

GRAND ST. FRANK'S SCOUT SERIES BEGINS TO-DAY!

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THE SCOUTS OF ST. FRANK'S
*On the School
Under Canvas*

A ROUSING STORY OF THE
ST. FRANK'S BOY SCOUTS
AND THEIR CAMPING-OUT
EXPERIENCES.

No. 523.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

June 13, 1925.



The chums of Study D were looking right down upon the camp—or a triple camp. Stretched along the downs was an apparently endless series of tents.



The SCOUTS of ST. FRANKS

or,

THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS!

Whether you are a Boy Scout or not, you will thoroughly enjoy the new Scout Series beginning with this week's story. The Author has received countless letters asking for a camping-out series, and it is to meet this great demand that he is

giving us these special stories of the Boy Scout Contingent at St. Frank's. You will remember, in the story before last, how the Modern House was utterly destroyed in the recent explosion at St. Frank's. Many boys are thus deprived of accommodation at the School and the idea of camping-out comes just at the right time.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

LEFT IN POSSESSION.

CAPTAIN BERTRAM GLENTHORNE, D.S.O., put a match to his cigarette and then slung a light raincoat over his arm.

"Well, Archie, I'm off," he announced. "I'm leaving you in possession of the flat, and I shall expect to find everything ship-shape when I come back. I'll probably send you a line from Paris to-morrow."

"That'll be frightfully priceless, dear old thing," beamed Archie. "Going already? I mean to say, I thought we were going to have a chat——"

"Well, I thought so, too," interrupted his brother. "But as you were going to sleep on the lounge, and showed about as much

signs of life as a dead lizard, I thought I'd be pushing."

"What-ho!" exclaimed Archie, rousing himself vigorously. "The good old pep has got to be shoved to the fore! I mean, I'm not going to have my own brother accusing me of slacking! Absolutely not!"

Archie Glenthorne, the shining light of fashion of the St. Frank's Fourth Form, could be firm when he liked. He was firm now. He rose, adjusted his monocle, and surveyed his elder brother rather frigidly.

"Now, old scream, what about it?" he demanded.

Captain Bertram grinned.

"Splendid!" he said. "I didn't think you had enough energy, old man. All the same, I'm going—I'm due over at Croydon in less than an hour, and I can't keep them wait-

ing. My plane's being tuned-up and prepared."

Archie's firmness deserted him, and he sank back on the lounge.

"Oh, well, in that case, dear old horse, what's the bally use?" he murmured resignedly. "I mean, the old chat appears to be off the menu. So kindly buzz, and leave the last of the Glenthornes to enjoy forty of the best and brightest."

They were in the sitting-room of Captain Glenthorne's comfortable chambers in Jermyn Street, hard by Piccadilly Circus. It was a bright June morning, and the heat was already making itself felt.

It was not the first time that Archie had borrowed his brother's flat. Of course, he was welcome there at any time, but it so happened that Captain Glenthorne was off on a flying tour, and wouldn't be back for nine or ten days. So Archie had decided to spend the last week of the Whitsuntide vacation in London, with the ever-faithful Phipps to look after his needs.

"I shan't worry," said Bertram, as he prepared to go. "You had the flat at Easter, and everything was all right, so I'll trust you again. You go back to school in about a week, don't you?"

Archie started.

"I say, dash it!" he protested. "Kindly bring up these good old subjects with slightly more tact old bean! I mean to say, school—in this frightful weather! The thought absolutely torpedoes me under the water-line! I've dashed well got that sinking feeling!"

"Lazy young slacker!" said his brother sternly. "It's a wonder to me they allow you at St. Frank's at all—you're no earthly use there. All you do is to go to sleep in every corner of the college. You'll be gone when I get back from the Continent, so—"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Archie, adjusting his monocle. "In fact, wait two minutes! I've just thought of something, laddie. There won't be any dashed school

for the rest of the term! I mean, it's absolutely imposs! St. Frank's is nothing more nor less than a mass of well assorted débris."

Captain Glenthorne paused as he was about to go.

"Oh, yes—that explosion?" he said slowly. "I've heard that over half the school was wrecked."

"Positively shattered, laddie," said Archie, with a sigh. "The Modern House is now a pile of ruins, and the Ancient House looks as though it had been absolutely bombarded! I

mean, even these frightful disasters have their little compensations, what? No school, and all that sort of stuff. Oddslife, but I'll stay in this flat all the bally summer!"

Captain Glenthorne grinned.

"Well, of course, opinions differ—but we won't argue," he replied. "You heartless young wretch! Lying on that lounge and gloating because St. Frank's is a heap of ruins! Don't you kid yourself, young man; you'll get a shock during the next day or two—you'll find that you'll go back to school, after all. I know what these governing boards are. They'll find some way out of the fix, or I'm a Dutchman. Well, I'm off!"

"Absolutely," said Archie lazily. "So long, Bertie, old onion! Fearfully cut up to see you go, but there you are. Business, what? Time flies, and all that sort of thing. Don't let me detain you, laddie!"

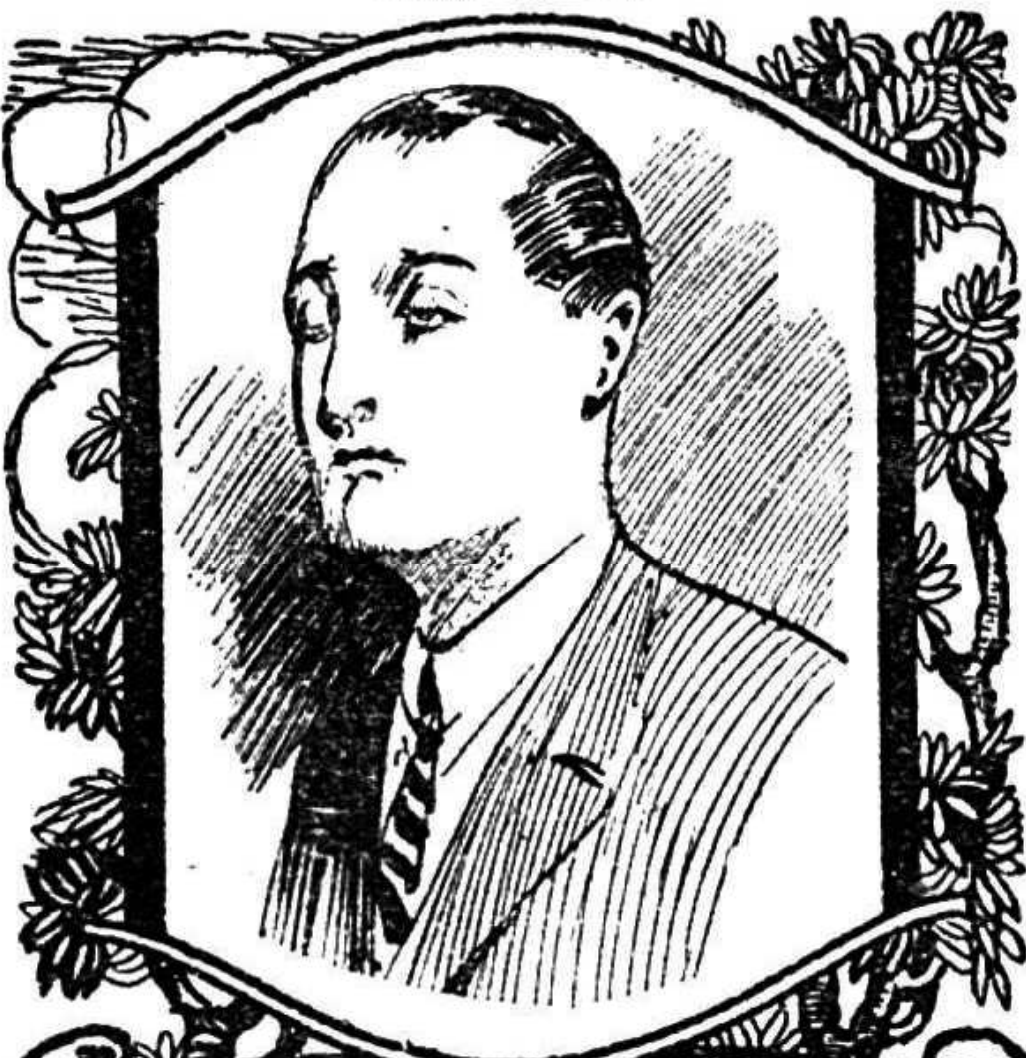
Captain Bertram had no intention of letting Archie detain him, and a few minutes later he had taken his departure. Archie closed his eyes dreamily, and felt that life was distinctly worth living. The window was wide open, a gentle, cooling breeze blew in, and he could hear the hum of traffic along Piccadilly.

He was just dozing off into a peaceful slumber when the buzz of a bell sounded. He took no notice, hearing it only in a

PORTRAIT GALLERY AND WHO'S WHO.

Fourth Series—Sixth Form.

NOTE.—The average age of Sixth Form boys is 18.



No. 9.—Guy Sinclair.

One of the dandies of the Sixth, but with a taste for flashiness. A supercilious fellow with a mean, vindictive nature. Unpopular generally, and hated by all fags. Curiously enough, he is excellent at most sports.

dim kind of way. But a moment later the door opened and Phipps glided in.

"A young gentleman to see you, sir," he announced.

"Eh, what?" ejaculated Archie, sitting up and looking at his imperturbable valet. "Here, I say, Phipps! Isn't this a bit mouldy, disturbing the young master—"

"Wake up, Archie—I've got some news!" interrupted the visitor, striding in and making himself at home. "Don't look at me in that glassy-eyed fashion! Rouse yourself, fathead!"

"Good gad!" said Archie blankly.

Alf Brent, his study mate of St. Frank's, prodded him in the ribs.

"News!" he repeated. "And, what's more, bad news!"

CHAPTER II.

ADVANCE INFORMATION.



PHIPPS gracefully retired, leaving Archie and Alf alone.

"Of course, I'm frightfully pleased to see you, old tulip, but I must observe that you drop in at fearfully awkward moments!" said Archie with a touch of pain. "What I mean is, you don't give a chappie a chance. The old telephone, for example—why not ring up and announce—"

"Don't be an ass, Archie!" interrupted Brent. "We can't waste time on formalities like that. It's about St. Frank's. I've heard something on the strict Q.T., and I thought I'd come along and tell you. As you know, we're all wondering what's going to happen, and most of the fellows have got an idea that there'll be no school for the rest of the term."

"Absolutely."

"Well, they're wrong," said Alf. "The governors have practically decided on the beastliest arrangement under the sun, and it seems to me that something ought to be done about it."

"Gadzooks!" said Archie. "You're absolutely stirring up a dashed gale! I mean, I'm getting the wind up somewhat vertically. How do you know these awful things?"

"Well, I happen to have advance information."

"That's dashed clever of you—"

"There's nothing clever about it," interrupted Alf gruffly. "My hat! You know as well as I do that my pater is Sir John Brent, and he's chairman of the board of governors."

Archie started, and lay back.

"Good gad! So he is!" he ejaculated. "So the dear old boy has been prattling, what? Letting out a few secrets of the inner council, and so forth. Be good enough to whisper a few of these sweet nothings into my attentive ear. I'm positively jellified with anxiety."

Alf Brent was looking serious. He took a seat on the corner of the table, and thought for a few moments. The situation, decided Archie, was more grave than he had first supposed.

Just before the holidays, there had been an unprecedented disaster at St. Frank's. A mighty explosion had occurred down in the disused quarry workings, near the school. The effect had been so shattering that the Modern House had entirely collapsed, and was now a heap of ruins. Over half the school had been wrecked. The greater portion of the Ancient House remained standing, but even here windows were smashed, and many ceilings had fallen.

All the fellows had left for home, firmly convinced that there would be no school again until after the summer holidays. There was an idea abroad that the long vacation would be gloriously enlarged for this year.

But in the absence of any official news, some of the juniors were beginning to feel a little doubtful. They had an uncomfortable idea that their hopes wouldn't materialise, after all.

And now Alf Brent had brought confirmation of this.

"My pater happened to mention it this morning at breakfast-time," said Alf, swinging his legs. "You see, there's going to be a meeting of the board to-morrow, and then the thing's going to be definitely decided."

"What thing?"

"It's practically all fixed now," growled Alf. "It's about the rottenest scheme I ever heard of. I told the pater so, too, but he didn't take any notice. Said something drastic had to be done, and there was nothing else for it."

Archie shook his head.

"The good old voice is dashed melodious, and all that sort of thing, but I must observe the trend escapes me," he exclaimed plaintively. "I mean to say, something drastic, what? A frightful scheme, eh? Pray relieve me of all anxiety, old cucumber, and spout out the dreadful truth."

"Well, it's like this, Archie," said Alf. "By what I can understand, they've fixed up the Ancient House. Not properly, of course, but it'll accommodate quite a good number. The idea is to have practically all the seniors back at St. Frank's, and board them in the Ancient House. In the meantime, there'll be all sorts of building operations going on. Then, during the summer holidays, the Ancient House itself will be altered."

"Absolutely," said Archie. "But where do we come in?"

"That's just it," grunted Alf. "We don't come in at all!"

"The juniors don't go to St. Frank's to finish the term?"

"No."

"Then, laddie, everything is bright and sunny——"

"Everything isn't!" interrupted Alf. "We're not going to have extra holidays, as you just thought, but we're going to be distributed."

"Distributed?"

"Yes."

"Who—us?"

"All the juniors."

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie. "I'm still floundering, dash it! The old gearbox may need oiling, but I'm dashed if I can understand you, Alf, old thing! What are we going to be distributed for, where are we going to be distributed to, and if it comes to that, why?"

"My pater's got hold of a brilliant scheme!" said Alf Brent scornfully. "There's no room for the juniors at St. Frank's, owing to the bust up, and so, if you please, we're going to be parked out."

"Oddslife! Parked out?"

"Sent in groups to other schools!" exclaimed Alf indignantly. "What do you think of that? Half a dozen of us here, and half a dozen of us there! As far as I can see, the Fourth and the Third are going to be carved up into chunks, and goodness knows where we shall find ourselves?"

Archie sank back and feebly beat the air.

"Laddie!" he whispered. "This is too much! The old tissues absolutely wilt under the strain, and I'm dithery from head to foot!"

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN WITH THE BRAIN.



ALF BRENT'S news was indeed startling. The St. Frank's Governors were evidently determined not to let the recent disaster entirely shatter the school routine. There wasn't room for everybody at St. Frank's, and so, rather than let a large number of boys stay at home, they were going to be temporarily distributed among a number of other schools—as Alf Brent had said—half a dozen here, and half a dozen there.

It seemed to be a purely junior grievance, for the Fifth and the Sixth were to be accommodated in the comparatively whole Ancient House. Big alterations were planned, but a great deal of the work could go on unhindered, even though the school was occupied. The changes in the Ancient House itself could be made after the school had closed up for the long summer holidays.

But during the next few weeks—from now until the end of the summer term—the junior boys were apparently in for an unpleasant time. Going back to St. Frank's

was quite a pleasant prospect at this time of the year—but to be sent off to some unknown school was a different thing altogether.

"Goodness knows how we shall be separated," continued Alf disgustedly. "In a case of this sort, they'll treat us like so many soldiers—one detachment here, and another detachment somewhere else. You and I might be separated by a hundred miles, for all we know."

"Nothing," moaned Archie, "is more ghastly to think of."

"And imagine Handforth & Co. divided!" said Alf. "Handforth at one school, Church at another, and McClure at a third!"

"Laddie, they'd never live through it," declared Archie. "I don't want to be frightfully pessimistic, but this scheme of your pater's strikes me as being a trifle more than foul. It wouldn't be going too far to describe it as venomous. Good gad! Handforth wouldn't live until the end of term, without Church and McClure to look after him!"

Alf Brent managed to grin.

"I agree with you, but we'd better not mention that view to Handy!" he chuckled. "He's inclined to take these things the wrong way. My pater is generally sensible, but this time he seems to be a bit off his rocker."

Archie sighed.

"All paters are liable to have these lapses," he said sadly. "At times, my own governor shoves the priceless old veto on my happiest suggestions. A habit of paters, laddie—and we must bear with them. It seems to me that something fearfully swift ought to be done. I mean to say, rallying round, and confabbing, and all that kind of thing."

"Yes, but what?" asked Alf, getting off the table, and striding up and down. "That's the question, old man. Of course, there's something to be said for my pater's point of view. There's certainly not room enough for all of us in the Ancient House, and I suppose the seniors come first, so we juniors are to be pushed into other schools. And once the Governing Board finally decides, it'll be too late to——"

"Oddslife!" ejaculated Archie, sitting forward. "An idea, laddie! A bally brain-wave! What-ho! It seems to me that you've absolutely come to the right department."

Alf Brent looked at his elegant chum doubtfully.

"You've really got an idea?" he asked with an incredulous stare.

"Absolutely!"

"Something to put the stopper on the whole scheme?"

"Well, hardly that, old chestnut," admitted Archie. "The fact is, I've got an

idea how we can get an idea, if you follow me."

"I don't," said Alf bluntly. "You're drivelling."

"I say! Somewhat terse, what?" protested Archie. "But I mean to say, what about Phipps? That's the idea, Alf, old bird! Call in Phipps, and I'll guarantee that the priceless old egg will absolutely produce suggestions as swift as a dashed magician takes rabbits out of a hat."

Alf Brent looked interested.

"You're not drivelling after all," he said generously. "Phipps, eh? I'm bound to admit he's a brainy sort of chap."

"Brainy?" repeated Archie. "My dear old horse, Phipps is entirely composed of brain. If he liked, he could be Prime Minister! I mean to say, the cove is an absolute marvel! It doesn't matter how knotty the problem, he just gives one swift thought, and everything's over."

Alf went across the room, and pushed the bell.

A few moments later, Phipps appeared, and looked inquiringly at his young master.

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "What about it, Phipps? Kindly get the gear-box to work, and produce a few suggestions."

"If you will inform me of the problem, sir, I will do my best."

"The problem?" repeated Archie. "Good gad! Of course, you don't know anything about it, do you? Alf, old teacup, kindly trot out the facts, so that Phipps can wrap himself round them."

And Alf, thus appealed to, lost no time in telling Phipps of the unpleasant prospect. Archie's valet listened with grave attention, and when he had heard all he stroked his chin in a thoughtful way.

"A difficult position, young gentlemen," he admitted. "I appreciate the reluctance you feel—the natural reluctance to go away to other schools. It is very serious."

Archie dropped his monocle.

"But, gadslife!" he ejaculated. "You don't mean to stand there, Phipps, and tell us that the good old attic is absolutely vacant?"

"No, sir," said Phipps. "I already have a little suggestion to offer."

CHAPTER IV.

THE CALL OF THE CLAN.



ARCHIE GLEN-THORNE beamed.

"Without wishing to imitate a dashed farmyard, I must admit that I feel inclined to crow!" he observed. "What-ho! What

did I tell you, Alf, old sunlight? Phipps has got an idea!"

"A mere suggestion, of course, sir," Phipps hastened to put in. "The problem, in brief, amounts to this. Only a limited

number of boys are returning to St. Frank's, and these boys will consist solely of seniors. The junior young gentlemen, including yourselves, will be dispatched to various other scholastic establishments."

"That's it," said Alf.

"Well, sir, is not the solution quite obvious?" asked Phipps respectfully. "There is no accommodation for you at St. Frank's, and yet you don't wish to go away. Surely it means that the necessary accommodation must be provided?"

"Oddso!" ejaculated Archie. "But there isn't any, laddie."

"That's just it," added Alf. "We're not so feeble-minded as all that, Phipps. You know as well as I do that half the school was busted up—"

"Precisely so, sir," put in Phipps gently. "At the same time, there are alternative methods. For instance, I have heard on the best authority, that canvas is quite an excellent roofing material."

Alf Brent started.

"Canvas?" he repeated.

"Tents, sir."

"Tents!" yelled Brent. "You—you mean —"

"Exactly, sir," said Phipps. "Camping in this weather is, I believe, a pure delight. There may be occasional rain, of course—I think it is understood that the English summer sometimes affords us a great variety in weather conditions."

"Camping out!" exclaimed Alf, his eyes gleaming. "Tents on the playing fields! A whole giddy flock of them, Archie! That's the scheme! Why not?"

"Absolutely not," agreed Archie. "I mean to say, absolutely! Why, as you say, not? I must confess, of course, that the prospect is even fouler than before, but it seems to tickle you. Camping out in tents, and all that sort of stuff has never exactly appealed to me. Phipps, laddie, I must observe that your suggestion department has slipped a bally cog or two!"

"I am sorry, sir!"

"I mean to say, camping!" said Archie, with a shudder. "Sleeping on wet grass, and all that sort of thing! Dash it, I'd rather go to another bally school!"

"Don't you believe it, Archie," said Alf Brent. "This suggestion of Phipps' is the absolute goods! It's a brain-wave, and I can't understand why we didn't think of it. It only shows that it takes a master mind to suggest these little details. St. Frank's under canvas, eh? I tell you, it's terrific! The rest of this term will be like a holiday!"

Archie sank back upon the lounge.

"Opinions, of course, differ!" he sighed. "Kindly carry on! Take no notice of me whatever. But if this poisonous proposition comes into force, I shall absolutely insist upon a special tent with a double

flooring, electric light, and a corner reserved for Phipps."

"You can insist on what you like, old man," said Alf generously. "I'll buzz straight home and tell my pater about this. He's bound to agree, and then I can let all the other fellows know——"

Phipps coughed, and Alf looked at him.

"Begging your pardon for interrupting, sir," said Phipps. "But I should advise you to think twice before approaching your father."

"Why?"

"I fear he would take the suggestion in a manner quite opposed to your own hopes, sir," replied Phipps gravely. "Nothing definite is going to be decided until tomorrow, and I therefore propose a discussion."

"A discussion?" repeated Alf.

"Yes, sir. Such young gentlemen as Master Nipper and Master Handforth and Master Pitt are all available by telephone. I propose that you ring them up, and that a meeting is held forthwith. On their way here, the young gentlemen can call and bring others who are not so easily accessible."

Alf Brent calmed down.

"I must admit, Phipps, you've got the right idea," he said admiringly. "A Form-meeting, eh? Yes, Reggie Pitt ought to know about this. And perhaps we can send a proper deputation to my pater. It would have more effect, I expect."

"I was about to say the same thing myself, sir," said Phipps.

"Good man!" declared Alf crisply. "Where's your telephone, Archie? We'll ring up Pitt and Nipper and Handforth and the few others at once."

And within a few minutes Alf was busy at the telephone. He got hold of Nipper all right, and Nipper promised to come, and he would collect Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West on the way. Reggie Pitt undertook to bring Jack Grey and Bob Christine and Buster Boots. As for Handforth, Church and McClure, they were already with him, and they promised to start for Jermyn Street straight away.

Alf finished with the telephone at last, and hung up the receiver.

"Phew! Well, that's done!" he exclaimed. "There's something moving—and it'll be a pity if the Fourth can't push this thing through!"

CHAPTER V.

INTERVIEWING SIR JOHN.



"WHAT rot. Sending us away to other schools? I never heard of such a dotty idea!"

Edward Oswald Handforth, the masterful leader of Study D, spoke with all his usual bluntness. He

had just arrived with Church and McClure, and Alf had explained the situation.

"It's a fact," said Brent. "But there's no need to worry—Phipps has thought of a good idea. Instead of us going to other schools, he proposes that we should camp out in tents. In that way we can all be at St. Frank's, and there'll be lots of fun."

"Rather!" said Church enthusiastically. "It'll be ripping, under canvas. Might rain a bit, of course, but that'll add to the charm of it."

Handforth strode up and down, with his hands clasped behind his back, and his head sunk forward. He looked like a human edition of Felix, and suddenly he came to a halt.

"I've got it!" he ejaculated. "We'll go into camp!"

"Eh?" said Brent staring.

"Tents!" said Handforth triumphantly. "There isn't room for us in the school, and so we'll go under canvas! It's a jolly good thing you told me about this! You've got the benefit of my ideas now!"

Alf grinned. Handforth didn't really know that he was being funny. In some strange way he believed that his suggestion was original. And he was tremendously enthusiastic about it.

Then Reginald Pitt and Jack Grey and a few more arrived. And, on their heels came Nipper and Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson. Archie's sitting-room was like a St. Frank's common-room during a Form meeting.

"Of course, we simply can't think of being pushed off into other schools," declared Nipper, at length. "There's no telling where we shall find ourselves or how we shall be distributed. It's up to the Fourth to stick together—and the Third ought to be just as firm."

"Blow the Third!" said Handforth. "It'll be all the better if my minor and his gang go somewhere else."

"I don't like to spoil your exhibition of brotherly love, old son, but the Third ought to be considered," went on Nipper. "Anyhow, if Sir John Brent agrees to the camping idea at all, he'll allow the Third to participate in the scheme. We ought to see Sir John at once."

"That's it—a deputation," agreed Reggie Pitt. "We'll put it to him gently, and use all our persuasive powers. Do you think we stand much chance, Alf?"

"Oh, I think so," said Brent. "My pater's a pretty decent old sort. Somehow, I don't think I'd better come—he'll take a lot more notice of you fellows. Nipper ought to do most of the talking—he's got the best gift of the gab."

"The deputation ought to be limited to three," exclaimed Pitt. "I suggest Nipper and Buster Boots and myself. I'm Form skipper, and I really ought to be there——"

"What about me?" demanded Handforth, glaring.

"My dear chap, there's no need——"

"Rot!" roared Handforth. "The thing's going to be an absolute failure unless I go! How do you expect Sir John to agree unless I talk to him? I'm not going to be messed about like this—I've got to be included in the deputation!"

Nipper winked at the others.

"Yes, I think Handy ought to come," he said gravely. "We don't want to jeopardise the success of the mission. All right, then—we four: Boots, Pitt, Handforth, and myself."

The rest agreed. It was felt that Handforth's inclusion in the party would lead to trouble, but it had to be risked. There would be a lot more trouble if he was excluded.

There was no delay, either. Alf mentioned that his pater was always at home in the neighbourhood of lunch-time, and he was generally in a good humour at that hour. So the deputation left at once.

Arriving at Sir John's house in the West End, the four juniors were shown in, and learned with satisfaction that their quarry was at home. Furthermore, he consented to see them, and they were shown into the library.

"Good-morning boys—good-morning!" said Sir John genially, as the deputation entered. "If you have come for Alfred, I'm afraid you will be disappointed. I understand he has gone to see young Glenthorne."

"No, sir. It's something quite different," said Nipper. "I hope Alf hasn't given away any special secrets, but we all understand that there's going to be some big changes when this half-term starts, next week."

Sir John looked rather surprised.

"Well, yes," he replied. "That's natural, too. You all know the condition of the school——"

"Is it true that we're going to be sent off to other schools, sir?" put in Handforth bluntly.

"So Alfred has told you, eh?" smiled Sir John. "Well, boys, although nothing has been definitely decided, it is practically settled that you will be distributed. There is really nothing else to be done. Your education has to be thought of, and the holidays cannot be extended indefinitely while the school is being rebuilt."

"We quite understand that, sir," said Nipper. "But, at the same time, we feel that there's another way out of the difficulty. We're here, sir, as a deputation of the Fourth Form."

Sir John Brent raised his eyebrows.

"Oh, indeed!" he said. "A purely business visit, eh? In that case, young gentlemen, you had better sit down, and we will discuss the matter in a purely formal way."



"Hold on, sir!" said Handforth, giving the corner of Sir John's desk a heavy thump. "When it comes to discipline, we'll look after that! All you've got to do to-morrow is to put this thing to the Board of Directors, and push it through!"

CHAPTER VI.

NOTHING DOING.



SIR JOHN BRENT'S calm acceptance of the situation pleased the deputation immensely. His crisp air of business-like keenness was just what they wanted. It

was a great thing to have such a prompt hearing. For, although Sir John was Alf Brent's father, he was also that exalted person, the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

"Now, boys," he said briskly. "You have an alternative suggestion? I shall be only too pleased to hear it—and if it is worthy of any consideration, I shall place it before the Governing Board during the course of to-morrow's meeting."

The juniors didn't know that Sir John was deliberately adopting his business-like attitude. He told himself that he might as well humour these youngsters. They deserved it for having the nerve to come to him in this way.

"It's quite simple, sir," said Nipper.

"The Modern House is a wreck, and the Ancient House isn't big enough to accommodate everybody. But wouldn't it be better if the whole school remained intact?"

"Undoubtedly it would be better."

"Then we've only got to have the accommodation provided, sir, and St. Frank's needn't be disintegrated," went on Nipper. "Our suggestion is simply this—that we juniors go under canvas."

"Under canvas!" ejaculated Sir John. "Impossible!"

"Not at all, sir—it's done every summer," put in Nipper quickly. "The scouts do it—and cadets, and lots of fellows. We only need the tents, and we can be quite comfortable under canvas. And we shall all be together, and St. Frank's won't be divided. We thought you might decide upon this at the meeting to-morrow."

Sir John thoughtfully knocked the ash off his cigar. His attitude was gradually changing. He was losing his genial smile, and becoming grave. He realised, in fact, that these juniors were perfectly serious, and that the proposition was an earnest one.

"You really mean this, then?" he asked. "Well, boys, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I am afraid the suggestion is quite out of place. I do not blame you for desiring to stand by the school, but this camping proposition is quite out of the question."

"That's not final, is it, sir?" asked Nipper.

"I am afraid so——"

"Oh, but look here!" broke in Handforth. "Half a tick, sir! Haven't we got the most say in the matter? We're the chaps who are affected, and if we're ready to live in tents, instead of proper rooms, it's our giddy lookout! It won't affect you at all!"

Sir John frowned.

"You forget that it affects me in quite another way," he replied. "As Chairman of the Governors, I am responsible for the school's discipline—for the health of the boys—for the general conduct of the whole establishment. And it would be a pure farce to have half the school camping on the grounds and living in tents."

"Farce, sir?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"Yes, my boy," replied Sir John. "No discipline would be possible—even rules and regulations could not be adhered to. I'm sorry, for I can perceive that you came here with high hopes. But, really, the idea is quite impossible. Put it right out of your minds."

There was a finality about Sir John's tone which carried conviction, and the members of the deputation looked at one another rather hopelessly. Handforth was the only one who remained hopeful—and his optimism was proverbial.

"Hold on, sir," he said, standing up, and giving the corner of Sir John's desk a heavy

thump. "When it comes to discipline, we're looking after that! All you've got to do to-morrow is to put this thing to the Board of Directors, and push it through! Have all the tents provided, and the camp-beds, and all that, and leave the rest to us!"

"Indeed!" said Sir John. "I've got to put this to the Directors?"

"Yes, sir."

"And push it through?"

"Yes, sir."

"And we must have the tents provided?"

"Yes, sir."

"And these, I take it, are your strict orders?"

"Yes, sir—I—I mean, no, sir!" gasped Handforth.

"I'm glad to hear that," said Sir John ominously. "I was quite under the impression that you were giving me instructions. However, we will let it pass. I have already told you that the plan cannot be carried out. In your boyish enthusiasm you have taken it for granted that this scheme would be successful. But it cannot come into operation."

"Any particular reason, sir?" asked Nipper quietly.

"Several—but I can name one which is quite sufficient," said Sir John. "It would be perfectly incongruous to have the junior school encamped in the college grounds—living in tents, and wearing Eton suits, and so forth. St. Frank's, indeed, would be a laughing-stock."

"But under the special circumstances, sir——"

"The circumstances may be exceptional, but not to such an extent as that," interrupted Sir John firmly. "It would be quite different if you were Boy Scouts—quite different. In that case, you would be wearing the proper clothing, you would be under discipline, and a camp would be in the ordinary nature of things."

"Yes, sir," said the deputation.

"But you are not Boy Scouts, and, if it comes to that, St. Frank's has no Boy Scout troop," said Sir John. "So it is quite useless to continue this discussion."

CHAPTER VII.

THE ONLY WAY.



NIPPER allowed a little gleam to appear in his eyes.

"Very well, sir—we'll go!" he exclaimed.

"We quite understand your point, and we appreciate that nothing can be done. But, just for the sake of argument, suppose we were Boy Scouts."

Sir John laughed.

"My dear lad, you are not Boy Scouts—"

"But for the sake of argument, sir?"

"In that case, of course, I should give the suggestion more consideration," said Sir John. "A summer camp would, perhaps, be quite permissible. But you are merely wasting my time—"

"And we're wasting ours," said Nipper briskly. "Sorry, sir! We'll clear off, and accept your decision as final. Hope we haven't bothered you too much, sir."

"Not at all—not at all!" beamed Sir John. "I am pleased to find that you are acting so sensibly. Don't be disappointed, boys—the separation will only be a brief one, for the summer holidays will soon be here, and after that a new St. Frank's will have arisen. I can assure you that it will be a better St. Frank's from every point of view."

And with this the deputation had to be satisfied. They got outside, and all four were looking rather troubled. Handforth, indeed, was bubbling over with indignation.

"You're a jolly fine spokesman!" he exclaimed tartly, turning on Nipper. "Wouldn't let me get a word in edgeways—and then you calmly ended up by telling Sir John that we accepted his decision as final! What rot! We haven't done anything of the sort!"

"Nipper was right," said Buster Boots. "You can't lecture a chap like Sir John Brent—he's even more exclusive than the Head himself. Nipper was diplomatic—he pleased the old boy."

"Just what I thought," said Reggie. "We should only have done ourselves harm by arguing. Well, it's all up—we're dished!"

"Dished?" echoed Handforth, glaring. "You—you weaklings! I'm jolly well going back, and I'll tell Sir John—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Nipper grimly. "Don't get excited!"

"As for you!" said Handforth witheringly. "As for you—you're a giddy failure! I don't like to say it, Nipper, but I'm ashamed of you! By George! I thought you were made of different stuff!"

He stood in the middle of the pavement and looked Nipper deliberately up and down from crown to toe. Nipper, however, refused to wither under the scorching gaze. He merely chuckled.

"Sorry, Handy—it grieves me to know that you're ashamed of me," he smiled. "But perhaps I'd better explain that there was a method in my meekness. You needn't think I've given up this scheme. I'm keener on it than ever I was."

"But, you ass, you accepted Sir John's decision as final."

"I know that."

"And Sir John told us that the whole thing was off."

"I know that, too," said Nipper. "And there's a third thing I know—Sir John told

us that if we were Boy Scouts, he would give this camping proposition full consideration."

"You—you fathead!" howled Handforth. "We're not Boy Scouts!"

"That's just the point," said Nipper, nodding.

"What do you mean?"

"My dear ass, it's as simple as falling off a form," smiled Nipper. "There's only one thing for us to do, and there's no earthly reason why we shouldn't do it. Sir John says Boy Scouts—so we'll be Boy Scouts! Anything wrong with that?"

The other members of the deputation stared at him with flushed faces.

"You mean—let's form a St. Frank's Scout troop?" asked Pitt tensely.

"Exactly!"

"By jingo!" breathed Pitt. "It's a brain-wave!"

"You bet it is!" declared Buster. "As Nipper says, it's the only thing to be done. Let's go back and tell Sir John that we'll all be Scouts, and then he may change his mind—"

"Wait a minute, Buster, old man," put in Nipper. "I admire your exhibition of pushfulness, but it's the wrong policy. One Scout troop won't be enough for all of us—we must have two."

"That's a good idea," said Reggie. "One troop for the Modern House chaps and one troop for us. And two camps, eh?"

"Two camps," nodded Nipper. "And two Scoutmasters."

"Eh?"

"Two Scoutmasters," repeated Nipper. "That's the vital point of the whole business. We can't form two Boy Scout troops ourselves—the Scoutmaster's got to be in command. So before we go near Sir John again, we've got to have our Scoutmaster's all ready."

"Yes, but who?" asked Reggie Pitt dubiously.

"I think I can persuade the guv'nor to be one," said Nipper slowly. "And there's old Barry Stokes, too—he's a sport. I'll bet he'd agree if we put it to him."

"By George, yes!" declared Handforth. "Mr. Lee and Mr. Stokes. It's the greatest scheme that's ever happened! Boy Scouts, eh? That sort of uniform will suit me down to the ground. Of course, I shall be a patrol leader—"

"We'll go into all those details later, old son," interrupted Nipper gently. "Before we talk about patrol leaders, let's get the troops organised. There's a terrific lot of work to be done, and everything depends upon the Scoutmasters. If they fail us, we're dished."

But, somehow, the deputation felt that there was still hope.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER STEP FORWARD.



WHEN the rest of the juniors heard the result of the deputation's visit, there were many long faces. But Nipper's Boy Scout suggestion put a different complexion on things.

"There's just a chance that we shall be able to pull it off," declared Nipper. "In any case, this is the crucial moment. Don't forget, there's a tremendous lot of preparatory work to be done. Scout troops can't be formed in half an hour. Our Scoutmasters—if we get any—will have to get into touch with the local association authorities, and all sorts of other things."

"I don't see how it's going to be done," said Bob Christine. "Scouts have to pass all sorts of tests before they're given their badges, and the tests are pretty stiff, even to become a Tenderfoot, I've heard. Most of us will pass all that, but others won't—"

"I'll put that to the gov'nor," interrupted Nipper. "He'll probably be able to make a special arrangement with the giddy association. Anything can be done if we're determined enough. The main thing is to form the two troops."

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's get a move on."

"You go and see Mr. Lee, and find out his opinion, Nipper," said Reggie Pitt briskly. "I'll pop round and see Mr. Stokes. He and his wife are staying somewhere in Bayswater—I can easily find out their address. The sooner we can get something moving the better."

And considerable activity prevailed.

Nipper went off to Gray's Inn Road at once, accompanied by Tregellis-West and Watson. Pitt & Co. sallied out in search of Mr. Beverley Stokes, the popular master of the Ancient House.

Archie and Alf remained in Jermyn Street,

with one or two of the others. And steps were taken to get into communication with more members of the Fourth who knew nothing about the new idea.

"We're quite safe, of course," said Alf Brent. "All the chaps will prefer to become Boy Scouts—better than being sent to other schools, anyway. We can look upon the Fourth as solid."

"Absolutely," agreed Archie. "At the same time, old scout, I must admit that the whole affair positively appals me. I mean to say, living in tents, and all that sort of thing!"

"You'll get used to it, Archie," grinned Alf. "A little taste of the simple life will do you a world of good."

"But, dash it, I don't want to be done any good!" objected Archie. "Upon the whole, laddie, I think I prefer to be counted out—"

"Then you'd better think again!" growled Alf. "There'll be no absentees. The Fourth goes into this thing solid, or not at all!"

Archie gave a hollow moan.

"Then it seems there's no escape," he said sorrowfully. "I must bear up and face the old situash with all the celebrated Glenthorne fortitude."

Archie mentally decided that he would give Phipps a decided ticking-off at the first opportunity—for, after all, this foul scheme had originated in Phipps' fertile mind. Without him, there may have been no suggestion of camping whatever.

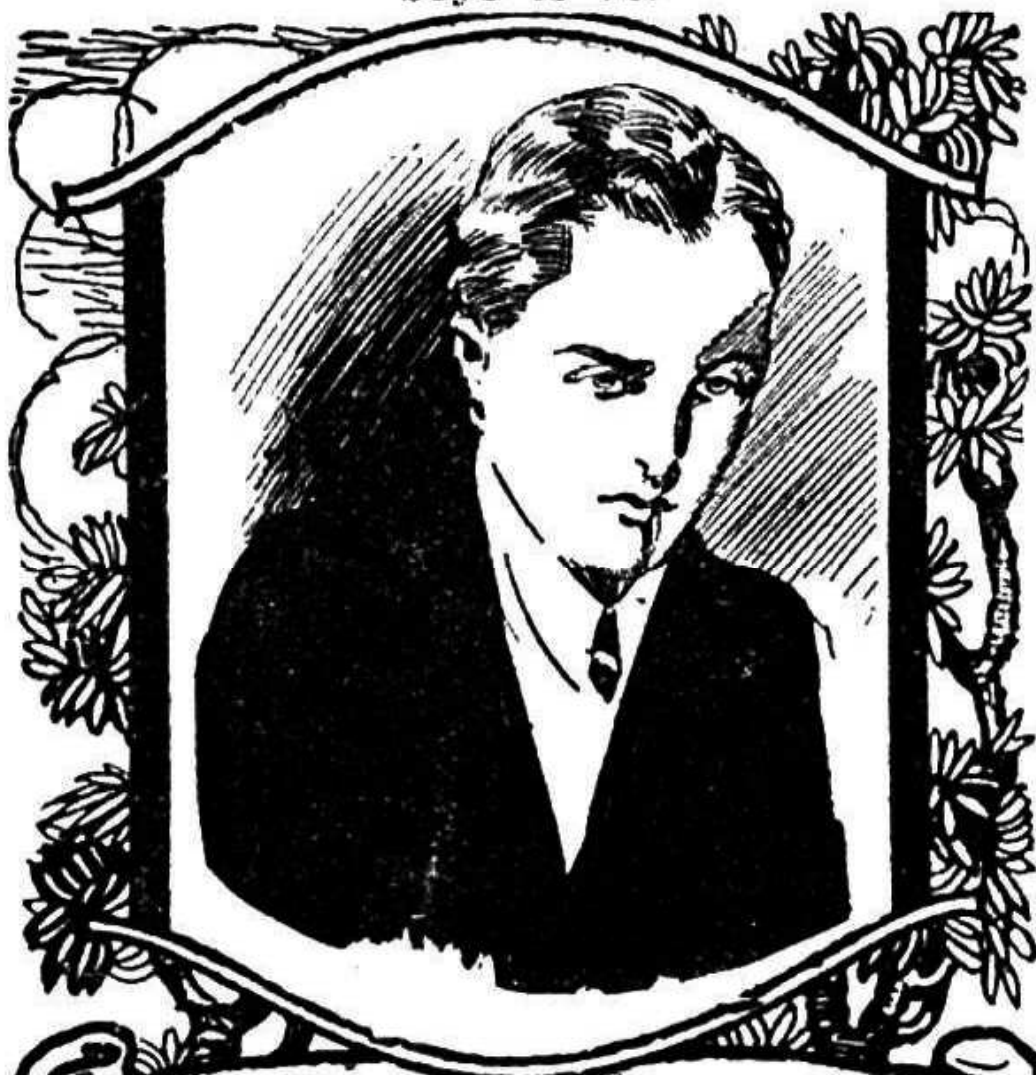
In the meantime, Nipper had arrived in Gray's Inn Road, and was putting the position very delicately before Nelson Lee. The famous schoolmaster-detective was rather amused, and he listened sympathetically.

"I can appreciate your reluctance to be sent to another school, young 'un," he observed, at length. "And to tell the truth, I am not at all keen upon staying at St. Frank's under the present conditions. There will be a deal of confusion, any amount of noise, and life will not be in

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Fourth Series—Sixth Form.

NOTE.—The average age of Sixth Form boys is 18.



No. 10.—Hobart Conroy (Conroy major).

An easy-going kind of senior—neither brilliant nor dull. Fair at most sports, and popular in both the senior and junior schools. His chief hobby is avoiding his two younger brothers.

any way agreeable. A few weeks under canvas, however, is a different thing."

"You like the idea, guv'nor?" asked Nipper eagerly.

"Well, I'll confess it appeals to me," admitted Lee. "And the Boy Scout movement is one I entirely approve of. I have often thought that St. Frank's ought to have a troop of its own. It seems that the opportunity has now arisen."

"Then you'll be our scoutmaster, sir?"

"Yes, if the scheme can be managed, I'll accept that position of honour," smiled Lee. "What is more, I will see Mr. Stokes, and together we will beard Sir John Brent in his den."

Nipper was overjoyed. He had hardly expected such success as this. Indeed, he knew from Nelson Lee's tone that the thing was practically settled. For once his guv'nor made up his mind to anything, he allowed no obstacle to bar the way.

Nelson Lee, in fact, realised that his position was rather delicate. If he refused to become scoutmaster, the whole suggestion might go by the board. Yet he was quite attracted by the prospect—for, as he had said, he had frequently desired to see a Scout troop at St. Frank's.

By consenting to form a troop he would virtually place the seal of success upon the venture—and by refusing, he would kill it. And a few weeks under canvas in the month of June sounded very enticing.

So it seemed that the great idea would materialise, after all.

CHAPTER IX.

EDWARD OSWALD MEANS BUSINESS.



SATISFACTION was general a couple of hours later.

Reginald Pitt reported that Mr. Beverley Stokes was quite willing to become Scoutmaster of the second troop. For the time being, he would desert the Ancient House fellows—for Nelson Lee would naturally control that troop. Buster Boots & Co. were quite agreeable, for they knew that "Barry" Stokes would make an ideal leader.

The latest news was that Nelson Lee and Mr. Stokes would get together that evening, discuss the whole position, and see Sir John forthwith. And the final decision would be arrived at during the Board meeting the next day.

But everybody was very optimistic.

Reggie Pitt and Nipper and Boots and several others got busy with letter-writing. They communicated with every Fourth-Former and every Third-Former who was at present out of reach. Of course, it was a foregone conclusion what their verdict would be—for to spend the rest of the term under canvas was a prospect which

would appeal to everybody, even including such bounders as Fullwood & Co.

"Not that it matters much," declared Nipper. "Supposing a dozen fellows jibbed? Well, they can keep out of it. Let them go off to some other school. We'll have plenty for our two troops, anyhow."

So the matter was left undecided. Nothing would be known for certain until the meeting of the Governors. And Alf Brent promised to telephone round the very instant he heard the final news.

So the meeting dispersed, and the various juniors went home. Handforth took Church and McClure home with him, and there was a strange gleam in Edward Oswald's eyes. He hadn't said much, but his chums knew that he had come to some definite decision.

"Hallo! What's the thoughtful frown for?"

Willy, Handforth's younger brother, confronted the trio in the hall, a moment after they had entered. Handforth looked at him with a start. There was a pained expression on his face.

"My only hat!" he exclaimed plaintively. "Have we got to be bothered with you now? Clear off, Willy! You're not wanted!"

Willy didn't seem at all dismayed.

"Better go easy," he suggested. "The pater's having a nap, and he doesn't like a lot of noise. He's in a bit of a temper, too."

"I suppose you've been bothering him?" growled Edward Oswald.

"Me?" asked Willy. "Of course, I haven't! Old Marmaduke managed to get into pater's library a little while ago, and chewed up a few papers, but I don't see why that should upset him. Then he happened to run across Sebastian, too, and the way he bolted was pretty rich. Anybody might think that Sebastian was dangerous."

Handforth looked round suspiciously.

"Have you got that rotten snake of yours anywhere about here?" he demanded. "By George! It's about time you took up fretwork as a hobby, or something like that! These pets of yours are getting a bit thick! Thank goodness we shall be rid of you for the rest of the term."

Willy smiled sweetly.

"Well, of course, we won't argue," he said. "But I don't quite see where you get your idea from. If I'm in the same camp as you—"

"Camp?" asked Handforth, with a start. "What camp?"

"We're all going to be Scouts, aren't we?" asked Willy.

Handforth assumed an air of cold indifference. He had made up his mind that he wouldn't tell his minor a word about this Boy Scout scheme, and he wasn't going to be pumped!

"You can go and eat coke!" he said stiffly. "I'm not going to tell you any—"

thing about what's been planned—not a word! So don't try any of your tricks!”

“You won't tell me that we're going to be Boy Scouts?”

“No, I won't!”

“Or that we're going into camp?”

“Not a word!”

“Or that Mr. Lee and Mr. Stokes are going to be Scoutmasters?”

“You can pump me all you like, but I won't say anything,” said Handforth firmly. “It's no good, my lad—this thing's a dead secret!”

Church and McClure grinned loudly.

“You fathead!” chuckled Church. “Willy knows all about it! Hasn't he just been telling you?”

Handforth started.

“By George!” he ejaculated. “I didn't look at it like that! Willy, my lad, I don't know how you've got your information——”

“I wouldn't keep you in the dark for worlds,” interrupted Willy. “I've been talking to Nipper on the telephone for about twenty minutes——”

“Just like that ass to jabber!” growled Handforth. “Well, keep it dark! It'll probably be all the better if you go to some other school. I shall have some rest for a few weeks!”

“My dear, deluded chump!” said Willy. “You seem to be under the impression that I shan't be with you! But I'm going to be a Scout, too! I've already got some extra money from the pater to buy my uniform. Nothing's settled yet, but it's just as well to be on the safe side. The pater would have paid up anything to get rid of Sebastian!”

And Willy sauntered off with his hands in his trousers' pockets, leaving his major gazing after him with rising wrath.

CHAPTER X.

HANDY AT THE OUTFITTERS.



EDWARD OSWALD found his voice at last.

“Young idiot!” he snorted. “Does he think he's going to bring his blessed gang into our camp?”

Why, we wouldn't allow it!”

“But it's all arranged,” said McClure gently. “These two troops are to consist of Fourth-Formers and Third-Formers——”

“Rubbish!” interrupted Handforth. “I'm going to put my foot down on that! Fags, indeed! On the same footing as ourselves! Not likely! If they come in at all, they'll only be Cubs!”

“But Cubs are younger!” said Church, shaking his head. “They're called Wolf Cubs, or something, and the age limit is about eleven. Willy's over twelve, so he'll naturally be a full-blown scout.”

Handforth glared.

“Do you know more about this than I do?” he demanded tartly. “I tell you I won't let Willy come in as a scout! He and his blessed gang can have a camp for themselves! It'll be a lot better if there's a third troop, under another Scoutmaster altogether.”

“That's not a bad idea,” said McClure thoughtfully. “You never know—Mr. Clifford might be persuaded to become a Scoutmaster. Anyway, we shall see later on.”

“Yes, it's all in a state of uncertainty at present,” said Church. “The best thing we can do is to go off to Wembley this afternoon, and forget all about Scouts until to-morrow.”

Handforth turned a delicate pink.

“Blow Wembley!” he growled. “We're going somewhere else.”

Church had unwittingly touched upon a sore point. It was only a few days since Handforth had fallen violently in love with a waitress at one of the Exhibition restaurants—and had fallen just as violently out. But, having visited Wembley about a dozen times during the course of his infatuation, he naturally wished to give the famous Exhibition a wide berth for the rest of the holidays. Wembley had ceased to charm him.

“No, there's something else to be done!” he went on. “Wait down here for two minutes while I get some money. I've got a fiver upstairs, and I shall need all of it. We're going to Ramages straight off. You needn't ask any questions—I shan't tell you what we're going to do, or where we're going.”

“But you just said that we're going to Ramages!” exclaimed Church.

“Oh, did I?” said Handforth. “It must have slipped out. I mean to have all my scouting outfit complete—I'm going to buy everything! They'll provide me with a complete outfit at Ramages, including all the badges and stars, and stripes, and everything else.”

Church and McClure were aghast.

“But you don't want any badges and stars!” said McClure. “They can only be worn by old-timers—chaps who've won their badges on merit! Besides, why go and buy your outfit before we know anything definite? The Governors may squash the whole giddy proposition.”

Handforth sniffed.

“You're jealous—that's what it is!” he said tartly. “You can't get your outfits, and you're going to stop me getting mine! But it won't work! We're going to get them now! And you're coming with me to help!”

Church and McClure knew that it would be hopeless to argue. It wasn't any good pointing out that the outfit would be useless if the St. Frank's Governors squashed the scheme. Handforth had set his mind upon visiting the outfitters, and there was an end to it.

Five minutes later the chums of Study D were on a 'bus, travelling Citywards. The afternoon was hot and sunny, and they were only too glad when they reached the great outfitters.

"Scouts outfitting department, sir?" said a keen-looking gentleman, as Handforth made his requirements known. "Certainly! This way, sir!"

The three juniors were directed towards the necessary department, and Handforth looked round with interest.

"I shall want about three complete outfits," he decided. "It's no good having just one—it's always as well to be prepared. I've made up my mind to have one green shirt, one blue shirt, and one khaki. Then I'll have a red scarf, and blue shorts."

"Is that advisable, sir?" asked the assistant in surprise. "It is usual to have the scarf of the troop colour, and the shirts should surely be all the same?"

"I'm buying these things!" said Handforth tartly. "I believe in having plenty of colours! I want some special stockings with plenty of pattern; a kind of Tartan, or something of that sort."

"Scouts stockings are always in plain colours, sir."

"I can't help that," said Handforth. "I've got my own ideas as to what's right and what's wrong. I shall want a haversack, too—and a staff. Then I shall want shoulder badges, and one each of all the proficiency badges, too. You can have them sewn on the sleeves——"

"All of them, sir?" asked the assistant, aghast.

"Of course."

"But there are so many!"

"I don't care about that—I'm going to have the outfit complete!" said Handforth firmly. "Just you take my orders, and I'll foot the bill!"

Church and McClure looked on uncomfortably. Handforth, in his enthusiasm, didn't seem to realise that he was proclaiming his ignorance to all and sundry. He had evidently made up his mind to be a complete Scout Troop all rolled into one.

CHAPTER XI.

ALL COMPLETE!



"LOOK here, old man," said Church softly. "You don't need to buy all these things. It's only necessary to have tenderfoot's outfit to start with."

"Are you calling me a tenderfoot?" demanded Handforth.

"What do you think you are—a Scout-master?" asked Church sarcastically.

"Anybody might think you were a Scout-

master, and an officer, and a King's Scout, and a cook, and a swimmer, and a telegraphist, and a woodman, and a printer, and a plumber, and everything else combined!"

"I'm going to have the lot—so that I shall be prepared," replied Handforth obstinately. "There's another thing. Naturally, I'm going to be leader of the troop, and a patrol leader, too——"

"You can't be both!" objected McClure.

"I can be anything!" snorted Handforth. "I've decided that my patrol is going to be called the Tigers. In other words, I'm going to be Chief of the Tiger Patrol. So we've got to practice the call of the tiger——"

"Better decide on the Elephant Patrol," suggested Church.

"Why?"

"You ought to be able to perform the bellow rather well."

"You—you fathead!" roared Handforth.

"Are you trying to tell me that I bellow?"

"Why tell you?" asked Church tartly.

"What are you doing now? On second thoughts, you'd better be a hippo, or something—— Hallo! Here comes the chap with piles of things."

Handforth turned to the counter with a frown, but he soon recovered his good humour as he examined the outfits. He was quite lavish. He had the best of everything, and two or three sets of each.

By the time his order was complete, the pile was formidable. He bought three or four hats, numerous shirts, stockings, shoes, badges, and, in fact, everything appertaining to Scouts. Church and McClure looked on, and had an idea that their leader was purchasing the outfits for the entire troop.

"You wish to pay for these now, sir?" asked the assistant.

"Of course," replied Handforth. "Make out the bill, and I'll settle up. Then you'd better tie everything into parcels, so that Church and McClure can carry them home."

"Look here——" began Church indignantly.

"I'm afraid it will be rather impossible to carry them all, sir," said the assistant. "However, I will make out the bill."

He juggled with figures for a few minutes, and Handforth & Co. waited. Upon second thoughts, Church and McClure calmed down. A brief spell of calm reasoning assured them that they wouldn't have much to carry.

"There you are, sir," said the assistant briskly. "Eighteen pounds, seven shillings and ninepence."

Handforth rocked.

"How much?" he gasped.

"Eighteen pounds, seven shillings and ninepence."

"But—but I've only got about six quid!" roared Handforth. "What rot! All these

things can't come to that money! You've made a mistake! I thought the bill would be about three pounds!"

Church and McClure grinned happily. At last they were obtaining some pleasure out of this visit. It was purely entertaining to watch Handforth's discomfiture.

"You forget, sir, that you have selected the most expensive articles," said the assistant. "Furthermore, you have purchased a number of each. There is no mistake regarding the price——"

"Oh, all right," growled Handforth, as a sudden thought struck him. "You'd better send the things along, and my pater will let you have a cheque. Or you can have cash on delivery if you like."

The assistant looked very relieved.

"Thank you, sir," he said gratefully. "Name, please?"

Handforth gave his name and address, and at last they managed to get out of the shop.

"Well, that's done," said Handforth contentedly. "There may be a bit of bother with the pater, but he'll have to pay. Fancy these things costing such a giddy lot! I had no idea of it!"

Church and McClure passed no opinions. But they privately held the view that Handforth senior would cause more than a "bother" when the bill was presented to him. In fact, it was a moral certainty that most of the goods would be sent back, and the order reduced to a reasonable size.

All anxiety was relieved the following day.

For it was officially announced—by Alf Brent—that everything had gone off smoothly at the Board meeting. Nelson Lee had been present himself, and had succeeded in persuading the Governors that nothing could be better than a camp.

There would be two troops formed, and possibly a third. And active arrangements were put into operation without delay. The school authorities were provided with tents and the equipment. The boys would have nothing to find except their uniforms.

Everything would be on a grand scale. There would be plenty of tents, cooking facilities, sleeping quarters, and so forth. With Nelson Lee and Mr. Stokes in charge, the camp was destined to be a business-like affair.

As for the Fourth and the Third, there wasn't a single fellow who didn't approve of the idea. The prospect of living under canvas for the next three or four weeks

had a strong appeal, and there were many fellows who openly declared that it was a good thing St. Frank's had been half wrecked.

And for the last few days of the holidays all the juniors were engaged in feverish preparation. Nelson Lee himself took charge of the camp organisation, and plans and preparations were rushed.

When the first day of term arrived, everything was to be in readiness—so there was no time to be lost.

CHAPTER XII.

DRASTIC ACTION!



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH sat up in bed, and glanced at his watch.

"Good!" he murmured.

"Just half-past seven!"

There's nothing like taking time by the giddy forelock. If Willy thinks he can diddle me, he's made a mistake!"

Handforth slipped out of bed, and hastily put some clothes on. It was the last day of holidays—and, after breakfast, a move would be made towards St. Frank's. Church and McClure had promised to come round early after breakfast, so that they could all go off to Victoria Station together.

But Handforth had something else in mind.

At the hour of seven-thirty, everything was quiet. Only the domestics were about. It was a sunny morning, with a cooling breeze, and Handforth was feeling content. For days he had been prophesying that it would pour with rain.

His immediate objective was Willy. And the set look about his mouth, and the grim expression in his eyes, proved that he had some fixed purpose in mind.

The fact was, Handforth was tired of Willy's repeated declarations that he was to be a member of the Scout Troop. Willy had even gone so far as to get his outfit, and he had made up his mind to travel down to St. Frank's wearing his new garb.

Handforth had come to the same decision. But he was totally opposed to Willy being a Scout. It was like his cheek! And the previous evening Handforth had made up his mind to a certain course of action—a course which would defeat Willy's intentions, once for all.

Incidentally, he was quite disgusted with his pater. As Church and McClure had expected, Sir Edward had flatly refused to pay any such sum as eighteen pounds, seven shillings and ninepence. So the order had been whittled down to a ghost of its original form. And Edward Oswald's scouting outfit was quite a modest affair.

ANSWERS
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However, he didn't worry—he could add to it later on. And at present he was thinking of Willy's things. There was only one way to deal with cheeky youngsters of this sort. Firmness was required.

He stole out of his bed-room, crossed the landing, and entered Willy's sleeping apartment. Experience had taught Lady Handforth that it was far better to keep her hopeful sons well apart.

"Good!" murmured Handforth. "Asleep! Lazy young bounder!"

Willy was coiled up in bed, sleeping the sleep of the just, with the quilt half on the floor, and the sheet entirely covering his head. Handforth regarded his younger brother disdainfully.

"My hat! Sleeping with his giddy socks on!" he exclaimed tartly, as he espied one of his minor's feet sticking out of the bottom of the bed. "In this weather, too! Nothing but sheer laziness!"

On a chair near by stood a neat pile of clothing. It was a scouting outfit, all ready to be donned. Handforth's eyes gleamed as he quietly picked the collection up. Then, with triumph glittering in his eyes, he tip-toed out of the bed-room.

He went to his own room, and looked round.

"Yes, behind the wardrobe," he murmured. "That's the best place—the young fathead will never find them there—"

He broke off, and dashed to the window. A familiar call had come to his ears. He could see a side road over the garden. And there, appealing for custom, was a rag-and-bone merchant! Under any ordinary circumstances, Handforth would have viewed this gentleman with strong disapproval. How dare a rag-and-bone merchant come into such a high-class West-End district as this?

But this morning he regarded the man with pleasure.

Whisking up the clothes again, he dashed out just as he was, attired in slippers, flannel trousers, and a cricket-shirt. He sped across the garden, went out by a side door, and hailed the merchant.

"Here you are—take these!" he panted. "They're not wanted!"

The rag and bone man was filled with joy. It wasn't often he ran across such a customer as this. The clothes were absolutely new, and of good quality, too.

"Want to sell 'em, young gent?" he asked cheerily. "All right—I'm open to any kind o' business. Let's have a look. H'm! Shirt, hat, trousis, and all the rest o' the fixings! What about five bob?"

"They're yours!" said Handforth promptly.

The old clothes merchant nearly fainted, but he managed to control himself. He had only made the offer facetiously. He produced five shillings with the swiftness



"Here you are—take these!" he panted. "They're not wanted."

of a conjuror, paid it over, and deposited the booty on his barrow.

"Good!" breathed Handforth, as he got back into the room. "I'll give this five bob to Willy, and let him whistle for his giddy outfit! I'll teach him to swank about being a full-blown scout!"

And then Edward Oswald came to a halt in the path, and turned a sickly green. There, sauntering across the lawn, was his minor! But what was infinitely more to the point, his minor was clad from head to foot in the outfit of a Boy Scout!

CHAPTER XIII.

WILLY ENJOYS THE JOKE.



WILLY nodded cheerfully as he glanced at his major.

"Hallo! I didn't expect you to be up for another hour!" he said, as he strolled up. "What's the idea? Where have you been to?"

Handforth passed a hand across his eyes. "You're—you're dressed," he said dazedly.

"I should hope so," said Willy. "You didn't expect me to come out here in my pyjamas, I suppose?"

"But you're wearing your Scout's outfit?" "What about it?"

"Five minutes ago you were in bed, and fast asleep!" panted Handforth.

"You've been dreaming; I've been up for an hour!"

"Up for an hour?" roared Handforth. "Don't tell fibs! You young ass, I went into your bed-room and saw you lying there, fast asleep! You were wearing your socks in bed, too, you young rotter—"

"Oh, you've had a nightmare!" interrupted Willy firmly. "My dear chap, I was up at half-past six! Of course, it's just possible you went into my room and made a mistake. It's not my fault if you go and confuse me with a couple of pillows and an old sock stuffed with part of my cricket-shirt."

A dim light dawned upon Handforth.

"Was—was that a dummy in your bed?" he hooted.

"A dummy?" asked Willy in surprise. "What rot! Just a couple of pillows, with a sheet thrown over 'em. You see, I've got to be careful. I thought you might walk in—"

"You've spoofed me!" howled Handforth wildly.—

"Impossible!" retorted Willy stupefied. "How can anybody spoof a wonderful detective like you, Ted? Oh, by the way, if you want your Scout's outfit, it's in my room!"

"In your room?" repeated Handforth dazedly.

"Yes, I put it in there first thing, as soon as I got up," explained Willy. "I know what a careless chap you are, and I'm always thoughtful about your property—"

"My outfit—in your room!" said Handforth in a hoarse whisper.

"On the chair," said Willy, nodding.

"On the chair!" bellowed his major. "But—but I've just sold that outfit. I've given it to an old clothes dealer for five bob!"

Willy shook his head.

"That was a silly thing to do," he exclaimed. "They were worth a lot more than five bob, you know. Still, if you like to go and sell your outfit, that's your concern. I didn't ask you to, did I?"

"But—but how—"

"You've got such a loud voice, Ted, you know," said Willy. "I heard you saying something to Church last night—the whole House might have heard it. Something about getting up early and hiding my Scout's outfit. So I turned out at half-past six."

"You—you young rotter!" gasped Handforth.

"It's not my fault if you go and sell your outfit for five bob—"

"Great pip!" ejaculated Handforth, in alarm. "My outfit!"

He dashed out of the garden like mad. Now that it was almost too late, he realised to the full how he had walked into the trap. In trying to take Willy down a peg or two, he had practically given away his own Scout's clothes!

It was a horrible position, and Edward Oswald rushed down the road just as he was, and gave a gulp as he caught sight of the rag and bone merchant far away, down a side turning. He rushed up breathlessly.

"I say! Half a tick!" he panted. "Gimme back that Scout's outfit! I've made a mistake—they're mine!"

"Strikes me you made another mistake, young gent! They're mine!" said the man truculently. "I paid you five bob for them things, and you took it. A deal's a deal!"

Handforth glared.

"Look here, it was a mistake!" he shouted. "You don't mean to say you're going to stick to those things? Here's your five bob! I want 'em back!"

"Then you won't get 'em!"

"Oh, won't I?"

"When I buys a thing I buys it!" said the merchant. "It ain't no good you comin' this 'ere bluff with me, young gent. I can't 'elp your mistakes. The best thing you can do is clear off—"

"We'll see about that!" said Handforth grimly.

He pulled up his sleeves and closed his fists. Then he advanced fiercely towards the old clothes dealer.

"I'll give you ten seconds!" he exclaimed. "Understand? You know as well as I do that it was all a mistake. Ten seconds, or I'll biff you! Give me those clothes, and you can have your five bob, and another five bob on top. You can't say I'm not fair!"

"Them things are worth more than ten bob!" growled the man. "Nothing doing!"

"All right—you've asked for it!" roared Handforth.

He gave one swipe, and the clothes merchant dodged in alarm. There was something about Handforth's attitude which was by no means pleasant. And the man was a skinny, mean-looking sort of fellow at the best.

"All right, guv'nor!" he gasped. "I'm on! Gimme ten bob and they're yours!"

Handforth dropped his fists just as he was about to commit slaughter. And the Scout's outfit was handed over in exchange for ten shillings. Edward Oswald returned home full of triumph. He considered that he had acquitted himself famously.

He didn't seem to realise that this early morning effort had cost him a lot of energy, had done no good to Willy, and his pocket was lighter to the extent of five shillings.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRIALS OF ARCHIE.



ARCHIE GLENTHORNE sat in bed, sipping his morning tea.

"What-ho! Summer breeze, and all that sort of thing, Phipps," he observed.

"I don't know what it is, but it seems to be impressed upon the old mind that something special is indicated for to-day."

"Quite so, sir," said Phipps.

He was quietly busying himself in his usual unobtrusive manner. It was just eight o'clock, and the sunlight was streaming in through the window.

"Something special, what?" repeated Archie. "I'm dashed if I know what it is, laddie, but the impression is absolutely firm. Be good enough to help the young master."

"You return to school to-day, sir," explained Phipps.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie. "I knew there was something. The last morning in the old homestead, and all that sort of stuff. Back to the weary grind, Phipps. I mean, how absolutely mouldy."

"Yes, sir," said Phipps.

"However, we mustn't be downhearted," proceeded Archie brightly. "It appears that the weather is bright and gay. This morning, Phipps, we will enfold ourselves in the striped grey, what? And how about the good old cream silk shirt with the crêpe-de-Chine tie? Produce them with your usual magic touch, Phipps, and we will proceed to prepare."

"I hardly think the grey stripe will be suitable, sir," said Phipps. "You may remember that there is quite a new arrangement—"

"Enough, Phipps—enough!" interrupted Archie. "Too often do I give way to your bally whims! This morning, I insist!"

"As you wish, sir; but—"

"Remember, laddie, that I am the chappie who gives the dashed orders!" interrupted Archie firmly. "It grieves me to do the bossing stuff, but you absolutely force the old digits. Produce the cream silk to start with, and we'll see about adorning ourselves."

Archie climbed out of bed, stretched himself, and then looked at Phipps with a somewhat severe glance. Phipps was unfolding a perfectly foul shirt made of some rough woollen stuff. Archie looked at it askance.

"Dash it all, Phipps, there's no need to bring your frightful attire into my bedroom!" he objected. "I mean to say, that beastly summer shirting! All right for the masses, and so forth; but when it comes to a delicate chappie of my calibre, I

mean— Well, there you are! No doubt you grasp the young master's meaning."

"This is your shirt, sir," said Phipps unemotionally.

"Mine!" bleated Archie. "Oddso! If it comes to that, gadslife! Likewise, dash it, great Scott! You surely don't think that I'm going to dive into the interior of that poisonous garment?"

"It's your Scout's shirt, sir."

Archie started as if he had been stung.

"Scout's shirt!" he echoed hoarsely. "Good gad! I'd forgotten all about that diabolical business. Phipps! I appeal to you, laddie. Does this scouting stuff absolutely necessitate this garb?"

"Absolutely, sir."

"And, I mean to say, these frightful-looking knickers!" went on Archie, picking up a pair of blue shorts. "Phipps, it's impossible! Why, dash it all, I'd rather expire straight away! Go out, buy a few wreaths, and hunt up some black-edged notepaper."

"It is hardly as bad as that, sir," said Phipps. "Indeed, I am told that the Scout's uniform is exceedingly comfortable. Master Nipper will be here presently, sir, and I was hoping that you would be fully arrayed in order to welcome him."

Archie shuddered.

"But, Phipps, it can't be done—"

"You gave your word, sir,"

"My word?" moaned Archie. "In that case, I suppose we shall have to have a stab at it. But these woolly things always make me creep. I mean to say, the very thought of it causes the old hide to quiver."

However, Archie managed to get into the Scout's uniform, with Phipps' help. By the time he had completely dressed he was looking smart and neat. Archie had a good figure, and the uniform looked well on him. But as he surveyed himself in the glass he turned pale.

"What about it, Phipps?" he asked feebly.

"If I may say so, sir, you look wonderful."

"But, dash it, the knee department!" protested Archie. "I mean, I'm bally well half-naked! The old knees are positively exposed to the public gaze! I couldn't go out like this, Phipps—I should wilt at the glance of every stranger."

"That's all right, sir—you'll soon get used to it," said Phipps soothingly. "All Boy Scouts expose their knees—it's wonderfully healthy, I am informed. And the freedom of movement, sir, is quite remarkable."

Archie regarded his own reflection as though he were looking at some monster.

"Of course, we shall have no trouble about keeping the old crease nice and neat," he said sadly. "That's one compensation, dash it! All the same, I feel frightfully draughty— Good gad, there's the bell!"

Phipps glided from the room, and a moment later he returned to announce that Nipper & Co. had arrived.

CHAPTER XV.

OFF FOR ST. FRANK'S.



NIPPER and Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West were all looking smart in their new uniforms. On their left shoulders were their patrol colours—yellow and red, showing that they belonged to the Lion patrol. Nipper was wearing the uniform of patrol leader.

Archie was also one of the Lions, and when he came out, fully arrayed, Nipper & Co. regarded him with enthusiasm.

"Good old Archie!" said Watson. "You look great!"

"Begad, rather!" agreed Sir Montie. "Toppin' dear old fellow."

"I'd no idea you'd make such a fine Scout!" said Nipper enthusiastically. "We're proud to have you in the patrol, old son!"

Archie gazed at them rather blankly.

"But, dash it, you don't really think so?" he exclaimed. "I thought I was looking perfectly frightful! I mean to say, I don't know a dashed thing about the business—and here I am, masquerading as a bally scout! A sort of a kind of a swindle, what?"

Nipper grinned.

"It may be at present, but that'll soon right itself," he replied. "The St. Frank's Troops have been formed in a hurry, and I think the gov'nor has been in communication with some of the chief men at the Association Headquarters. They made special concessions."

"That's dashed interesting, old lad."

"Well, you see, we're not exactly like the ordinary scouts," explained Nipper. "We shall still have to do lessons, and although we'll be under canvas, it won't be an ordinary holiday camp. And the Troops have been organised so quickly that we can't all pass the necessary tests."

"What-ho!" said Archie. "I'm beginning to breathe again."

"But you mustn't think that we're allowed to play at it," went on Nipper firmly. "It's only a temporary concession. As soon as possible, every Scout has got to pass his tests, and conform to the usual regulations—or else he'll have his badge taken away, and he'll be chucked out of the troop. But to begin with, I understand that things will be pretty lax."

Nipper's information was quite correct.

In order to start the camp on the right day, the troops would have to collect from their various homes without any previous drilling or instruction. The Association realised that the circumstances were peculiar, and various concessions had been readily made.

But the St. Frank's Boy Scouts would have to pull themselves together later on, or the whole thing would become a farce. Both Nelson Lee and Mr. Stokes were determined

to make their troops worthy Scouts in every sense of the word, and the fellows themselves were just as keen upon passing every test, and showing their merit. All those who slacked would soon be weeded out, and expelled from the troops.

But to begin with, a certain freedom was essential.

"We shall all be at sixes-and-sevens for the first day or two, but that'll soon right itself," went on Nipper. "I think that idea of a third troop is coming off—a special troop for the Third-Formers. Mr. Clifford is rather keen on it, I think, and I know that Willy and his crowd would prefer to be under their own banner. It'll mean less friction, too."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "At the same time, old horse, I must confess that this doesn't thrill me to the core. I regard the whole business as particularly blighted. However, it's a dashed lot better than being skidded off to some other school."

"That's what we all think," said Nipper. "There's nothing like sticking together. By the way, the camp isn't going to be at St. Frank's as we first thought, but somewhere between Shingle Head and Caistowe—right near the sea."

"That's rather good hearing," said Archie. "Anything to keep us away from the public gaze, what? It's the idea of sleeping in tents that worries me, you know."

"It'll be simply glorious," declared Nipper. "Plenty of fresh air, plenty of freedom, and——"

"Plenty of bally insects!" put in Archie. "To say nothing of rain, dew, and all that sort of foulness! But we mustn't grumble. Scouts are supposed to keep cheerful, what?"

"That's the right spirit," said Tommy Watson. "I can tell you, we're going to have some ripping times during this term. We've got to go to St. Frank's as usual, and then we'll go to the camp from there."

Archie hated the idea of venturing out in public, but at last he was persuaded to do so. Strangely enough, nobody took the slightest notice of him. He attracted no attention whatever.

And his confidence returned.

"I mean to say, not so frightfully bad, after all," he observed. "Now I come to bring the gear-box into full play, it seems to me that this scouting stuff is rather priceless."

"You wait till we have it for a few days," said Nipper. "You won't know where you are, Archie. You'll enjoy open air life so much that you'll never want to go back to ordinary houses, and lounge-chairs, and soft carpets."

Archie smiled.

"Apparently, laddie, you don't realise that I have given Phipps instructions to have sundry lounges and carpets sent down for my special tent," he said complacently. "Easy-chairs, cushions, and all that sort of thing."

"It's one thing to give such orders to Phipps, and it's another thing for Phipps to carry them out," said Nipper. "My dear old son, put all those ideas out of your head. The Scoutmaster won't allow anything of the sort. You'll have to have the same blankets as we have—and if you want any furniture, you'll have to make it yourself! You'll probably be a cook, or a dish-washer, or something like that."

Archie caught his breath in.

"Oh, but I say!" he protested. "That is, I mean! Not really, old tulip? You don't mean that I shall have to actually work?"

"Yes, you'll have to actually work," grinned Nipper.

All Archie's happiness left him. By what he could see, this Boy Scout movement was rather worse than frightful. Just as he had been congratulating himself that he would have an easy time of it, too!

CHAPTER XVI.

ST. FRANK'S AGAIN.



"BY George!" ejaculated Handforth.

He was standing just inside the Triangle at St. Frank's. Accompanied by Church and McClure, the leader of Study

D had arrived from the station a minute since. And turning in the gateway, he had received a bit of a shock.

St. Frank's was certainly not itself.

When all the fellows had left, previous to the holidays, the school had been decidedly a wreck. With the Modern House a mere heap of ruins, and the Ancient House without a window whole, the great Public school had looked forlorn and desolate to a degree.

It had seemed impossible that anybody could inhabit the place for months.

But even during the short Whitsuntide vacation a vast change had taken place. Almost without the loss of a day, a small army of workmen had been on the job, and the appearance of St. Frank's was changed.

There was a transformation—and nobody could say it was for the better. Even the forlorn ruins had been rather more picturesque than the scene which now greeted Handforth & Co.'s gaze.

St. Frank's was alive with workmen. Over towards the back of the Modern House numbers of temporary wooden buildings had been erected—blacksmiths' shops, carpenters' shops, store-houses, and a regular builders' yard. And scaffolding was marring the view in every quarter.

The Triangle itself had been cleared of debris, and was looking more or less its old self. The great portion of the Ancient House was also in good trim again—although one side was festooned with scaffold poles.

The Modern House was in the course of being cleared completely away, and the

activity of workmen, the lumbering of laden lorries, the hissing and roaring of steam cranes—all this sounded harsh and discordant. It was so different from the usual peace which prevailed at St. Frank's.

"My hat," said Church, "I don't envy the seniors! I'm jolly glad we're going into that camp! We'll be away from this mess, anyhow."

"Rather!" agreed McClure. "No wonder Mr. Lee and Mr. Stokes were so keen upon being Scoutmasters! Why, it'll be glorious under canvas! Fancy living in the midst of all this hullabaloo!"

"You're the very fellows who oughtn't to mind," chimed in De Valerie, who was standing near by. "When you're at school you're accustomed to nothing else but a hullabaloo! This noise is tranquil compared to the average din of Study D."

Handforth glared.

"Nobody asked you to be funny!" he said tartly.

"I didn't know I was being funny," said De Valerie, strolling off.

"Don't take any notice of him," said Church. "Our rows in Study D are our own concern—and I expect we shall have 'em just the same in one of the tents. We don't blame you, Handy—it's not your fault—"

"Blame me!" echoed Handforth. "Not my fault! Why, you silly chump, it's you fat-heads who always cause the trouble! If you'd only take my orders, instead of jibbing, there'd never be any ructions at all! But that's all going to be changed in future."

"This isn't New Year's Day," said McClure.

"What do you mean—New Year's Day?"

"I thought you were making a resolution—"

"Fathead!" said Handforth witheringly.

"I'm patrol leader, and you fellows have got to obey orders without question! What do you think I've got these two white stripes on my left shirt-pocket for?"

"Goodness knows," said Church. "As a matter of fact, you've got three stripes there."

"That shows I'm a Troop Leader," said Handforth.

"But you're not!"

"That's nothing—I soon will be!" said Handforth carelessly.

"Besides, you've got a green plume in your hat—and only Scoutmasters can wear that," went on Church. "And that red enamel fleur-de-lys buttonhole badge, too—that belongs to an Assistant Scoutmaster. By what I can see, you're a kind of mixture—particularly with all those other stripes and badges. As soon as Mr. Lee sees you, you're going to get ticked off!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "I'm one of the Leaders, and I've got to be distinguished."

"Anybody could distinguish you a mile off," said McClure sarcastically.

They went across the Triangle to have a look at the operations, and came upon William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth. The Fifth-Form skipper eyed them benevolently.

"Ah, Brother Handforth, so we are resplendent in gay attire?" he said kindly. "Let me issue a word of warning. Beware of sideslips. I have been informed on the highest authority that veteran Scouts find it necessary to have skin grafted on to their knees, to replace that which has been torn off in various minor accidents. It has been truthfully said——"

"That you're a chump!" interrupted Handforth tartly. "Don't you worry about my giddy knees! They'll come to no harm!"

He walked up the Ancient House steps with his chin in the air. He slipped on a loose pebble, staggered, and fell. He rose with one knee grazed and bleeding.

"You see?" said Browne, sadly shaking his head. "Alas! If only people would listen to my great wisdom! But it is just as well—just as well! Experience, after all, is the great and only teacher!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NEW ORDER OF THINGS.

SILENCE prevailed in Big Hall.

The entire school had assembled—according to the headmaster's express instructions. It was mid-afternoon now, and every scholar had arrived, from the lowliest fag to the most lordly prefect.

In view of the new arrangement, Dr. Malcolm Stafford had thought it better to call the entire school together, and to deliver a speech. It was for this reason that the newly formed Scout troops had come straight to St. Frank's, instead of proceeding direct to the camp.

Big Hall was unchanged. The broken windows had been repaired, and from within this stately old chamber none of the recent destruction could be seen. Only the sound of hammers, and the roar of the steam cranes reminded the school of the building activities.

The Head appeared on the platform, and with him were many of the masters, including Nelson Lee, Mr. Beverley Stokes, and Mr. Harold Clifford. The latter three were all attired in the uniform of Scout-masters.

"Good!" whispered Willy Handforth, nudging Juicy Lemon in the ribs, with his elbow. "See old Clifford? All dressed up! That means we're going to have troop to ourselves."

"Fine!" murmured Juicy. "We don't want any truck with the Fourth!"

"No fear!" agreed Chubby Heath.

And as the Fourth didn't want any truck with the Third, it seemed that everybody was satisfied. There was no doubt that a great deal of friction would be avoided by this formation of a separate troop altogether for the Third Form.

"Well, we're all together again, in spite of the recent disaster," said the Head, in his deep, pleasant voice. "I needn't tell you all how pleased I am to be here, addressing you once more. There are one or two things I wish to say, and I think you are all interested in our present predicament. Upon the whole, the governors have hit upon a simple way out of the difficulties."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good luck to the St. Frank's Scouts!"

"By many makeshifts we are able to accommodate all the senior boys under the roof of the Ancient

House," continued the Head. "There is even room for a few more, if the necessity should arise—and that, indeed, is the point I wish to dwell upon."

"Between now and the commencement of the summer holidays we shall fill in the term as best we can. The Senior School will carry on as usual. But the juniors, in consequence of the lack of accommodation, must go elsewhere. And so a well-equipped camp has been provided on the cliffs, two or three miles from here. All you junior boys, in your new capacity as scouts, will go into camp, and carry on

PORTRAIT GALLERY AND WHO'S WHO.

Fourth Series—Sixth Form.

NOTE.—The average age of Sixth Form boys is 18.



No. 11.—Harold Frinton.

A good-looking fellow, with a mistaken impression that he is irresistible to the ladies. He has a passion for having his photograph taken, and is always presenting them to his friends, whether they want them or not.

in the best way you can. As far as possible, the usual school routine will be maintained.

"Sports, of course, must necessarily suffer," proceeded Dr. Stafford. "Under the peculiar circumstances, I have deemed it advisable to cancel cricket fixtures, and so forth. The playing-fields are unavailable, and any kind of practice is out of the question. The Junior School would be unable to indulge in cricket, in any case.

"I am very pleased to learn of the enthusiasm for scouting which has arisen in the ranks of you junior boys. And it has been decided to give every encouragement

are fully qualified. It is for your Scoutmasters to give you the full details. I will merely say that if any boy fails to show the necessary spirit and goodwill during the first week, these boys will be singled out, and in all probability deprived of their uniforms and badges, and brought back to St. Frank's, where accommodation will be found for them, and where they will continue the school routine in the usual manner. But I should like you all to avoid any such measure as this, as it will only increase my present difficulties—which are heavy enough, in any case. In allowing these Scout troops to be formed, I am



"But dash it, the knee department!" protested Archie. "I mean, I'm bally well half naked! The old knees are positively exposed to the public gaze! I couldn't go out like this, Phipps—I should wilt at the glance of every stranger."

to this new movement. There are three troops, the first consisting of Ancient House Fourth-Form boys, the second consisting of Modern House Fourth-Form boys, and the third consisting of mixed Third-Formers. In order that they shall have every chance, there will be three distinct camps—although, of course, the three camps will be adjoining."

"Hurrah!"

"We'll make things hum, sir!"

"Three cheers for the St. Frank's Scouts!"

"As you probably know, there have been certain concessions," said the Head. "You are Scouts, and yet you are not Scouts. You are wearing the uniform before you

hoping that the move will be a complete success."

"Rather, sir!"

"It will be, sir!"

"Regarding St. Frank's itself, there is little that I can say," continued the Head. "Ambitious alterations are planned, and the contractors have undertaken to have our school completely rebuilt by the autumn. There will be some changes—startling changes, perhaps. But I am convinced that the new St. Frank's will be an improvement in every way upon the old. It is for us to do the best we can between now and the vacation."

The Head continued in the same strain

for some little time, and soon afterwards the Senior School was dismissed. The juniors, however, remained. Big Hall now looked like a rally of Boy Scouts. And Nelson Lee came to the front of the platform.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GIRL GUIDES NEXT!



"**Y**OU needn't be alarmed, all of you," smiled Nelson Lee. "I'm

not going to make a long speech—just a few words. Full instructions will be

given to you upon arriving in camp, but for a day or two there will necessarily be a certain amount of confusion. It remains to be seen which troop gets itself into ship-shape order first."

"Artful bounder!" whispered Handforth. "He only said that to give us some ginger! Wants to put the spirit of rivalry into us at the very start."

"A good thing, too—as long as it's friendly," murmured Church.

"There will be no route-marches or restrictions to-day," continued Nelson Lee. "We don't want to start with too much discipline—so you will all turn up for roll-call in camp at exactly four-thirty. You know exactly where the camp is, so I needn't give you any instructions on that point. But I trust you to make your way there in an orderly fashion, and to be prompt. I am, of course, speaking on behalf of Mr. Stokes and Mr. Clifford as well as for myself. Strictly speaking, we are all amateurs in this new movement, and we must do our best to settle down in record time. That's all. You can go now, but don't forget—four-thirty."

"Well, that's over!" said Nipper, as they crowded out. "Only just half-past three—we've got an hour to get to camp. No reason to stop here, as far as I can see. Supposing we make a move?"

"Good idea!" said Tommy Watson, nodding.

"It is, really," agreed Sir Montie.

Most of the others were also of the opinion that a move towards the camp would be the best thing. Everybody was curious to see the place, and to find out exactly what they were in for.

But there was no question as to the enthusiasm.

Even such slackers as Fullwood and Merrell and Snipe and Long were proud of their Scouts' uniform, and were determined to do credit to their troops. The whole Scout movement had come upon the juniors so suddenly that they were bubbling over with enthusiasm for it. In any ordinary circumstances, a Scout troop at St. Frank's might have been regarded with doubt by most of the fellows. But

when the alternative to joining was to perspire in school—instead of enjoying the delights of camp life—there was not a single non-starter.

Such fellows as Handforth and Buster Boots and Fatty Little were in their element. Fatty was particularly pleased. It was a foregone conclusion that he would be a cook, and nothing delighted him more than the practice of his own special art. He was happy enough with a frying-pan over an oil-stove—but to control a camp kitchen was the one dream of his life. And it was about to be realised.

"Well, come on, let's go and have a look at the place," said Handforth briskly, as he and his chums passed out into the Triangle. "Now then, Willy, you clear off! I wasn't speaking to you! You and your gang ought to be Wolf Cubs."

"Anyhow, we've got a troop to ourselves!" sniffed Willy. "What's more, we're going to whack you Fourth-Formers into fits! You wait until I get really going! I shall be a Troop Leader in no time."

This wasn't boasting. Willy's confidence in himself was such that he was speaking the simple truth.

"Better look out Archie," added Willy carelessly, as Archie Glenthorne appeared. "You're a bit nervous of your knees, ain't you? I just spotted Irene & Co. out in the road."

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie, aghast.

"Irene & Co?" said Handforth quickly. "Good! We haven't seen 'em yet!"

"Don't forget to tell 'em about the Wembley waitress!" said Willy sweetly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You breathe a word about that affair, and I'll skin you!" hissed Handforth, as red as a beetroot. "Not that I care, of course!" he added, recovering himself. "Everybody knows I was only spoofing you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth strode off with a snort. And out in the lane, sure enough, Irene Manners, Marjorie Temple, Doris Berkeley, Winnie Pitt, Violet Watson, and several other of the Moor View girls were collected—taking a keen interest in the building operations.

"Hallo, you girls!" said Handforth, striking a pose.

"You needn't swank!" said Doris calmly. "We're going to beat you chaps before long. Miss Bond has told us that we can become Girl Guides—and we're going into camp soon."

"What!" ejaculated Handforth. "Going into camp?"

"Rather!" said Irene, smiling. "Then we'll show you boys what's what! Of course, we shall be a few miles away, but I expect we'll run across one another at different times."

"We'll guide you home when you get lost!" said Doris calmly.

"I shouldn't make any rash statements if I were you," put in Willy Handforth. "If you're going to guide Ted home when he gets lost, you'll be doing nothing else!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The news, however, was welcomed by the Boy Scouts. They would be pleased to see Irene & Co. as Guides. In all probability, the next week or so would provide some novel situations and adventures.

CHAPTER XIX.

UNDER CANVAS.



"THERE'S going to be trouble before long!"

Handforth made this remark, in a grim tone, as he walked towards the Caistowe cliffs with his two chums.

"Trouble!" he repeated fiercely. "You heard the way young Willy sauced me in front of those girls? I couldn't slosh him then—although he jolly well deserved it! Blessed if I know why, but if I give him the slightest touch, those girls accuse me of bullying!"

"Well, you see, what you regard as a slight touch, they look upon as a terrific biff," explained McClure. "You've given me a slight touch sometimes, and I've come to myself ten minutes later!"

"Don't be funny!" snapped Handforth. "And remember to address me with respect! I'm your Troop Leader——"

"Patrol Leader, you mean."

"I'm your Troop Leader!" repeated Handforth. "What's more, I'm your Colonel-in-Chief——"

"Scouts don't have colonels," objected Church. "It's a good thing that Mr. Lee described us as amateurs! It'll take weeks and weeks before you become a true Scout, Handy. In fact, I shouldn't be at all surprised if you fail in your examinations, and get chucked out!"

"You—you insulting rotter!" roared Handforth. "For two pins I'll biff you over, and roll you in the dust!"

Church grinned.

"Can't be done, old son," he said calmly. "We're on the public highway, and it's a disgrace for Scouts to be seen scrapping with one another. Why, you'd get your stripes taken away instantly."

Handforth started.

"Is that one of the Scout laws?" he asked, in dismay.

"Fancy not knowing that!" said Church. "I can tell you, Handy, you've got to be careful. One biff—and no stripes!"

Handforth was startled. Fortunately, he wasn't aware that Church was drawing largely upon his own imagination. But the trouble was averted for the moment, and that was all that Church cared about.

There were other Scouts in view, and Handforth decided that it would be advisable to go easy. He didn't want to have a lot of talk. So he simmered down, and gave Church a friendly pat on the back. By a supreme effort, Church prevented himself from being hurled into the ditch.

"You rotter!" he gasped. "Didn't I tell you——"

"Fathead! I was only patting you!" explained Handforth. "I've decided not to biff you to-day. In fact, I'll give you three days' grace—the pair of you. But, remember, it's only on condition that you treat me with respect."

Handforth considered that he had made a generous concession—whereas, of course, he had made no difference to the situation whatever.

Having passed through Bellton village, the chums of Study D went along the Caistowe Road, but soon took to a footpath which led in the direction of the cliffs.

They had never seen the camp, but they knew that it was pitched on the peaceful downs some little way beyond the Shingle Head Lighthouse. This part of the coast was quiet and uninhabited. There were no cottages nearer than a mile. Nestling in a neighbouring hollow, however, was a good-sized farm.

Here the Scouts would obtain their supplies of milk, butter, eggs, and so forth. As for general stores, a big supply had been laid in, and there was not likely to be any shortage of food.

"There we are!" exclaimed Church keenly, as they topped a little rise of the downs. "My hat! Doesn't it look fine?"

"Ripping!" said McClure enthusiastically.

They were looking right down upon the camp—or a triple camp. Stretched along the downs were an apparently endless series of tents. Most of them were small, but there were three medium-sized marquees of model design—strong, sturdy affairs which looked capable of withstanding the hardest storm.

The tents were arranged in three groups.

Each group was centred round its own marquee. Flags were flying, and, in the afternoon's sunshine, the scene looked remarkably attractive. Numbers of Scouts were hurrying towards camp at the double.

"Not so bad," said Handforth generously. "One collection of tents for each troop, by the look of it. I don't mind two of 'em being close together, but the third ought to be a couple of miles away! We shall have those fags butting in all day long!"

"Well, we'll give 'em a trial, anyhow,"

said Church. "If they cause too much bother, we can easily make 'em shift their tents."

"By George, so we can!" said Handforth. "I hadn't thought of that— At least, I hadn't mentioned it," he added hastily. "Let's go along and see what everything's like. Under canvas, eh? This is going to be better than the giddy vacation, my sons!"

CHAPTER XX.

GETTING DOWN TO WORK.



ROLL CALL was a complete success.

Every Scout had turned up in his respective camp well before four-thirty. And the juniors were more than delighted with the arrangements. Each camp was complete in itself, and formed a separate unit.

And Nelson Lee, who had had charge of the organising work, had seen to it that the equipment was of the best. Lee, in fact, had had rather a struggle with the school Governors owing to the matter of expense. But Lee had won in the end—having pointed out that these camps could be struck, and pitched again year after year. It was a heavy initial outlay, but the school would undoubtedly benefit in the long run.

Not that the boys cared anything about the financial arrangements.

The camp was there, ready for them, and they took possession of it with joy. The 1st St. Frank's Troop was in Nelson Lee's charge, and consisted of old Ancient House Fourth Formers. The 2nd St. Frank's Troop adjoined, and the 3rd St. Frank's Troop—the fags—was a little further off.

"Now, boys, just a few words," said Nelson Lee, after roll call. "As your Scoutmaster, it is my business to see after your wants, and to right any little troubles that may come along. Don't hesitate to come to me if you wish to have something explained. And all Patrol Leaders will make their reports, and come to me for instructions. At present we are more or less chaotic, but I've no doubt that we shall soon shake down. In any case, for the rest of the day I shall not bother much about discipline."

It was the best way.

These Scout Troops, organised with such haste, were totally different to any of the thousands of other Scout Troops all over the country. These latter had been carefully organised after weeks of preparation, Scouts being initiated by a gradual process.

The St. Frank's Troops had come into being in a rush.

By a special arrangement, this had been made possible. But as each Scoutmaster pointed out to his boys, there was to be no liberty taken on account of this concession. It was up to the Scouts to make themselves proficient as early as possible.

The Ancient House fellows were determined to obtain full marks before the Modern House juniors—and vice-versa. And Willy Handforth calmly told his fags that it was up to them to beat the Fourth Formers into fits.

This spirit of keenness would certainly act in the right way, and make all the Scouts eager and determined to do their utmost. But, as Nelson Lee had said, the real work wouldn't start until to-morrow. For to-day, everything would be free-and-easy.

Each camp had its own marquee.

This was destined to serve many purposes. It would provide a dining-hall for its own particular Troop—it would be a kind of common-room, where all the Scouts could congregate in leisure moments. And, lastly, during certain hours of the day, lessons would take place, in just the same way as lessons took place at St. Frank's itself.

For this was not a holiday camp. The work of the school had to go on as usual. Only in their leisure time would the juniors enjoy the delights of camp life and Scoutcraft. But everybody felt that lessons would be curtailed. In the afternoons, for example, they would probably be free at least an hour before the usual time.

Nelson Lee walked towards his own tent after roll call, but he suddenly halted, and frowned. Near by, Handforth was talking with the Onions brothers and Neco-demus Trotwood. There was something about Handforth's appearance which caught Nelson Lee's eye.

"Just a moment, Handforth."

"Speaking to me, sir?" asked Edward Oswald, turning.

"Yes, my boy," replied Lee. "What, exactly, are you supposed to be?"

"That's just what I was telling these chaps, sir," replied Handforth promptly. "The asses are trying to make out that I'm all wrong! Said I oughtn't to wear this plume—"

"Do you happen to be the Leader of this Troop?"

"Not exactly, sir—but—"

"I understood that Nipper was Troop Leader—so you have no right to wear those three stripes on your pocket," said Nelson Lee. "And as for these badges— Why, good gracious! You appear to have an extraordinary number of accomplishments!"

"Yes, sir," said Handforth awkwardly.

"Not only are you a musician, but a naturalist, a horseman, an entertainer, a cyclist, and a cook," proceeded Nelson Lee. "Even now I do not think I have exhausted the number of badges. You also appear to be a Scoutmaster and an assistant Scoutmaster."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A number of Scouts chuckled loudly as Handforth turned very red.

"This won't do, young man," said Nelson Lee.

"No, sir," murmured Handforth.

"You must dispense with all these trimmings," said Lee sternly. "I will say nothing further to-day, Handforth, but in the morning you must turn out without any of these badges or stripes—"

"But I can wear two stripes, sir—I'm patrol leader."

"Well, we will see about that later," said Nelson Lee. "But don't let me have to speak to you again. We are Scouts, Handforth, and there must be no liberties taken. We want the St. Frank's troops to set an example to the whole countryside—a good example. It is not my desire to see my boys making a laughing-stock of themselves."

"No, sir," said Handforth with a gulp.

"Before you can wear those proficiency badges, you must pass the necessary tests, and qualify fully," continued Lee. "Perhaps you had better confine yourself to being a cook to start with. The evening meal is now being prepared, so I should advise you to busy yourself in that direction."

He walked off, leaving Handforth rather blank.

"A cook, eh?" he muttered. "Well, I don't need to pass any test for cooking! I'll go along and take charge of the operations at once."

De Valerie groaned.

"That's done it!" he said. "I thought we were going to have a good feed this evening, but there's not much chance of it now!"

CHAPTER XXI.

HANDFORTH, THE COOK.



FATTY LITTLE was fairly in his element.

He was in full control of the camp kitchen, and he was keeping several assistants busy with a tactfulness which amounted

to genius. In any matter concerning food the fat junior was several kinds of a marvel.

The kitchen was splendidly equipped.

A good-sized tent was provided for the stores, and just outside stood the cooking stoves, and these were already fully alight, and all sorts of pots and pans were being prepared.

"We've got a free hand this evening,"

said Fatty. "So we're going to have a terrific spread. By pancakes! Buck up with those potatoes, Griffith! You, too, Armstrong! And what about those greens, Doyle? We shan't get much of a feed unless you chaps put a hustle on."

Fatty himself was slicing bacon with the hand of an expert. And a number of Scouts stood round, hungrily eyeing the operations.

And at this point Handforth strode up.

"Oh, so you've started, eh?" he said, looking round.

"Started?" repeated Fatty. "What do you mean—started? I'm chief cook here—and the feed's well on the way."

"You're chief cook?" repeated Handforth. "What rot! That's my job! If you like to be my assistant, I'll allow you to have the post," he added generously. "But remember—no butting in against my orders! Hi, Church! Where are you sneaking off to?"

Church and McClure, hoping to escape, were unobtrusively dodging behind a neighbouring tent. Instead of obeying their leader's orders, they vanished, and Handforth gave an indignant snort.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter!" he exclaimed. "There are plenty of other fellows here. Now then, Fatty, let's have that bacon! I'll show you the way to carve it! And don't forget—I'm the boss of this kitchen!"

Fatty Little glared.

"You clear off!" he roared. "Great bloaters! If you start interfering we shan't get any supper at all! You're not the cook—so don't start any of your funny business! Scoot!"

Handforth was taken aback.

"Are you talking to me?" he asked blankly. "Are you telling me to clear off? Me—the cook?"

"You can call yourself what you like, but I'm preparing this meal!" retorted Fatty grimly. "But I'll tell you what—you can give a hand if you like. Grab some of that bread, and cut it up."

Handforth laughed in a superior way.

"I've had enough of this insubordination!" he said curtly. "I'll give you just ten seconds to hand over that bacon. You can cut the bread! I'm going to take charge of the frying."

He grabbed the bacon, and Fatty gave a hoot of dismay. He stood looking on dazedly while Handforth hacked off a number of uneven slices, varying in thickness from half an inch to an eighth.

"Oh, all right!" said Fatty sourly. "Go ahead! If you can fry slices like that you'll take first prize!"

Fatty appeared to be resigned, and he stood idly by, watching, while Handforth took over the command. Somehow, Edward Oswald managed to dispose of the bacon, but he was already beginning to regret that he had tackled the job.

At last he put the big knife down and wiped his hands.

"Now then—out of it!" roared Fatty, seizing his opportunity. "I wasn't going to do anything while you had that knife in your hand, but now, by treacle, you're going!"

Handforth went.

Fatty Little charged him like an enraged bull. And when Fatty Little charged anything, something had to go. It seemed to Handforth that an avalanche had struck him.

Fatty didn't use his fists. He simply butted into the intruder and sent him flying backwards, staggering over the grass. Handforth tripped against something, overbalanced, and sat down with terrific violence into a tub of water and potato peelings.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Great pip!" gasped Handforth. "What—what's happened?"

"You've been kicked out of this kitchen—that's what's happened!" said Fatty Little grimly. "And if you come back, I'll jolly well do something worse! By gravy! I'm not standing any interference with my department."

Handforth struggled out of the bath, dazed.

"You wait!" he said thickly. "Just wait until I've got changed! You—you rotter! Just for this I won't eat any of your rotten supper!"

He stalked off, but, strange to relate, Fatty Little was not in the least dismayed by the threat.

ing was calm and peaceful, but a few clouds in the sky hinted that rain was not very far off.

"Yes, and we're handy for the beach, too," said Nipper. "A bathe every morning, my sons—that'll be the order of the day in future. They couldn't have pitched the camp in a better place."

Nipper was quite correct in this remark.

At this part of the coast the cliffs sloped gradually down to the sandy beach. There was no sheer drop, so even in the dark the Scouts would be quite safe. And

the slope was not excessively deep, either—just a short descent to the beach.

On one side lay Shingle Head, and on the other a curving bay, which led round the point to Caistowe. In that direction the formation of the cliffs altered. They became steep, and there were many cave openings visible.

"Let's go down and have a walk on the sands," said Watson.

"Just as you like, dear old boy," agreed Tregellis-West. "What do you say, Nipper?"

Nipper was quite agreeable, and they went down the slope, and were soon on the beach. Looking up from the water's edge, it was impossible to see any sign of the camp, for the latter was hidden completely. They seemed to be absolutely alone.

"Queer how we can cut ourselves off so completely," remarked Nipper. "Anybody coming along here would never dream that there was a camp just along the cliff-top."

They walked along the beach, enjoying the stroll. Shingle Head was looking quite harmless at present. The sea was still and quiet, with only a few lapping waves playing upon the beach. It was difficult to realise that the headland was one of the most dangerous along the entire coast, and that in winter-time it had often been the scene of tragic wrecks.

The chums of Study C walked in the opposite direction, attracted, possibly, by the caves. Somehow, the St. Frank's fellows never grew tired of exploring these caves. There were a great number along the coast.

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CHAPTER XXII.

OLD ACQUAINTANCES.



"JOLLY good view from here," said Tommy Watson keenly.

He and Nipper and Tregellis-West were standing at the cliff-top, some little distance from the camp.

They had strolled off to have a look round while supper was being prepared. The even-

While the majority of them were just short, brief affairs, other caves were famed for their dark and mysterious recesses. There were one or two special caves, in fact, which had never been fully explored, owing to the perils.

"Shall we have a look in one?" asked Watson, as they neared the point.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Nipper. "Not much fun in exploring caves without any ropes or lights. No harm in just glimpsing in, of course."

They entered the first cave they came to. Crouching low, they passed into the

He ventured forward recklessly, and a moment later he was floundering amid a mass of soft seaweed. The sensation was rather awful. He sunk down, and the spongy mass seemed to pull him down by some hidden force.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "It's like a quicksand!"

He struggled to get out, but the clinging seaweed enveloped him, as though it were possessed with life. And Nipper and Sir Montie could do very little, because they were unable to obtain any foothold.

Somehow, Watson managed to reach the outstretched hands of his chums. He was



Nipper motioned to his chums to keep quiet. "No need to go out just yet," he whispered. "It's old Starkey!"

entrance, and soon found themselves treading over thick, spongy seaweed. Darkness yawned in front of them—black and mysterious.

"These caves are pretty dangerous, you know," remarked Watson. "If anybody happens to get caught in here at high tide, it's all up! The sea comes right in, and there's no escape——"

"My dear chap, there's no need to talk about that," interrupted Nipper. "The tide's only just gone out, and it'll be hours before it's fully in again. Mind where you're going—there might be some pitfalls."

Watson soon found there were.

pulled up with difficulty. Although he had been in no particular danger, he was nevertheless shaken.

"My hat! Let's get out of here!" he muttered.

"Not so pleasant, exploring caves without lights, is it?" asked Nipper. "You're always liable to come across one of these hollows. They get filled up with seaweed, and you can't see 'em. You can sometimes plunge right down until you're practically buried."

"Half buried is good enough for me," said Watson breathlessly.

They made a move for the cave exit, Nipper leading. But just as he was about

to emerge into the open he pulled back. Voices sounded upon his ears—rough, coarse voices. And he caught sight of two figures coming along the sands.

They struck a familiar chord in Nipper's memory, and a moment later he recognised the two men as old acquaintances.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RATHER QUEER.



NIPPER motioned to his chums to keep quiet. "No need to go out just yet," he whispered. "It's old Starkey!"

"Starkey!" repeated

skipper a prison sentence. It would be just as well, perhaps, not to venture out.

For the three juniors were quite isolated from the rest of the Scouts, and Captain Starkey might greet them with some unpleasant behaviour. His memory was probably better than theirs.

Moreover, Nipper vaguely wondered why Captain Starkey should be here at all. It wasn't the kind of scene which fitted in with his character. A low waterside drinking-house was more his mark.

"No need to take too much notice of gossip, Trapp," came Captain Starkey's voice, as he and his companions passed the cave. "Anyhow, it don't need to worry you. By sharks! We ain't afraid o' boys!"

"I tell ye them youngsters are campin'

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Watson. "Who's he? I seem to know the name!"

"You remember him—Captain Jonas Starkey!" said Nipper. "He's a hardened old reprobate, I believe, a man who has sailed in every part of the world, and who was put in gaol some months ago for gun-running. His mate's with him, that chap who calls himself Mr. Trapp."

Watson and Tregellis-West remembered.

Captain Starkey was a bit of a character, and the St. Frank's fellows had taken an active part in getting the villainous

over the cliffs," said Mr. Trapp. "I don't like it, cap'n. It was them durned boys, don't forget, what caused all the trouble last time."

Captain Starkey swore.

"Ay, bust my mast!" he grunted. "So it was! But they won't do it agin, Trapp—they won't best me a second time! You leave everything to me, and if them boys start interferin'—"

His voice trailed away and became inaudible.

"They seem to be up to some fresh mis-

chief," whispered Nipper. "Hold on—I'll just take a peep! It's a good thing we didn't allow ourselves to be seen."

He craned his head round the rocks, and was just in time to catch sight of Captain Starkey and Mr. Trapp entering a cave farther along the cliff. The two men walked in over masses of seaweed.

Glancing back, Nipper espied a small boat pulled up on the beach. Looking out to sea, he now beheld another craft. It looked like an old schooner, but somehow the masts seemed rather too small for the size of the vessel.

But Nipper had no doubt that it was Captain Starkey's ship. He and the mate had come ashore for the purpose of entering that cave. But why? What reason could they have for such a strange procedure?

"There's something rummy about this," declared Nipper. "I shouldn't be surprised if Starkey's up to his old games—gun-running, or something like that. It's a funny thing how men of his type come back to their old haunts. You'd think he would try another locality altogether."

"He knows this coast, dear boy," said Sir Montie. "It's safer here. I expect he knows every shoal and every rock, to say nothin' of every cave. It's the only place he can operate in—it is, really."

"Yes, I suppose you're right," said Nipper. "Well, we'd better get out of here and shin up the cliff as quickly as we can. Now that Starkey hasn't seen us, we might as well let him remain in ignorance altogether."

They left the cave, and succeeded in reaching the cliff top in safety. They could now see the camp, lying on the downs just ahead. Throwing themselves flat on the grass, they watched the beach.

"We'll wait for a few minutes, and see what happens," said Nipper.

The period of waiting was only a brief one.

Less than seven minutes later Captain Starkey and Mr. Trapp re-appeared. The juniors had been half expecting that the two men would be carrying something. But they were empty-handed.

Their actions, however, were significant.

Captain Starkey was the first to emerge, and he came out cautiously, looking sharply to right and left. He scanned the cliff-top, but failed to observe the crouching figures of the three watching juniors. He turned and beckoned into the cave mouth.

Mr. Trapp appeared, and the pair hurried down to the water's edge, pushed their boat in, and rowed off towards the waiting schooner.

"Well, that's a bit mysterious," declared Nipper grimly.

"I'll tell you what—let's slip down and go into that cave!" suggested Watson, look-

ing eager. "They've gone now, and perhaps we shall be able to find something—"

"Not now!" interrupted Nipper. "From that schooner our movements could be seen as clearly as possible through a telescope. I've got the cave marked in my mind, and we'd better wait until to-morrow."

So the juniors went into the camp, rather thoughtful.

The unexpected appearance of Captain Jonas Starkey and Mr. Trapp had given them plenty to think about. There was a mystery here, but whether it would turn out to be a trifle, or an important matter, remained to be seen.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SETTLING DOWN.



SUPPER was a huge success.

The three camps were enjoying themselves immensely. So far, there had been no attempt to keep any particular

discipline, not that Scouts are subject to discipline in the same way as cadets. Such a camp is necessarily more or less free.

But this evening the juniors simply let themselves go.

Camp fires were built after the meal, and there was plenty of enjoyment to be obtained, squatting round the blaze, and exchanging yarns. Everybody was beginning to feel that camp life was the only real method of existence.

Even Archie Glenthorne succumbed to its charms.

"What-ho!" he murmured lazily, as he leaned back against Alf Brent's shoulder. "This, as it were, is the good old stuff! Dash it all, it's not so frightfully frightful after all!"

"Opinions differ!" growled Alf. "If you think you're going to use me as a cushion, my son, you'd better use your brains again. Try lying on the grass for a change."

Alf shifted his position, and Archie fell back.

"I say!" he protested. "Be a sport, you know! A chappie of my delicate nature must get used to these changes gradually. Strictly speaking, I'm bally worried. I don't look it, but I am."

"What are you worried about?"

"Phipps," said Archie sadly. "The priceless old cove has absolutely failed to turn up. I don't know what I'm going to do without him until to-morrow."

"Until the end of the term, you mean," put in Reggie from near-by. "Poor old Archie! Don't you know that Phipps is barred?"

"Barred?" repeated Archie, with a violent start.

"Of course! This is a Scout camp!" explained Reggie. "You can't expect to have a giddy valet dodging about in camp. A Scout has got to fend for himself, Archie—that's the whole idea of the thing. You won't see Phipps again until the end of term."

Archie made a sound like a dying creature of the woods.

"Then all is lost!" he moaned. "I distinctly told Phipps to rally round during the course of the afternoon——"

"And our Scoutmaster distinctly told Phipps to take a holiday!" grinned Reggie. "My dear chap, Phipps would be as out of place here as Handforth's badges on his shirt. It simply can't be done. You've got to make your own bed, and do your own boot cleaning, and——"

"Good gad!" breathed Archie. "Enough! Kindly say no more, laddie! Let the blow sink in gradually."

He felt so weak from the shock that he staggered to his feet and reeled off towards his tent. He felt that the only possible cure was to go straight to sleep. In the morning perhaps he would have gained sufficient strength to cope with the situation.

It was still quite light, and Archie entered his tent and found it empty. He had no special concessions here. The tent was of the regulation kind, and provided sleeping accommodation for half a dozen.

"Poor old chap, he'll soon get used to it!" chuckled Jack Grey. "In fact, I shouldn't be surprised if Archie comes out strong. He needn't have Phipps at all; he's just as strong and capable as any of us. Being a Scout will be the making of him."

"It'll do us all good," replied Reggie. "I've often thought about starting a St.

Frank's troop, but somehow we've never had time."

"It's just like everything else—the opportunity comes along, and we grab it," remarked Nipper. "Well, we've had an easy time of it to-day, but to-morrow we start the real business—proper routine, and everything."

All the Scouts were highly satisfied.

It was just the same in the two adjoining camps. The juniors were enjoying themselves with great keenness. This was a lot better than being sent off in batches to other schools.

They were not exactly at St. Frank's, but after all, they were quite near the old school. And they were still intact. There would undoubtedly be a keen rivalry between the three troops. The Fourth-Formers, of course, took it for granted that they would leave the fags far behind.

But the redoubtable Willy had his own ideas on this point.

Round the fags' own camp fire Willy was holding forth.

"There's one thing all you chaps have got to bear in mind," he said firmly. "These fatheaded Fourth-Formers look upon us as kids, and think we ought to be Wolf Cubs. They don't recognise us as Scouts at all!"

"Like their nerve!" said Chubby Heath indignantly.

"Exactly!" agreed Willy. "And it's up to us to take them down a peg or two. Remember, my sons, the Third has got to be the best troop, the first to be proficient, the first to win its badges of merit. We'll teach these Fourth fatheads what the Third can do!"

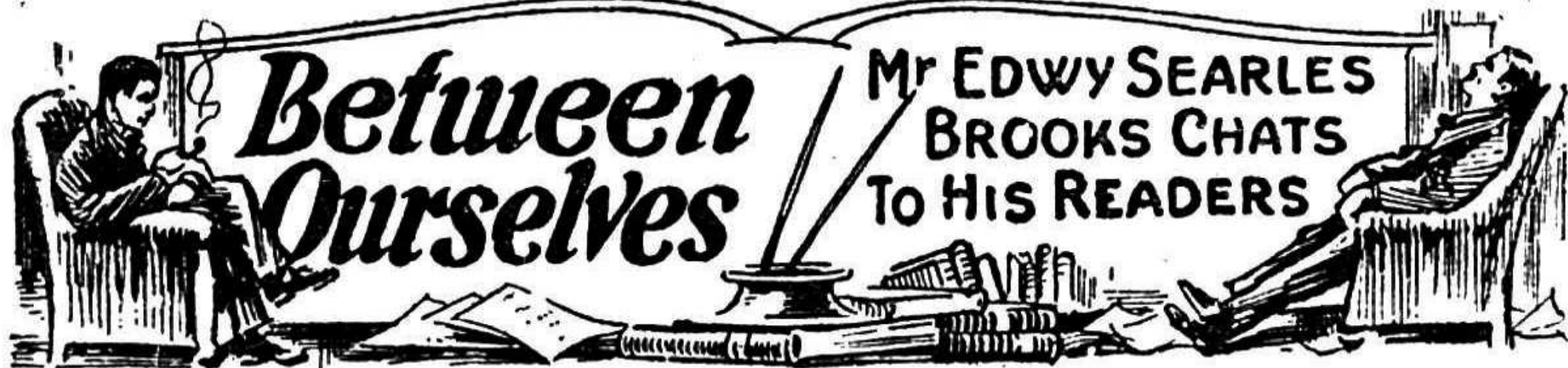
So upon the whole it seemed that the camp had started well; and it further seemed that there would be plenty of interesting events in the immediate future.

THE END.

Another Fine Long Story of the St. Frank's
Boy Scouts Next Week, entitled:—

"THE TIGER PATROL!"

Look Out also for Further Information
About the St. Frank's League!



Between Ourselves

Mr EDWY SEARLES
BROOKS CHATS
TO HIS READERS

(NOTE.—If any readers write to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. If you have any suggestions—send them along. If you have any grumbles—make them to me. All letters should be addressed to EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Remember, my aim is to please as many of you as I possibly can. So it's up to you to let me know your likes and dislikes.—E.S.B.).

Letters received: J. Adams (Sydney, N.S.W.), Macnab (Wyong, N.S.W.), Basil A. Downing (Melbourne, Aus.), Morwin-stowe (Swansea), Herbert George Slatford (Brentford), B. L. (Lancashire), J. T. (Sheffield), Leslie Udall (Bradford), Arzac (Huddersfield), Cissie G. (London, E.1), John Halley (Walthamstow, E.17), A. N. L. L. (Chichester), L. F. Reilly (Brighton), Cheesie Lovatt (Stafford), James E. Wood (Douglas, Isle of Man), R. L. Watson (Birmingham), "Nick & Niffin" (Sutton), Eldred Seabourne (Langstone, Mon.), Fred Graham (Eastbourne), Francis Norman (Plumstead, S.E.18), Michel de Ulrich (Dresden, Germany), Master Robert Sturgeon (Liverpool), Albert Borrow (London, N.1), J. Miller (Darwen), B. W. Messem (Forest Gate, E.), L. Sharp (Luton), Robert Murray (Tottenham), Gwilym John (Gowerton, S. Wales), Archie Hewitt (Ealing), "The Mad Motorist" (Sheffield), A. Redgate (Nottingham).

Of course, you've seen the Editor's announcement about The St. Frank's League, haven't you? If you haven't, I advise you to turn to it at once, and soak it in. I don't intend to say anything further this week—the Editor has told you that the League is now about to blossom forth into full life, and you'll have to wait until next week for further details. If we tell you too much at once you won't be able to digest it properly. Besides, I've got lots of letters to attend to.

Thanks for drawing my attention to the story entitled "ONE OF THE BOYS," No. 472, Herbert George Slatford. Quite a number of others have written me on this matter, and I suppose it's up to me to say

something. As it happens, you are all wrong. On the face of it, I am clean bowled, but I think there's a loophole of escape—and without any wriggling, either. You all tell me that there was nothing new in juniors playing for the First Eleven in the recent cricketing series. You remind me that several juniors played for the First, at the instigation of Mr. Beverley Stokes, in "ONE OF THE BOYS."

Well, you're all right—and you're all wrong. In that story, some juniors did play for the First, but it was only as an experiment. It was only a temporary measure, the juniors playing as substitutes for some crooked seniors. In my recent stories, the situation was totally different, and my statement that juniors were playing for the First Eleven for the first time was correct. For in these latter yarns, Nipper, Dodd and Kahn were actually established

Therefore in that sense—which was the sense I intended conveying—the three Fourth Formers were breaking fresh ground.

I have a letter in front of me which needs a word of comment. I am not going to say whom it is from, because that would encourage him in his base villainy. I might mention that I have had other letters in a similar strain. Briefly, my correspondent tells me that unless I give him an answer in these columns he will at once give up Our Paper for good. Now, if every correspondent acted in the same way, and I took notice, I should need the entire paper every week for "Between Ourselves"! I invite everybody to write to me, and I welcome all letters, but under no circumstances can I guarantee a reply, or even a comment. And I think most of you are broadminded enough to be satisfied if you only get an acknowledgment. As you have all seen, if a correspondent touches upon a matter of general interest, I invariably tackle it. But this is where the point comes—a reader may think he has written upon an important matter of universal appeal, and I feel quite the contrary. Don't you think it would be the right thing to accept my judgment? Threats such as the above leave me quite cold, and if everybody made them this feature would very soon vanish from our pages.

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE

My dear Readers,

I can no longer keep you in suspense as to what is happening regarding the St. Frank's League. Hundreds of letters have been received and continue to arrive concerning the League from all parts of England and the Colonies and wherever Our Paper is read. Many of these letters contain offers from enthusiasts to act as Organising Officers, and all of them indicate a desire to see the League materialise into a reality.

DEVISING A SCHEME.

This is what I have been waiting for these many months before launching out on what may prove to be the biggest scheme we have ever tackled. I have wanted time for the idea to circulate to every quarter of the globe; time to give everyone an opportunity of sending in their opinions and suggestions. Meanwhile, both the Author and I have been at great pains to devise a scheme of development, beginning in a small way, and by the co-operation of readers, gradually to increase the activity of the League in many directions of usefulness to its members. It is now with very great pleasure that I can definitely state the St. Frank's League will come into existence at once.

OBJECT OF THE LEAGUE.

Primarily, the League is being formed for the purpose of knitting together a bond of friendship and understanding between readers far and near. You have all one great thing in common—you are all admirers of those wonderful and inimitable stories of the Boys of St. Frank's. Every week, you delight in the adventures of Mr. Brook's famous characters. They are living personalities, and you, dear readers, by your unfailing appreciation, have helped to make them so. Yet, though you tread this common ground together, have shared the same feelings of delight, have lived together in the environs of St. Frank's, familiar each of you with the lanes and landmarks as you are with the living characters that people the pages of Our Paper, how many of you know anything about your fellow-readers? You number many thousands, distributed throughout the British Empire, and an opportunity of getting in touch with one another should induce every one of you to join the League.

OTHER BENEFITS.

But there will be many other inducements offered later on. For instance, I hope to devote space in the N.L.L. for League notices, short news contributions by Members, free advertisements, competitions, the formation of local clubs and

sports clubs, and, possibly, we may arrange an annual muster, or a sports meeting, and it has even been suggested that we might form a bureau for supplying Members with special articles of clothing at reduced prices. Other benefits, deserving of mention, will take the form of helping and advising boys to choose and qualify for careers or trades, to organise at cost price a correspondence school, and to form an employment bureau. There are many more advantages I could enumerate, which could be introduced into the League.

HOW WE SHALL BEGIN.

It is no use attempting to do all this at once. Like all big undertakings, we must begin in a modest way, contenting ourselves first of all with appointing Organising Officers and enrolling Members. We shall all need to put our shoulders to the wheel and work hard to make the League a success. If you are a regular reader, you have everything to gain and nothing to lose by joining the League. To you I make my appeal direct. There are others, who as yet are non-readers, and who would become readers and join the League if they were told about it. That is where you can help, and at the same time qualify for a solid bronze, silver or gold medallion, which I am offering to Members who introduce new readers and induce them to join the League.

This is only a preliminary announcement, but next week I purpose explaining the simple procedure to be adopted by all who wish to join the League.

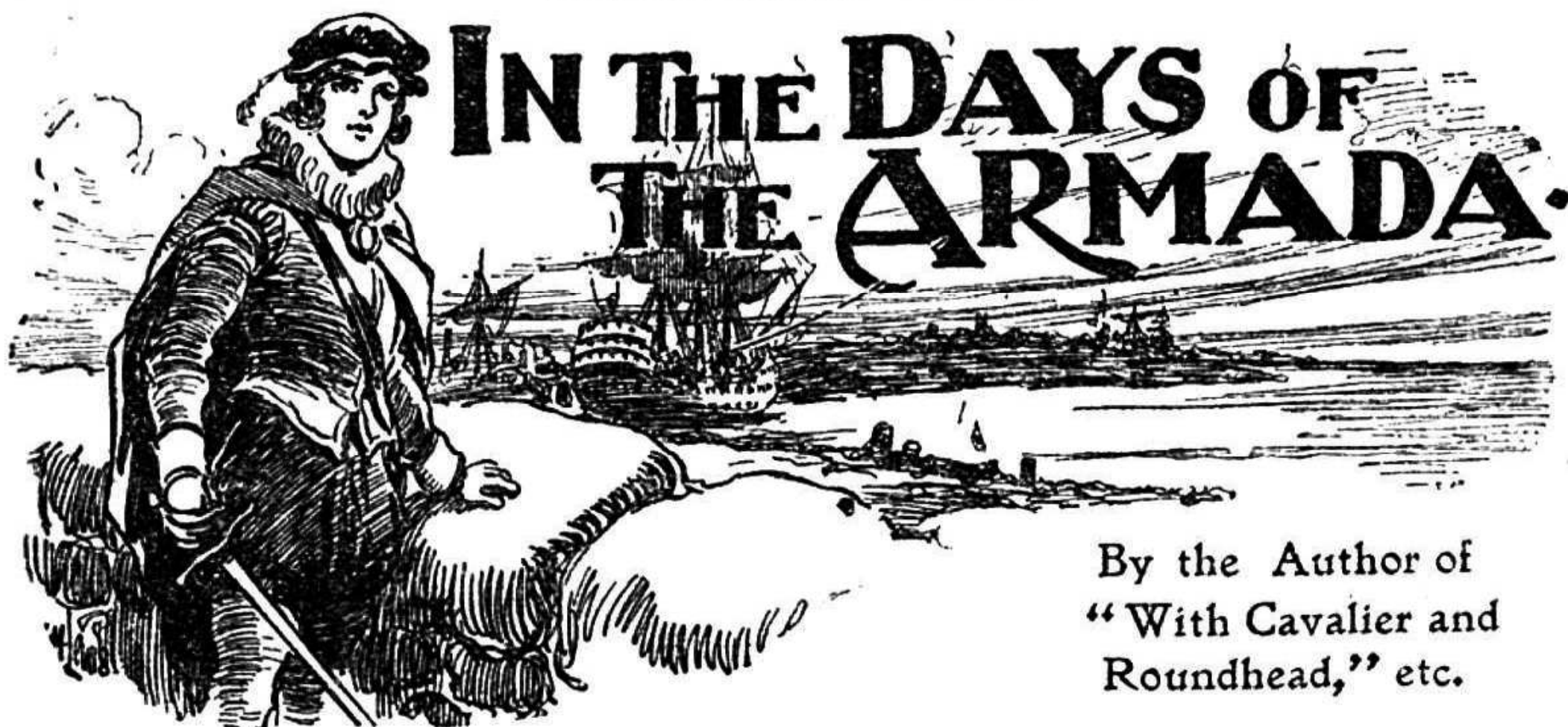
ORGANISING OFFICERS.

The many enthusiastic readers who have already offered their services as local Organising Officers have already been made Members of the League, and this worthy band of pioneers, scattered throughout the Empire—and, indeed, all over the world—form the nucleus of the League. We might call them Foundation Members. They will be given special privileges, and will also be eligible for rewards according to results achieved by them between now and the end of this year. These Foundation Members already number several hundreds, and one of my main concerns in this preliminary announcement is to give every reader a last opportunity to become one of these pioneer Members. But please understand that all readers who send their names in must be sincere in their determination to organise in their localities on the simple lines which we shall indicate. So DON'T send your name in unless you ARE sincere. Up to the end of next week all applicants will be eligible as local Organising Officers, or Foundation Members. That, will be the Home closing date. Overseas closing date will be August 8. Yours sincerely,

THE EDITOR.

(Chief Officer of The St. Frank's League).

**A STIRRING TALE OF A BRITISH BOY'S EXPLOITS WHEN SIR FRANCIS DRAKE
SAILED THE HIGH SEAS.**



By the Author of
"With Cavalier and
Roundhead," etc.

FOR NEW READERS.—The story begins in 1587, when Giles Montford, the sixteen-year-old master of Templeton, decides to take up arms under Drake against the Spaniards, in defiance of his uncle, Don Ferdinand Gonzales, who has invited him to go over to Spain. Giles is sent to London on an important mission, and returns with a dispatch from the queen to Admiral Drake. He has barely arrived back at Templeton when the house is rushed by five Spanish soldiers, and Giles is overpowered and carried off to some unknown destination. The captive is taken on board a Spanish vessel, and then discovers he is a prisoner in the hands of his uncle, the Don. After some days at sea, Giles lands at Cadiz, in Spain, and while on the way to Seville he is rescued by two friends. They succeed in getting away from the Spanish coast in a row-boat, closely pursued.

(Now read on.)

THE situation was now desperate, and Trent and the lads exchanged glances of rage and alarm. With one pair of oars they were helpless, and their capture was but the question of a minute or two. Closer and closer hove the boats from right and left, each manned by six swarthy sailors. The rising sun gleamed on more than one pike-point and wide-mouthed arquebus.

But help was nearer than the fugitives dreamed of. Strange to say, they had forgotten the ship out in the offing, and now, looking in that direction, they saw it bearing swiftly toward them at a distance of a quarter of a mile.

Then it suddenly rolled around broadside, showing the frowning muzzles of six guns

peeping from the deck, and as part of the canvas dropped the flag of England was hauled rapidly to the mast-head.

Giles and the strange lad began to cheer heartily and to wave their hats, and Trent's eyes sparkled as he gave an extra spurt to the oars.

But the fugitives were not quite safe yet. The hostile boats had given up the chase, it is true, but they now opened a straggling fire from pistols and arquebuses.

Trent and his companions escaped injury by ducking, and when a loud report tempted them to bob up their heads they saw a cannon-ball strike the water within a dozen feet of the boat on the left, splashing its occupants profusely. Both boats now pulled hard for safety, and they had several narrow escapes before they reached their vessels.

The English ship, while lying to for the fugitives, opened a brisk fire on the Spanish barks to punish them for their audacity. It was ludicrous to see first one and then the other lift anchor, and make off to the eastward under full sail. Nor did they escape injury, as the occasional crash of timbers or the fall of a mast testified.

Trent quickly pulled under the hull of the *Dame Mary*—which was the name of the English ship—and the boat and its occupants were hauled aboard. The captain and crew gave the fugitives a warm greeting, and Giles saw more than one familiar face among the sturdy Devonshire sailors.

"I never hoped to put foot on a ship's deck again," cried Trent, "and had you been a little farther out to sea the Spaniards would have done for us. How came you on watch? Did Sir Francis Drake send you?"

"Ay, ay," replied the captain; "he feared you might be detained till daylight,

so he sent us to pick you up. We've been beating around hereabouts since two hours before dawn. And now below with you, comrades. You will find meat and drink in the cabin, and I advise you to fill your stomachs while you have the chance. There's hot work cut out for the fleet to-day."

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH STEPHEN TRENT TELLS HIS STORY.

TRENT and the lads were both hungry and thirsty, but they did not at once avail themselves of the captain's offer. They stayed on deck until the *Dame Mary* had tacked about and was riding out to sea under full spread of canvas.

There was scarcely any wind, and it looked as though a considerable time would be required for the ship to beat its way round to the mouth of the harbour. It was a sore trial to the patience of all on board, for they knew that they were missing a chance of distinguishing themselves in action. From behind the town they could hear the incessant thunder of cannon, and could see the powder-smoke drifting upward.

"Come, lads," said Trent, touching Giles and his companion on the shoulders, "there's no use in letting good food spoil, and while we eat the time will pass quicker."

They made their way below, and in the snug little cabin they found bread and meat laid out for them. They fell to with ravenous appetites, and in a short time the food had disappeared.

"Now, Master Giles," began Trent, "I dare say there are a number of things you want to know. It's not the best time for spinning narratives—since we are shortly going into battle—but I think we may venture on a few explanations, if we make them short. Let us hear your story first."

This did not suit Giles very well, but he reluctantly consented. He gave a hurried outline of his capture and imprisonment, to which his companions listened intently.

"And now for my adventures," said Trent, as he threw himself back in his chair. "After I left you on Dartmoor, Master Giles, I rode without peril to Plymouth, got a skiff from old Billy Bones off the Hoe, and pulled down the south in search of the fleet. I wasn't a quarter of a mile from the shore when a boat-load of bloodthirsty Spaniards overhauled me, and gave the word to die or surrender.

"There was no getting away, for the knaves were alongside. I stuck my knife through the dispatch and dropped it into the water. Then I hauled off to fight, but before I could draw my sword a crack on the head stunned me. When I came to I was lying in the bottom of the Spanish boat. The knaves were pulling till their bones cracked, and I could hear another

boat in hot pursuit. Like a fool I sang out for help, and got what I deserved—a stunning whack above the eyes."

"And what next?" Giles asked eagerly.

"The next thing I knew," resumed Trent, "I came to my senses two days later on board the *Hercules*, Sir Francis Drake's own ship. They had overhauled the Spanish boat, and killed all the knaves but one. At the time the fleet was under way for Spain, so they chucked me into a bunk, and took me along. I came within an ace of having a split skull, but on the third day I was able to totter about and take my meals.

"At the first chance I steered into Sir Francis, and told him all about the letter, and how you and I did our best to bring it from London. He looked at me sort of queer for a minute, and then he said I was right to throw it into the water."

"Did you tell him what the dispatch contained?" cried Giles.

"Not likely," replied Trent, "when I didn't know myself."

"That's true," said Giles. "I forgot. This is a pretty mess. The Earl of Essex told me in confidence that the dispatch was to countermand Drake's expedition to Spain."

Trent puckered up his lips and whistled.

"Told you in confidence, eh?" he said.

"Then my advice is, Master Giles, that you hold fast to the secret. It's the only way out of the scrape. If you tell it, the earl is likely to get into trouble."

"True for you," replied Giles, "I'll keep my lips sealed."

Trent nodded, and then laughed heartily.

"I don't believe Sir Francis was specially anxious to get the letter," he resumed.

"Government despatches are sometimes unwelcome, Master Trent," he said to me.

"What a man don't know don't hurt him." Those were his exact words."

"Then we are well out of the scrape," said Giles. "And now for the rest of your story."

"There's not much to tell," replied Trent, "except about the Spanish prisoner. He was a plucky fellow, and though we couldn't get him to say what he and his companions were doing up the Sound that night, he was ready enough to talk about a certain Don Ferdinand, whom he blamed for delaying the Spanish vessel in the Channel while he carried out a little plot of his own."

Giles drew a quick breath.

"Ah, I begin to understand!" he said.

"Exactly," added Trent. "To cut a long story short, Master Giles, the Spaniard told how your precious uncle had planned to abduct you that night, so I made up my mind to try to rescue you when we got to Cadiz—which the Spaniard said was the destination of the Spanish ship. And the rest of the story Master Sydney Rookwood shall spin you."

"Is that your name?" Giles asked in surprise, turning to his young companion. "You are English, then?"

"Yes, I am English," replied the lad, "and it is more this bonnet and cloak than my brown complexion that make me look like a Spaniard. My father is now living a retired life at Kingswear, in Devonshire, by the mouth of the River Dart. But until a year ago he owned a trading vessel, and I have been to all parts of the world with him since my mother died. That was sixteen years ago, when I was a baby."

"And how did you happen to be in Cadiz?" asked Giles.

"Sir Francis Drake took me with him because I knew all about the Spanish ports," replied Master Rookwood. "When we anchored off Cadiz Harbour last night Sir Francis asked me to go into the town as a spy, and as Master Trent here was of the same mind we disguised ourselves and went together. You know what happened then. We caught sight of you with the two Spaniards, and as we guessed which way they were bound we slipped ahead into the dark street. It was more by luck than skill that we saved you."

"Not a bit of it!" cried Giles, as he warmly shook Master Rookwood's hand. "It was a most brave and daring rescue, and I am more grateful to you than I can ever show. And to you also, my trusty Stephen. Why, I took you both for villainous Spaniards."

"Do you think I made a good one, Master Giles?" exclaimed Trent.

With this he fell to laughing violently, and in the midst of his mirth a sudden jerk of the vessel threw him off his chair to the floor. At the same instant the cannonading seemed to grow louder, and the deck overhead rang with cheers.

Trent sprang to his feet and dashed out of the cabin. Giles and Sydney rushed after him, and when they reached the deck they beheld a thrilling and magnificent sight.

The Dame Mary was standing gallantly in through the mouth of the harbour, and the long range of batteries on the right, fronting the town, were popping away furiously. The bombardiers seemed unable to get the correct aim, and the little vessel kept on her course amid a storm of iron missiles that either fell short or went shrieking overhead.

Drake's fleet had long since passed the batteries in safety, and now, at a distance of less than a mile ahead, it was engaged in a lively and spirited action. There were thirty ships under the command of the veteran seaman, six of which were privateers and men-of-war belonging to the Crown, while the others had been equipped by merchants of London and various English seaports.

The larger part of the fleet had surrounded a great Spanish man-of-war—the only formidable enemy that lay in the harbour—and were pouring broadside after broadside into it, and gradually closing nearer in spite of a heavy return fire.

The rest of the fleet were hotly battling with a number of Spanish galleys, and behind the galleys the vast harbour was simply jammed with store-ships containing provisions for the Armada—a prize which Drake had worthily determined to possess.

The belated English sailors were roused to hoarse cheering by the valorous deeds of their comrades, by the sight of the shifting mass of vessels, and constant flash and smoke of the great guns. The whistle and shriek of balls overhead had no power to terrify Giles, and as he stood looking forward he felt all the excitement and enthusiasm of a soldier's life.

"Does Sir Francis know that the Queen's letter recommended us to serve under him?" he demanded eagerly of Trent, who was by his side. "Did you tell him that?"

"Ay, I verily did," replied Trent, "since that much I heard from your own mouth."

"And what was his answer?"

"That he was glad to welcome two such volunteers. Nay, more; he promised that we both should fight on his own ship. So have no fear, Master Giles. We are bound to have our part in the beginning and the end of this war with Spain."

Giles flushed with joy.

"Sir Francis shall not repent his promise," he cried, "so long as I can hold a sword."

By this time the Dame Mary was beyond reach of the batteries, having lost only the top of one mast while passing through the fire. As she sped on toward the thick of the action, the master-gunner ordered his men to their places, and part of the sailors began to bring supplies of powder and ball above deck.

"Are we to fight on board this craft for the present?" Giles asked of Master Rookwood.

The lad shook his head.

"I think not," he answered. "I am to make a speedy report to Sir Francis."

Master Rookwood was right. The Dame Mary swept on till she was close to the hottest part of the struggle. Then she veered round, poured a volley from six of her guns into the Spanish man-of-war, and slipped gracefully alongside of Sir Francis Drake's flagship, Hercules.

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH GILES BOARDS THE SPANISH GALLEY.

A RUSH was instantly made by three or four sailors who held grappling-hooks and lines, and Trent and the two lads, knowing what was expected of them, dashed after the party,

But before the hooks could be thrown, the man-of-war sent a couple of round-shot shrieking across the deck of the *Dame Mary*, and thence into the forward bulwarks of the *Hercules*.

Death and destruction followed in the wake of the iron missiles. Giles was hurled to the deck by a shower of splinters, which fortunately did him no worse injury than a few bruises and scratches. As he rose to his feet, a little dazed, he heard a tremendous crash, followed by cries of rage and agony.

The shattered mast had fallen, crushing half a dozen of the sailors under its weight. Two or three poor fellows were lying near, bleeding and mangled. It was the lad's first taste of real warfare, and he was more angered than disheartened by the sad sight. He felt a burning thirst for revenge on the Spaniards.

Trent and Master Rookwood had escaped injury, and they hurried up to Giles, rejoicing to find him safe. By this time the two vessels had swung a little apart, but they were quickly connected by grappling-hooks, and drawn together.

While the *Dame Mary* fired gun after gun from its open side, Trent and the lads ran to the opposite side and hoisted themselves to the bulwarks of the *Hercules*. Thence they jumped down upon the deck, and the *Dame Mary* instantly sheered off, giving the *Hercules* a chance to renew her terrific broadsides against the enemy.

Master Rookwood at once disappeared, leaving his companions standing in the shelter of the bulwarks, and watching the animated and thrilling scenes around them. The bombardiers, grimy with sweat and powder, were working hard at their posts of duty. Sailors were staggering up from below deck, laden with powder and ball. The master-gunner seemed to be everywhere at once, shouting out orders, and keeping an eye on the movements of the enemy.

The noise of the great guns was terrific. Continuously the vessels of the fleet vomited their deadly charges into the man-of-war, or reeled under the return fire that was at times delivered with too true an aim. So the battle went on, with thunder and roar, rending of bulwarks and splitting of masts, with flapping sails and clamour of husky voices.

The rolling of the ships had pretty much the effect of a severe storm, and the waters of the harbour were lashed into angry waves. As the smoke curled this way and that dead bodies could be seen lying on the splinter-strewn deck, while here and there sailors were helping a wounded comrade below. Overhead, the shrieking balls whizzed through sails and rigging.

Trent seemed to be quite in his element. There was a grim smile on his face, and an eager, impatient look in his eyes.

"Ay, but this is like to old times, Master Giles," he exclaimed. "Methinks I can

see over yonder the low muddy shores of Holland. There is naught in life can compare to a hot brush with the Spaniards.

"Look!" he added. "Over by the mast stands the old sea-dog himself, holding converse with Master Rookwood. Aye, and he is as easy of mind as though he were playing at bowls on Plymouth Hoe."

Giles felt a strange thrill as he followed the direction of Trent's arm, and saw the sturdy navigator with whose praises England had rung a half-score of times. Sir Francis Drake was now forty-eight years old, with a weather-beaten face, tanned by the suns of many a foreign clime.

But he was plainly and unassumingly garbed, and there was little about him to indicate a man who had spent years in deeds of daring and conquest in France and the Americas, the West Indies, and the Spanish Main; who had floated the banner of England in Chili, Peru, and Virginia, trailed it across the Pacific to the Isle of Java, through the Indian Ocean and round the Cape of Good Hope.

Before Giles could take more than a brief look, Sir Francis came striding across the deck, and fixed his keen eyes on Trent and the lad.

"Welcome back, my trusty fellow," he said. "I hear you did nobly to rescue your young master from his enemies. Welcome also to you, Master Montford. I have heard how pluckily you rode from London with the Queen's letter. It matters not that I never saw it, since I understand that it contained in part a recommendation of your services from my Lord Howard."

"So I was told by her Majesty's Minister," replied Giles. "And the favour of my Lord Howard in my behalf I owe to my guardian, Sir Richard Edgecumbe."

"Ay, I know him well," said Drake. "He is a brave soldier and a loyal gentleman. But this is no time for long words. You have come recommended by deeds as well as by good words, and so long as I command a deck for England you shall both do service under me. Now get below, where you will find armour and weapons. You are like to have need of them ere the day be over."

With this Sir Francis turned away, leaving Trent and Giles well pleased by his gracious words and promises. The fight was still raging as they hurried below deck to a room that was fitted up as an armoury. Here Sydney Rookwood was exchanging his disguise for the habiliments that he had cast off when he started for Cadiz.

In a short time Giles was rigged out in a headpiece, breastplate, and back-piece of light steel, and was armed with a sword, a dagger, and two pistols. His companions were equipped in like manner.

"What news have you for our ears, Master Rookwood?" asked Trent. "Do we land to attack the town when the harbour hath been cleared?"

Sydney shook his head.

"Not so," he replied. "From the word I brought him Sir Francis hath decided not to lay siege to Cadiz. He purposes now to capture this rich fleet of store-ships, and with that he will likely be content for the present."

"I would fain have seen the English flag planted on the walls of yonder town," muttered Trent, "but doubtless Sir Francis knows best. Hark! They are at it overhead. Come comrades, it ill becomes us

strewn deck, and the Spanish flag waved insolently from the bow.

The English ships closed nearer, and a perfect hail of iron crashed into the man-of-war for fully five minutes. Then it began to settle deeply and swiftly into the water, and there were some signs of a panic on its deck. One by one the fire of the guns ceased, and the Spanish seamen commenced dropping into the water, to be picked up by the boats from their enemy's ships.



As he rose to his feet, a little dazed, he heard a tremendous crash, followed by cries of rage and agony. The shattered mast had fallen, crushing half a dozen of the sailors.

to lurk here, now that we are equipped for the fight."

With this he was off, with Giles and Sydney at his heels, and they reached the deck in time to witness a stirring sight. The Spanish man-of-war was near its last gasp. Its masts were down, its bulwarks were torn and rent, and it had sprung a leak from more than one hole inflicted as it rolled to leeward among the waves.

But the doomed ship was still fighting pluckily, and what guns were yet in service were pouring hot broadsides into the half-dozen surrounding ships. There was plenty of life and commotion on the debris-

"It sinks—it sinks!" cried the English sailors, and a hoarse cheer spread from vessel to vessel.

Drake gave the signal to stop firing, and the cloud of smoke slowly rolled away, letting the sun shine brightly on the last act of the tragedy.

"Ay, the victory is ours," exclaimed Trent, "and right nobly it hath been gained. Look, Master Giles, the sea is pouring in at the portholes."

"And the Spaniards are dropping overboard like angry wasps from their nest," cried Sydney. "We shall have a store of prisoners."

With flushed cheeks, Giles watched the scene from the admirable point of vantage which he and his companions had taken on the poop-deck of the *Hercules*. For a minute or two longer the man-of-war swayed from side to side, meanwhile sinking steadily deeper. Then it suddenly heeled over, dipping its bow out of sight, and the next instant the spot where it had been was a seething whirlpool of wreckage and struggling forms.

Hundreds went down with the vessel. Others made a plucky fight for life, and after the peril of the vortex was passed the boats of the fleet picked up a number of prisoners, including several officers of the ill-fated man-of-war.

The harbour, with its rich prizes was now completely at Drake's mercy, and he lost no time in leading his little squadron to the aid of the other vessels of the fleet, which were slowly and stubbornly driving the Spanish galleys off from their defence of the store-ships.

The town must have been in a fearful state of panic and rage. Vast crowds of people were watching from the walls, but they were helpless to interfere. The blow had fallen with stunning unexpectedness, and though Cadiz was full of soldiers, it had no force of vessels to compete with the English fleet. The Armada was lying at the time in the River Tagus, off the city of Lisbon, under command of the Marquis Santa Croce.

A hot fire delivered at close range speedily broke up the defensive line of galleys, and all but two put out toward the open sea as fast as their ponderous oars could carry them. These two pluckily stood their ground, pouring destructive broadsides into the enemy.

While the rest of the fleet sailed on to seize and plunder the store-ships, the *Hercules* and half a dozen other vessels surrounded the two galleys. Finding themselves trapped they now sought to escape, and one actually got clear of the blockade.

The other was very nearly safe, in spite of the terrific fire through which it had passed, when the *Hercules* ran alongside by a quick and clever tack. There was a grinding of oars, followed by a jarring bump, and no sooner had Drake's lusty voice shouted the command to board than a body of seamen made a rush for the bulwarks.

Trent and the two lads were among the first to scramble on the deck of the galley, and in the excitement they and their score of companions did not look to see what was taking place behind them. With shrill cries they cut down the Spanish gunners, and then attacked a body of foes that came pouring from all parts of the ship.

A terrific hand-to-hand fight ensued. The Spaniards struggled desperately, but they were no match for the resolute and powerful English seamen. Giles and Sydney stuck close to Trent, and found themselves in the thick of the combat.

The lads had no time to think of fear. They pushed on over the planking, slashing madly at the swarthy faces of their enemies. The Spaniards were driven farther and farther back, leaving the deck strewn with dead and wounded.

The master-gunner of the galley had been leading the assailants, and had so far borne a charmed life in spite of the many swords that singled him out. Now, seeing that hope was gone, he snatched a blazing torch, and rushed below deck with a shrill yell of defiance.

The English seamen knew what this meant, and with cries of panic and fear they retreated to the galley's side, hot pressed by the few Spaniards who remained alive. Trent clapped Giles and Sydney on the shoulder as he struggled by them in the mad flight for safety.

"Back for your lives!" he cried. "That knave of a gunner is seeking the magazine with his torch. The galley will be blown up."

Trent would have stayed to help the lads, but he was borne helplessly along by the rush. At the same instant a ferocious-looking Spaniard felled Sydney to the deck with a heavy pike, and then aimed a like blow at Giles, who was directly in front of him. Trent saw the downfall of the one lad and the imminent peril that threatened the other. He turned with a lusty shout, and tried to win his way back; but he made slow progress, and before he could get near the spot his aid was no longer required.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH GILES FACES DEATH LIKE A HERO.

THE Spaniard had come up from one side, and consequently Giles was a witness of the attack that prostrated his companion. Though he had his sword in his hand, a thrill of grief and rage so blunted him to his own peril at first that he lost a precious second in hesitation. Then, seeing the uplifted pike and the frenzied countenance of his foe, he tried to draw back a little, at the same time jerking his blade upward in an attitude of defence.

This movement would have availed the lad little against the force of the Spaniard's heavier weapon, but it fortunately so happened that his foot slipped on the deck, bringing him to his knees. At that very instant one of the seamen of the *Hercules*, too scared to see where he was going, darted between the Spaniard and his intended victim.

The luckless seaman caught the full force of the pike on his head, and down he went like a log, knocking Giles over on his back, and sprawling across him. The Spaniard was doubtless as well satisfied with the effect of his blow, though he had good reason to think otherwise a moment later.

Giles was not even stunned, and he lost no time in crawling from under the body of the unconscious seaman and springing to his feet. Seeing the surprised Spaniard lifting the pike in both hands, he made at him furiously. There was the quick flash and lunge of a blade, a groan of agony, and down went the Spaniard to the deck, where he lay with scarcely a quiver.

The little tragedy was done and over in much less time than it takes to tell. Indeed, scarcely half a minute had elapsed since the frenzied master-gunner was seen to dash below with the blazing torch.

The death of his enemy gave Giles a thrill of exultation. He regarded it as a deed of vengeance, for he had no doubt that Sydney Rookwood was dead. He was about to follow Trent, who was calling excitedly to him from the side of the galley, when a sudden impulse prompted him to step back to the side of his young companion.

A hasty glance showed that Master Rookwood was not dead after all. His chest was heaving, and there was a flutter of his eyelid. The helmet had broken the force of the blow, and was jammed down on his forehead; under the steel rim a tiny stream of blood was trickling.

"Run for your life, Master Giles! Quick, or you are surely lost!"

The appeal came in hoarse tones of entreaty from Trent, who had one leg over the bulwark of the galley and the other on the deck.

For an instant, as Giles remembered the dreadful fate that threatened him, his heart seemed to leap up into his throat. The excitement of his late struggle had quite driven the danger from his mind. A hurried glance round showed him the last of the English seamen, and a few Spaniards as well, scrambling in mad panic over the bulwarks. He noted the corpse-strewn deck and the little group of Spanish seamen who were standing over by the mast, waiting with sullen resignation for the explosion that was to save them from a shameful captivity.

Trent planted both feet on the deck and beckoned wildly.

"Have you gone daft, Master Giles?" he shouted. "In a second or two the magazine must blow up. You are throwing your life away, and mine as well. Master Rookwood is dead, and you can do nothing to aid him."

"Master Rookwood is not dead," cried Giles. "He is only stunned. He saved my life, and I shall try to save his."

By a quick movement he tore the helmet from the lad's head. Then, clasping both arms around the unconscious body under the shoulders, he began to drag it slowly across the deck. It was a heavy load, and he made but poor progress with it.

"Drop him, Master Giles!" implored Trent. "You can never do it in time. You have a slim chance yet if you speed quickly. We can jump into the water and swim for the ship."

Swim for the ship? What did he mean? Ah, now Giles understood. Over the bulwarks of the galley he saw the sails and mast of the Hercules swaying to and fro at a considerable distance. It had lurched away from the galley before half the boarding-party had been able to get a footing on the enemy's deck, and now a space of several hundred feet separated the two vessels.

For an instant Giles was sorely tempted. It was one thing to drag his burden to the bulwarks of the Hercules, another to plunge with it into the heaving sea. The sudden remembrance of his rescue from Don Ferdinand that morning checked the impulse of self-preservation to which he had nearly yielded, and a faint groan from Sydney steeled his heart to the perilous ordeal.

"Save yourself, Stephen!" he cried hoarsely. "If God wills it I shall join you, but I can't desert Master Rookwood."

Giles did not hear what answer Trent made. His brain was in a whirl, and a mist seemed to dance before his eyes as he stepped inch by inch over the deck with Sydney's limp form dragging in his arms. He heard shouts from a distance, and there was a dull, pounding noise from somewhere under his feet.

Still he pressed on, resolved to save his comrade or perish with him. The side of the galley seemed to come no nearer, and each second was like an hour. His blood was at fever heat, and in imagination he heard the frightful explosion of the magazine, and felt his limbs torn apart and hurled in the air.

It was the fearful strain that magnified the time to the lad's mind, and while he fully believed that he had been dragging his helpless burden for several minutes, he had in reality but barely started when a loud, warning cry rang in his ears.

The sound came from in front, and not behind, but Giles instinctively turned in the latter direction. What he saw cleared his brain and vision instantly. Three of the half-dozen Spaniards who had been grouped by the mast were now advancing savagely upon him, stooping to pick up weapons from the deck as they ran.

This sudden check to his hopes threw Giles into a reckless passion. He could not escape with his companion, and he saw little chance of coming out victor in a contest against such odds. He let Sydney slip out of his arms to the deck, and, having dropped his own sword in order to carry his friend, he snatched the first weapon that came to hand.

It was a long, thin rapier of Spanish make, and the lad had scarcely taken a tight grip of the handle when the first of his three assailants was upon him.

(Another grand long instalment of this stirring narrative next week.)

HOW TO MAKE HOT-AIR BALLOONS

By DICK GOODWIN

A PART from the interest in watching a hot-air balloon rise in the air and float away, a certain amount of skill is required in making one. Made of tissue paper, they are inexpensive and more effective when colours are used. There are several forms, from the circular or globe form to the pear shape, the latter being more commonly used as it is more stable in the air.

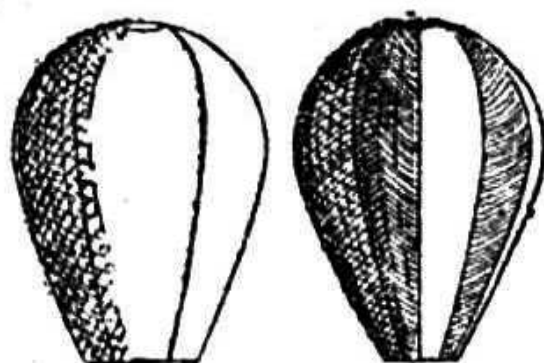


Fig. 1. Fig. 3.

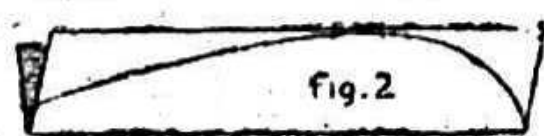


Fig. 2.

the centre and cut to give six pieces 42 in. by 14 in. Place together, fold in the centre, and then cut out the panels or gores, as at Fig. 2. Now take each piece in turn, coat about 1 in. of one side with gum, place another piece on and carefully press down. Gum the outside edge of the new piece, and continue until the whole of the gores are attached together. A 6-in. circular piece is placed on top, and the bottom attached to a circular wire.

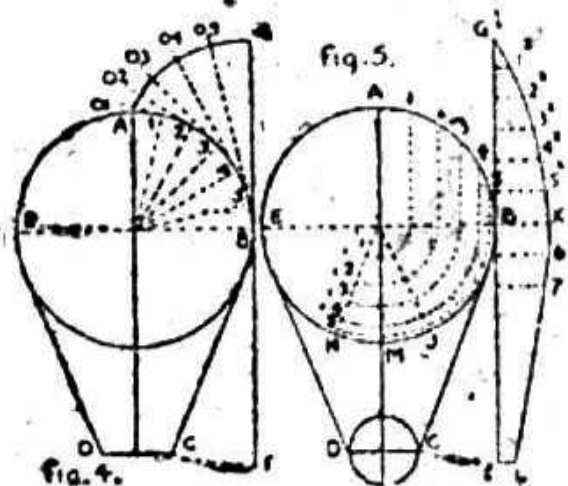


Fig. 4.

Fig. 5.

MAKING A LARGE BALLOON.

A larger balloon, of 6 ft. diameter, should be made with eight gores as at Fig. 3, the method of marking out is shown at Figs. 4 and 5. Draw a circle of 11½ in. radius, divide A and B into six parts, as at 1 to 5, and complete the shape as at C, D, and E. Draw a line F, G through B, join points 1 to 5 to the centre, lines at right-angles to these as at 01 to 05 and then set off distances 1A to 01, from 2, with distance 2-01, to 02 and so on. This will give point G, the height of gore, and BF, radius BC, depth of gore. To obtain width of gores, divide GB into six parts, transfer divisions between A and B to diameter BE, mark off HJ equal to radius or ½ of circumference, join to centre and transfer lines 1 to 5 with compasses. Next mark off BK equal to HM, set off 5² equal to 5¹, and add

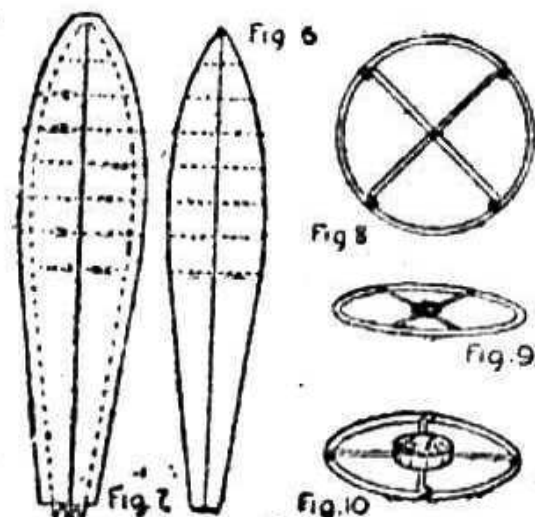


Fig. 6.

Fig. 8.

Fig. 9.

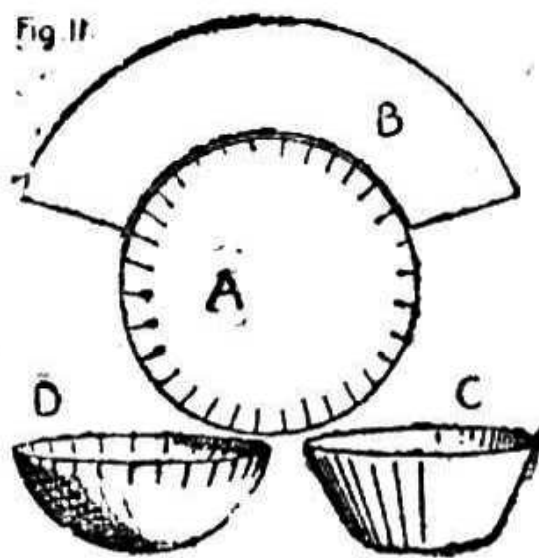
Fig. 10.

6 and 7, equal to 5 and 4 above. The distance FL is ½ of circle DC. The gores will be of the shape shown at Fig. 6, but in cutting out leave 1 in. for joining, as at Fig. 7. Paste together as described above, and prepare ring as at Fig. 8.

MAKING THE LAMP.

The wad for providing the heat, as at Fig. 9, can be of cotton wool, frayed lamp-wick or wool, fastened to the cross-pieces of fine wire with flower wire, but a good plan is to fit a cigarette-box lid, as at Fig. 10. A piece of wire gauze can be placed inside the tin with wool underneath; the lamp thus formed will burn longer than a wad, is less liable to ignite the paper, and the heat generated will carry the balloon higher and for a greater distance.

Fig. 11.



MAKING TWO-PIECE BALLOONS.

A method of making a smaller balloon with two pieces of tissue is shown at Fig. 11. The circular piece A should be as large as possible, and the segmental piece B should have an inner curve about one-third of the circumference of the circular piece A. The latter is snipped with scissors for 2 or 3 in. or more in a large circle; paste the ends of the piece B to form the shape at C, and then shape the circle as at D to paste inside the band. Another method shown at Fig. 12 is formed with gores cut from sheets placed in order, as at E, Fig. 13, pasted on the edges which overlap 1 in., and joined, as at F. Cut to shape as at G, spread out for pasting as at H, and join gores as before. Cover the top with a circular piece, and the bottom with a band, as at Fig. 14. The wire can be fastened to a circular sheet as at K.

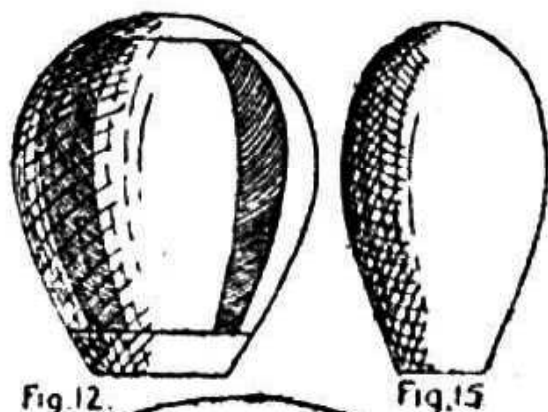


Fig. 12.

Fig. 15.

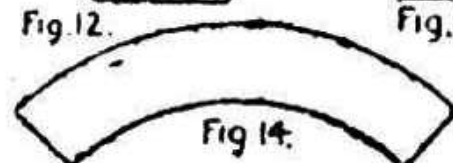


Fig. 14.

INFLATING THE BALLOON.

In setting hot-air balloons free, pull the sides apart and get two assistants to hold the balloon while the inside air is getting hot. Great care must be taken to keep the flame from the sides, and for this reason a narrow balloon, as at Fig. 15, is bad. On no account should balloon be freed until the inner air has quite inflated the shape. Let it go gently, and if there is no wind, the balloon will rise vertically and gradually float away.

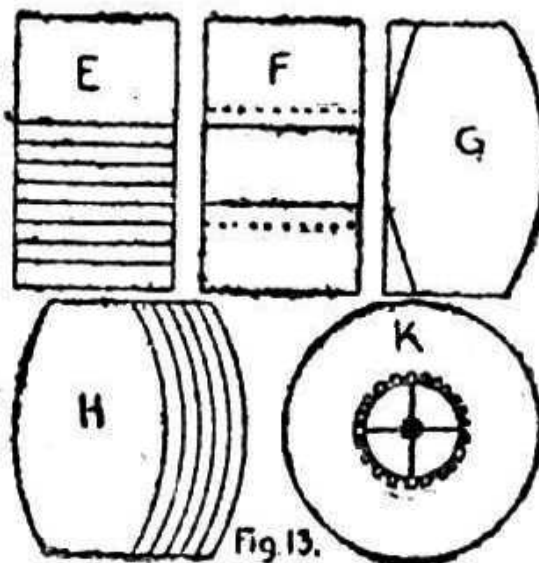


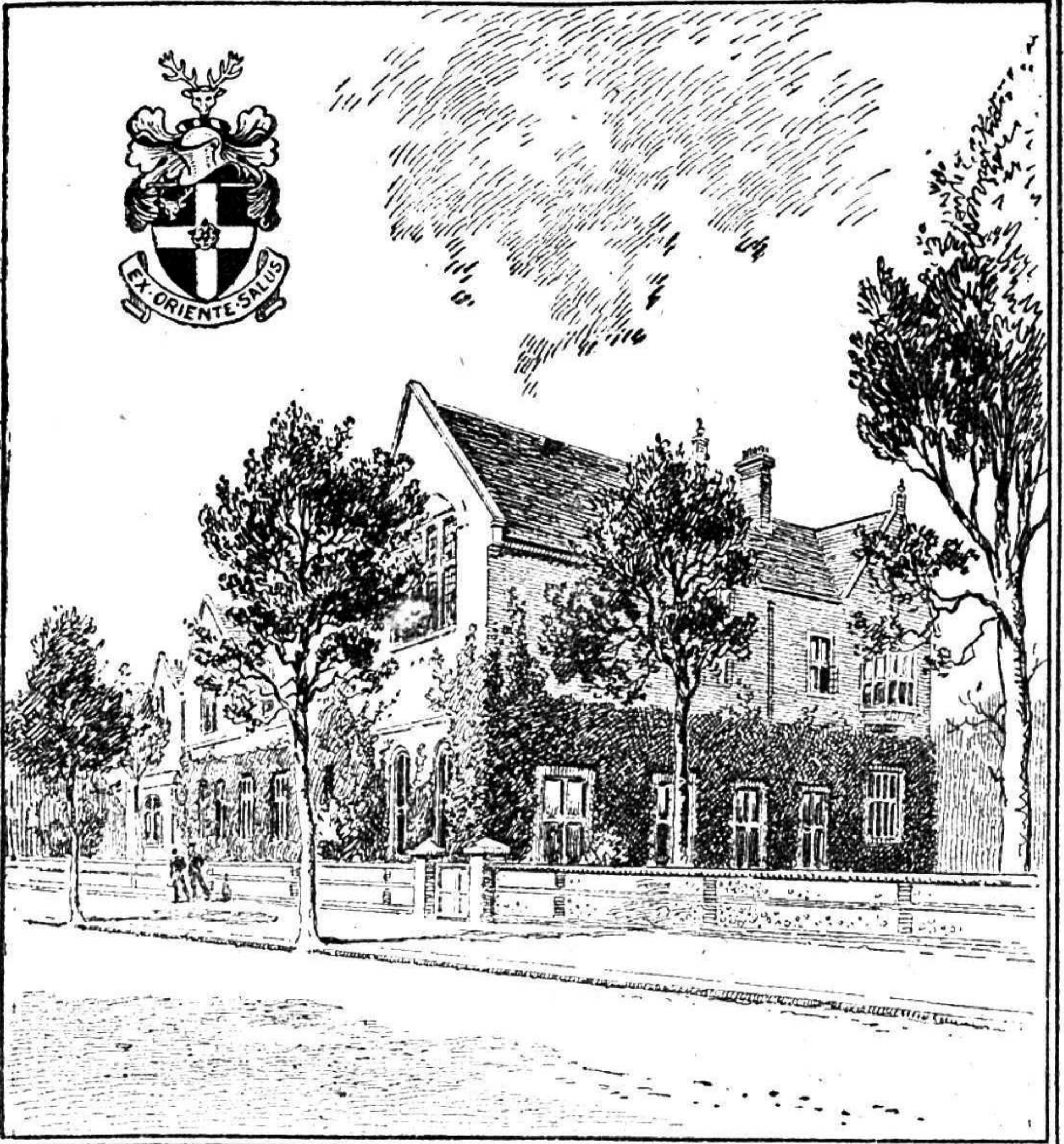
Fig. 13.

Fig. 14.

Fig. 15.

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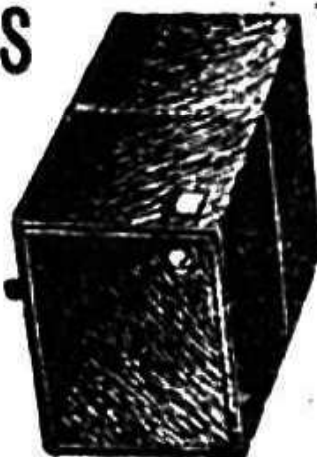
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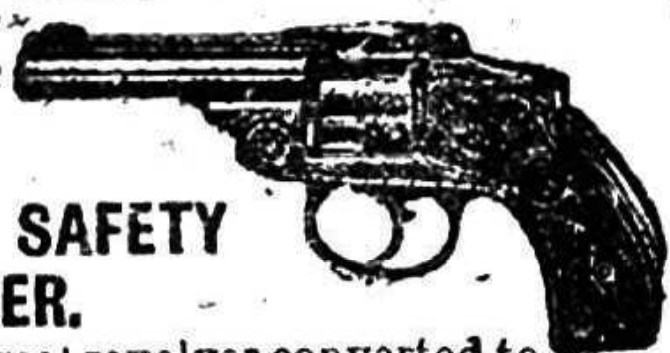
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