by
Edward Oswald Handforth

(NOTE.—Readers of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY can write to me, and I will reply on this page. But don't expect an answer for several weeks—perhaps five or six. Address your letters, or postcards, to E. O. HANDFORTH, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, LONDON, E.C.4.—E. O. H.)

CYRIL AMOS (Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia): You Colonials are thundering good judges! I agree with you, Cyril, that best thing in the "Mag." is the T. G. tale.

"CURIOUS" (Strathallyn, Australia): If I had room, I'd soon tell you how to get rid of your freckles. Next time you write, perhaps. How's the T. G. serial?

STAN BREWER (Bayswater, W. Australia): All right! You send me some local colour, and T. G. shall go to Australia to solve a mystery for you. Jolly good idea!

"PADDY THE NEXT BEST THING" (Tourtoirac, France): I can't make out your right name, so I've had to put this one, and now all the room I had for you has gone!

P. CON (Dublin): As you think I'm a terrible fathead, you won't expect a proper answer to your letter. And you won't get one, either! You're worse than Willy!

E. PORTER (Swindon): A fine "chum" you are! A "fag" to write to me, and you've only written because you had "nothing better" to do! Now apologise, you ass!

IVY (Southport): Please give little Doreen a great big kiss for me, and thank her for her card. Thanks to you also, Ivy, for promising a longer letter.

ALAN POLLOCK (Cavan): All right, my lad! You come over to St. Frank's

and try it on! You couldn't floor me first round, or any other round, Irish chap or not!

SILVIA MAPLETHORP (Chelsea, S.W.3.): If my forgiveness for those hard thoughts is all you want to please you, you've got it in chunks. No flogging deserved.

HILDA ROGERS (Rossett, Denbighshire): Yours is such a nice letter, Hilda, that I'd love to give you the long reply you ask for. But my space won't let me.

CHARLES J. RYAN (Peckham, S.E.): It's a good job you dried up when you did, because I got the pip long before I got to the end of your letter. Talk of swank!

BILLIE (Belfast): You'll have to send me a much longer letter than that if you want a long reply. In fact, I'm only going to answer very long letters now!

"GONE WEST" (Liverpool): You're a hopeless ass to expect me to answer all those dotty questions in this little space. I'm a detective, not a magician!

"EDOWHAN" (York): There's a name! I don't know whether you're a boy or a girl by that squiffy signature. But your rotten scrawl has given you away. I know!

MAC (Kildare, Ireland): I don't blame you for thinking I'm Irish, because Erin's full of witty fighters. But I believe we've got an Irish ass coming here!

C. E. W. (S. Lambeth, S.W.8.): At first I thought you really meant that about my feeble brain. But, of course, you're only trying to pull my leg. And it can't be did!

"PTEERCLLOINS" (West Hampstead, N.W.): You ask so many questions that I'm feeling dizzy. All on a postcard, too! It simply can't be done!

J. COOK (Poplar, E.14.): Like your nerve to suggest I was born on April 1st! Still, I forgive you—your letter's full of good sense. Thanks!

ELDRED C. S. (Newport, Mon.): That recipe of yours is dotty. As for getting

shivers when you read my T. G. yarns, it only proves how thrilling they are.

W. CLARKSON (Chiswick): All right, my son. You'll find that note you want immediately below this. I say, don't send me kisses! Nerve!

V. DYER, H. CLUTT, F. P., and C. H. (Chiswick): Look here, you four! It's about time you got busy and sent me a few lines. Don't be lazy!

HANDFORTH MINOR (Tottenham): I won't answer your next letter if you call me Eddy again. No, my knuckles don't get sore—they're hardened.

"WAJ" (Shepherd's Bush): I've found out what your cipher means, but I haven't got space to explain it properly. Who's my best girl? Nobody, fathead!

F. ROBINSON (Liverpool): You'll hear more about Nick before long. Sorry I can't tell you where to get back numbers of the Old Paper. They sell too quickly!

"A CANDID READER" (Reading) My T. G. stories are babyish???!! Great pip! You're asking for trouble, my lad! And you want a long answer! ,

"INTERESTED" (Wisbech): You're off your chump. If you've written three other letters, you must have received three other replies—Handy always answers!

"A GIRL READER" (Wellingborough): Yes, lots of chaps own motor-bikes. But they're getting so common nowadays I wouldn't have one at any price.

"REDSKIN ERN" (Hale, Lancs): Thanks for your piece of poetry. I showed it to Clarence yesterday, and he still looks a bit white and shaky.

TOM G. CLAPCOTT (Norbury, S.W.16.): So you only write to me when you've got a cold! I've a good mind to disinfect your giddy letter!

JEANETTE (Loughton, Essex): So I'm dying upwards, am I? And my T. G. stories are rot? I shan't even mention your name this week now!

"A NELSON LEE-ITE" (Oldham): Sorry, but I'm not an expert on old coins. At the same time, I think that George III. crown you mentioned is worth five bob.

"L'INCONNU" (Shepherd's Bush): You're the kind I like—always taking my part! If McClure puts your note on the fire before I read it I'll biff him sideways!

HARRY (Balham): Good for you, Harry! That cipher is jolly clever—honest Injun. Did you invent it, or is it pinched? Please let me know.

E. W. A. R. (Dublin): That young lady of yours isn't much good if she only likes you because of your chocolates! Give her some stickjaw for a change!

T. HUGHES (Carlow, Ireland): You're right. My contributions to the "Mag."

certainly give it a grip. Imagine the "Mag." without T. G. Impossible!

MARGUERITE (Rochdale): No, Nipper's got no relative's, being an orphan. And I don't quite know how he met Nelson Lee. Glad you like Irene and Co.

FRED CLARK (Manchester): Sensible suggestions are always welcome, but goodness knows where you dug yours from! Try again, Fred!

T. MAHOOT (S. Wales): First of all you praise my stories up, and then you call me a chump. It's a good thing you live in South Wales!

"CIRE REKLAW" (Withington): No, I never write odes. I leave that to lunatics and born idiots. That one you wrote is as bad as all of 'em!

SIS (Melton Mowbray): I'm blessed if I remember which chap I biffed. I do my exercises so often that these things slip out of my mind.

REG DALE (Crewe): Hear, hear! So you've noticed those insulting sketches of me on the front page? A bit thick, aren't they? All right—wait!

DICK TURPIN and TOM KING (London, E.C.): I don't believe these are your real names, and I jolly well know you never met Irene and Marjorie!

REGGIE (Liverpool): I'm not here to answer riddles, my son! What do I know about fishes heads and tails? Pull somebody else's leg!

A. GOLDENHAR (Montreal): Your description of me is so insulting that I can't believe you're a real Canadian. I'm surprised at you, Goldy!

"BOY SCOUT" (Chatswood, N. S. Wales): Cooee! I'm delighted to get a letter from N.S.W. Thanks muchly. I'll have a chat with Pitt about that scout idea.

CLIVE E. HANSFORD (Sydney, N.S.W.): Jolly nice, Clive, old man, but I don't think it can be done. Perhaps we'll have a bureau later on.

HARRY FRIEND (Melbourne, Australia): I liked your chatty letter immensely. Hope you do great things Down Under, and will always be a friend to the Old paper.

YEO TIONG HOE (Malacca): Fancy you living in a place where they get the canes from! Eileen Dare's coming along—so look out. Thanks for your praise.

JOE RAE (E.C.2.): I haven't read your letter, so I won't answer it. You address me as "You pitiful imbecile"—so I won't read another line.

"SHCAWB" (Bildeston, Suffolk): Your name sounds German, but I'll bet it's only a made-up affair of your own. Besides, you're a staunch pal—and that's enough.

TED.

THE HAUNT OF THE SPIDER

By **WILLY HANDFORTH**

SPIDERS are jolly queer cattle. I've caught hundreds, and what I don't know about spiders isn't worth knowing. I had fifty-seven at one time, all in different varieties—just like those Heinz things. I don't mean to say that I made 'em into pickles, but I just collected— Oh, blow! I shall waste all my space on explanations, at this rate. And I'll end up by getting myself into a pickle.

Now, about those spiders. Of course, the best sort to catch are those whacking great black beggars who slink about in the corners of an old barn. Sometimes they drop on your head, and then you've got a good chance of catching them. They're a bit hard to keep, though. It's difficult to know what kind of flies to feed them on, and sometimes they'll suddenly vanish, and leave nothing but a giddy skin that blows away at the first puff.

Another interesting spider is the striped chap who's mostly seen in the autumn. They've got big, fat bodies, and they lurk on bushes and creepers, and stretch their webs across footpaths. I spent a whole afternoon once watching one of these spiders build his web strand by strand. It was absolutely marvellous, the way he did it. In fact, I was so interested that I biffed the whole thing away so that he could do it again. But the fathead got the wind-up, and hid himself under a leaf. So I had to dig him out, and teach him a lesson.

There was another spider of the same kind living next door, so to speak—that is to say, the next bush. He'd just got his web made, so I chucked his lazy neighbour right in the middle of it. My hat! You ought to have seen what happened! Those two spiders had a terrific fight, and the real owner of the web found himself wrapped up in a kind of ball at the end of it. And then the invader actually started a feed. These spiders are cannibals, you know.

There are dozens of other spiders I can write about; but what's the good? You wouldn't understand, if I did. To appreciate spiders properly, you've got to make pets of them, as I've done.



By An Old
Boy

(Lord Dorrimore's
Weekly Trifle)

No. 20.—A BATTLE
WITH A TIGER.

TIGER-HUNTING is a sport as exciting as it is dangerous. Once, when in India, I was requested to kill a tiger which had carried off several human beings as well as cattle. Accompanied by my shikari, I started out to find the tiger's lair. Having discovered this, we secured about twenty men. Some of these we posted in an adjoining peepul tree, and the rest in a near-by cave. We also placed a sheep in the cavern, tethered to a heavy stone.

Then we waited until the crows and peacocks in the peepul tree should give us the signal. For as soon as a tiger appears, the peacock shrieks out its warning note, and the crows rise in a body.

Ignoring the sheep as he sprang into the cave, his eyes flaming, and his mouth spitting defiance, the tiger came for my shikari, who at once plunged his lance into its shoulder. The rest of us also thrust our lances into the tiger. But he brushed the lances off as if they had been made of gingerbread, leaving the heads sticking in his body. Roaring with rage, the tiger tried to strike me with his paw, which actually shaved my head. My shikari, however, fired into the tiger's open mouth. At the same moment I drove another lance into his chest, and he fell dead.

It was a narrow shave for me.

We carried the dead tiger into the village. There the schools were closed in honour of the event, and high festival held. The tiger's claws were cut off by the village doctor. Native women wear these as charms. The fat of the body was also distributed among the people, who prize it highly as a cure for rheumatism and other diseases.

IF YOU LOVE HORSES AND RACING—

You should make a special point of seeing this week's "Boys' Realm," because in it you will find a superb long complete yarn of the Cesarewitch.

"THE OUTSIDERS!"

That's the title of this yarn, specially written for this week's "Realm" by that famous author of sporting stories, John Hunter. Of course, there are lots of other fine features in the issue, but, most of all

—YOU MUST NOT MISS THIS STORY!

£10 a week for Life! — or £4,000!

THIS is the biggest prize that has ever been offered to the public in the history of newspaper and periodical competitions.

There are other prizes of £300 and £200. They must **ALL** be won!

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All you have to do is to solve certain picture-puzzles, and everything is made easy, too. A list of all the names concerned is supplied. Simplicity itself—and the **FIRST PRIZE** is a **FORTUNE**! Full details in this week's

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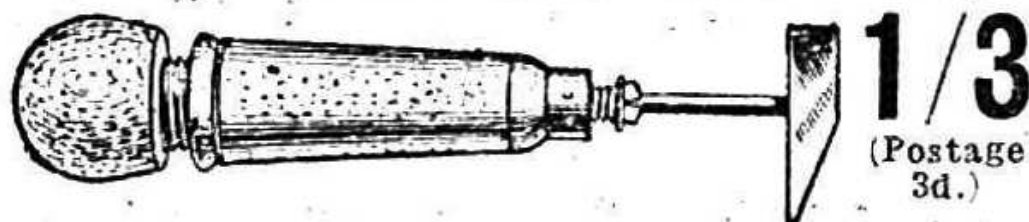
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