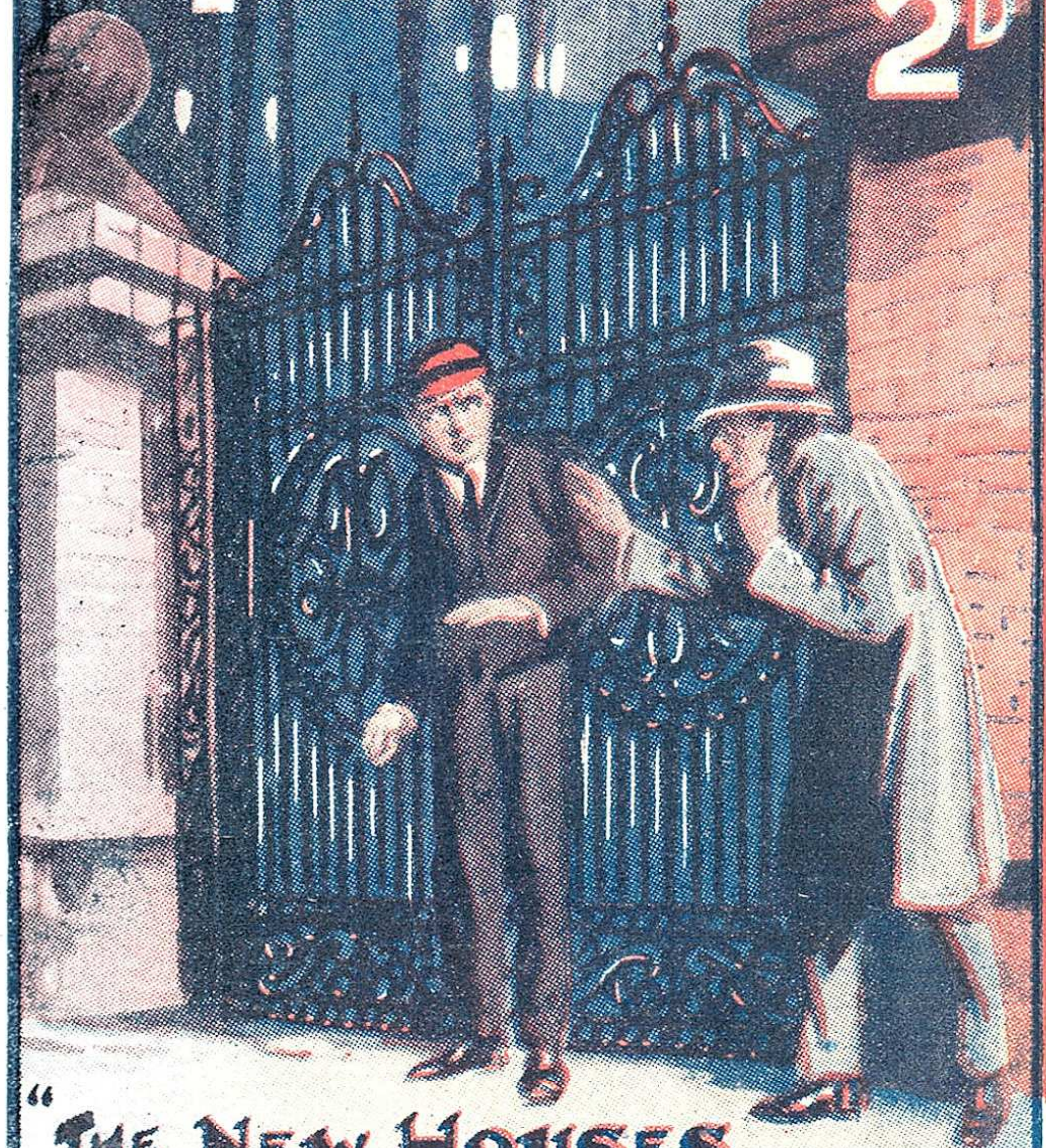


SPLENDID NEW SERIES STARTS INSIDE!

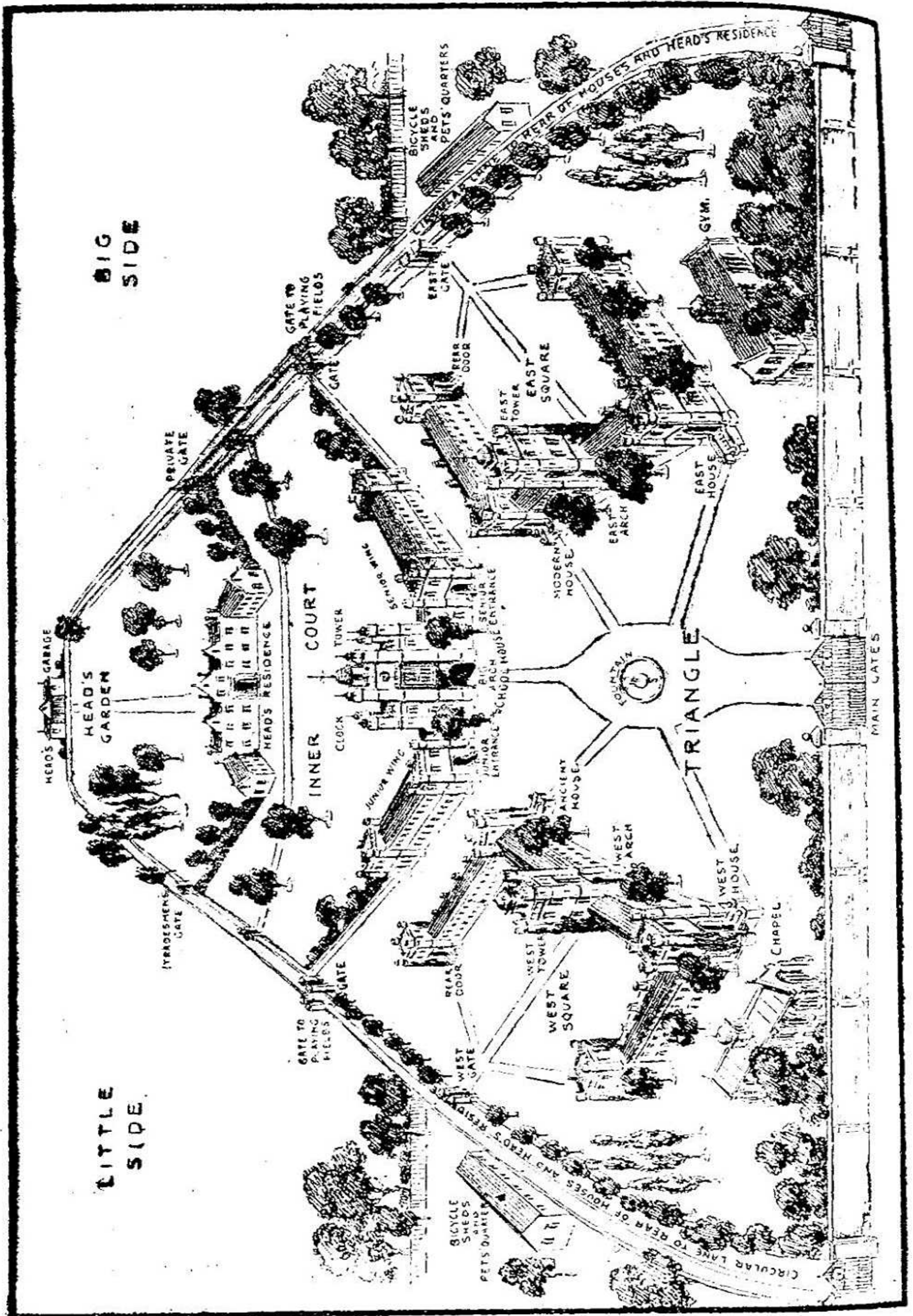
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**"THE NEW HOUSES
AT ST. FRANK'S"**

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF ST. FRANK'S COLLEGE.





for the better, we hope, though of a human character, is the principal theme of the rousing new series beginning with this week's story. It concerns Ralph Leslie Fullwood, generally known as the Leader of the Cads of Study A and how he strives to mend his ways.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

SOMETHING WRONG.

RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD, of the Fourth Form at St. Frank's, walked right past Gulliver and Bell without even noticing them. This was all the more remarkable, considering that he, himself, had made the appointment at Victoria Station.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Albert Gulliver.

"Too bally proud to see us!" snorted George Bell indignantly.

They were standing in a conspicuous spot, too—right in front of one of the attractive show windows which are to be found in the great entrance of the station. It stood midway between the refreshment-room and the bookstall, and in spite of the crowd, Gulliver and Bell had been very obtrusive.

They were dressed in their best—shiny top-pers, glossy shoes, and everything. Their bags were at their feet—and Fullwood hadn't seen them!

The leader of Study A, indeed, had walked like one in a dream. His face was haggard, his eyes grim-looking, and his jaw set. There

was a great mud smear on his left shoe which would have caused him to shudder at any ordinary time.

"Hold on!" said Gulliver. "I'll go an' grab him. Well, I'm hanged! The ass is actually goin' straight on to the platform!"

Gulliver hurried after his leader with rapid strides. He was positively amazed. This was the first day of the new term at St. Frank's, and fellows were starting off for the old school from all quarters—the majority from London.

And Gulliver and Bell had been anticipating a warm, jovial welcome. They hadn't seen Fullwood since he had arrived back on the Wanderer, with the rest of Lord Dorri-more's party, after their adventures in the South Seas. He had written, and they had replied—but they hadn't actually met. And now Ralph Leslie Fullwood ignored them!

"I say, Fully!" ejaculated Gulliver, grabbing at Ralph Leslie's arm.

Fullwood was just about to show his ticket to the man at the barrier. He turned, stared at Gulliver for a moment, and then became slightly confused.

"Oh, hallo!" he said awkwardly. "Gad, I'm glad to see you again, Gully!"

"You didn't seem like it two minutes ago!" retorted Gulliver. "What was the idea of givin' Bell an' I the cut direct?"

Fullwood started.

"What rot!" he said. "I didn't do anythin' of the kind! I haven't seen you until this second—By gad!" he added suddenly.

"We were to meet at that show-case, weren't we?"

"Ain't you goin' to shake hands?" demanded Gulliver bluntly.

He had been holding his fist out all the time, but Fullwood hadn't seen it apparently. He now took Gulliver's hand, and they clasped. It was rather a strange welcome, after being separated for so many weeks. For Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell had always been inseparable companions.

"I'm blessed if I know what's the matter with you!" said Gulliver, as he drew Fullwood back with him to where Bell was standing. "Great Scott! You're lookin' fearful, Fully, old man!"

"Fearful?"

"Absolutely rotten!" declared Gulliver. "Your eyes are bloodshot, you've got a dozen bally furrows, an' you seem half-dazed. I'll bet I know what!" he added, with a start. "You went on the razzle last night!"

"Did I?" asked Fullwood. "No, I don't mean that—Don't talk piffle!" he said sourly. "I was at home with my people last night!"

"Tell that to the Marines!" said Gulliver, with a wink. "Do you think I don't know the signs? Baggy eyes, fuzzy mind—unsteady walk! Gad! You must have swamped yourself in drink!"

"Don't be a confounded fool!" snapped Fullwood hotly.

Bell stared blankly. They had just arrived at his side, and it was startling to find them actually quarrelling. And this meeting was to have been a happy reunion—a glorious celebration. Gulliver and Bell, in fact, had already made preparations for the journey down. They had reserved a compartment, a well-filled flask, and a pack of cards—to say nothing of a supply of expensive cigarettes.

"Hallo, Bell!" said Fullwood gruffly. "How goes it?"

"Fine, thanks!" said Bell, shaking hands. "Anything wrong with you two?"

"Of course there isn't!"

"Well, you were cursin' at Gully pretty strongly——"

"Don't exaggerate," interrupted Fullwood curtly. "I was callin' him a fool—an' I meant it. You fellows ready? We might as well get into the train. No sense in hangin' about here."

"I think you'd better get into the train alone!" snorted Bell. "We haven't seen you all the vac., an' here you jump down our throats! What on earth's the matter with you?"

Fullwood pulled himself up.

"I'm a bit out of sorts," he admitted. "Sorry! Don't mind if I'm a bit irritable; it's nothin' much. Let's get into the train."

Gulliver and Bell exchanged glances, and their eyes expressed much. To their minds it was fairly obvious that Fullwood had had an unholy row with his pater. And the reason for this unholy row was also obvious. Fullwood could deny it all he liked, but he had been out on the spree the previous evening, and his pater had caught him red-handed. That was about the truth of it. And now he had probably been sent to St. Frank's minus his usual cash.

They passed the barrier, and took their seats in the reserved first-class compartment. Other Fourth-Formers—Reggie Pitt, Jack Grey, Bob Christine, Cecil de Valerie, and a few more—were seeking places in the ordinary third-class carriages.

"We don't want to mix with that crowd," said Gulliver, as he closed the door. "Hi, guard! What about lockin' us in? I gave you half-a-crown, you know."

"Right you are, young gent," grinned the guard, saluting.

"That's good!" said Gulliver, as he settled back in his seat. "Now, Fully, let's have all the news. I'll bet you had a frightful time with that set of good little Erics on the Wanderer! No wonder you're lookin' so bally washed out!"

Fullwood looked up with a start.

"Eh?" he said. "What's that?"

"I'm hanged if he hasn't gone all into another daydream!" ejaculated Bell. "There's certainly somethin' badly wrong! Here you are, Fully—have a cig., an' light up!"

Fullwood pushed the proffered cigarette-case away.

"No, thanks," he grunted. "I don't smoke."

Bell gave one gasp, and fainted.

CHAPTER II.

HANDFORTH LIVENS THINGS UP.



FOR about twenty seconds Gulliver and Bell stared at their leader in a kind of stupor. He—Ralph Leslie Fullwood—had positively stated that he didn't smoke! And ever since Gulliver and Bell had known him he had been a perfect demon for cigarettes!

"You—you don't smoke?" said Bell, recovering from his faint.

"No, I don't!"

"What's the game, you fathead?" demanded Gulliver indignantly. "What's the idea of tryin' to spoof us like this, Fully? Have a fag, an' come back to your

Don't try any of that goody-goody stuff on us!"

"Great guns!" gasped Bell suddenly. "He's been with those other chaps all the vac., an' perhaps they've made him give up smokin'! Ye gods an' little fishes! Is it possible?"

Fullwood flushed angrily.

"Hang you, give me a cigarette!" he snapped. "If you can't talk any better sense than that, you'd better shut up altogether!"

He took a cigarette, stuck it in his mouth, and then found he hadn't got a match. This, alone, was significant—for Fullwood had formerly carried a gold match-case. Gulliver obliged him with a light.

Fullwood sat there, smoking furiously, with a glowering expression on his face. And along the platform came Clive Russell, the new Canadian junior in the Fourth. Clive caught sight of Fullwood, and gave a cheery hail.

"Hallo, old son!" he said, putting his head in the window. "Jolly glad to see you again! Off to St. Frank's at last——"

He broke off, starting. Fullwood, with a smothered exclamation, threw his cigarette out of the opposite window, and extended his hand. Clive took it rather awkwardly.

"Sorry!" he said. "I didn't know you were engaged."

"That's all right," said Fullwood quickly. "Two of my old chums—Gulliver an' Bell. This is Russell, you fellows. Canadian Chap. Comin' into the Fourth this term."

Gulliver and Bell stared.

"Oh, that steward's son, or somethin'?" asked Gulliver, with deliberate insult in his voice. "That common backwoods bounder! First time I knew he was one of your pals!"

Clive Russell flushed deeply, and might have said something in reply, but at that moment he was seized violently from behind, hurled backwards, and a hand descended upon his shoulder like a blow from a steam-hammer.

"By George! Russell!" roared a voice. "Hallo, old son! So you're coming to St. Frank's, after all? Let me give you a word of warning! New chaps aren't allowed to do just as they like!"

Clive Russell partially recovered, and found himself being knocked about by Edward Oswald Handforth, the famous leader of Study D. Handforth's idea of greeting anybody consisted of thumping them on the back, punching them in the chest, and roaring into their ear.

"Steady, old man!" grinned Church. "You've dazed him!"

"Rot!" snorted Handforth. "I haven't touched him!"

"Another shove like that, and he'll be under the giddy train!" said McClure.

"Cheerio, Clive, old sport! Jolly glad to see you among the elect! Don't mind Handy—he can't help it!"

"That's all right!" grinned Clive Russell. "After five or six weeks with him on the Wanderer, it's about time I knew him!"

Handforth looked round with a cold eye.

"What's all this?" he demanded. "Anybody might think I was a monstrosity by the way you're discussing me! What about that carriage, Walter Church? Didn't I tell you to collar one?"

"You fathead!" howled Church. "How the dickens do you expect me to collar an empty carriage when we get here a minute before the train starts? I'm still wondering how the dickens we managed to get here before time! In nine cases out of ten we lose the train by six hours!"

"You funny ass!" said Handforth scornfully. "It's just like you chaps!" he went on, with a bitter note creeping into his voice. "Always running me down before other people! You haven't got the nerve to do it when you're alone! I'll soon find an empty compartment!"

He raced up and down the train, peering into every compartment, much to the interest of the two inspectors. The guard was already unfurling his flag, and Handforth was getting desperate. Having successively frightened an old lady, a child of three, and a short-sighted gentleman of a learned appearance, he gave a bellow, and halted.

"Come out of that!" he roared indignantly.

A face appeared at the compartment window.

"Hallo!" it said. "The walrus has escaped from the Zoo!"

"I thought I heard something raucous down the platform," said another face, which joined the first one. "My hat, it's your major! What's biting him now? He's never satisfied unless he's yelling at somebody!"

A third face wormed its way in between the other two, and Willy & Co., of the Third, were complete. They had, in fact, commandeered the compartment for themselves. This miracle had been accomplished by the simple process of crowding near the platform door, and alternately making faces at would-be passengers, and quarrelling violently between themselves. Nobody had dared to disturb their sanctuary.

Handforth was simply staggered. He and his chums were without an empty compartment, and his minor and these two other young ragamuffins were calmly holding the best compartment of the whole train themselves!

"Out of it!" he said curtly. "Of all the cheek!"

"I think it's going to rain," said Willy conversationally. "Of course, there's no telling. I heard a rumble of thunder just now—or was it your voice, Ted?"

Handforth stood there and goggled.

"Are you going to move or not?" he

roared. "I'll give you just two seconds! Not a minute more or a minute less!"

"He can't help it, poor chap," said Juicy Lemon sadly. "He seems to think there are all sorts of minutes in two seconds! Perhaps it's a new system of calculation!"

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," said Chubby Heath wisely.

"Take your seats, young gents!" said the guard, sweeping up with a majesterial air. "We're just off. Stand away from the train, there!"

CHAPTER III.

TROUBLE EN ROUTE.



HANDFORTH glared at the guard in amazement.

"What's the idea?" he demanded. "This train doesn't go until we get in it, so don't start any of your

rot!"

The guard examined Handforth as though he were a new kind of insect.

"Right you are, your Majesty!" he said genially. "Bill, keep the train back until the young gent finds the Royal Saloon."

Willy & Co. grinned with pure joy. There was nothing they liked better than to stand by while Handforth's leg was being pulled. They formed a kind of barrier, protecting the door against all comers.

"You're mad!" said Handforth, staring at the guard. "I don't want the Royal Saloon! I didn't know there was one on the train! As soon as I've got these young rotters out of this compartment you can blow your whistle—but not before!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Heads, all along the train, joined in the roar. And Willy & Co. cackled so heartily that they forsook their caution for a moment. It was a fatal slip. In a second, Handforth had wrenched open the door, and he made a grab at his miner.

"Now then—out of it!" he said grimly.

Unfortunately, Church and McClure spoilt everything. They were so anxious about losing the train that they pushed Handforth headlong in, and tumbled in after him. The guard, slammed the door, and held it. Then he blew his whistle.

"Talk about monkeys!" he said breathlessly. "They ain't in it!"

Within the compartment, the heap of youthful humanity was sorting itself out. Church and McClure were sprawling on top of Handforth, and Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were against the further door, watching with interest. Willy had apparently vanished.

"Gerrup!" gasped Handforth desperately. "You—you fatheads! Who pushed me just now? I'm half-squashed—"

"Who cares about you?" came a thin voice from beneath the entire pile. "What about me? In two ticks I shall be pushed through

the giddy floor! Air! Gimme air! My only hat, I've gone all flat!"

"Who's that?" asked Church, startled.

"Only Willy!" explained Juicy carelessly. "You can't see him, but he's underneath Handy. You chaps had better—"

"Thank goodness!" panted Willy, sitting up dazedly, as the three Fourth-Formers rose to their feet. "Great Scott! Why didn't the referee sound the gong sooner? Who's won?"

Handforth was utterly callous to his miner's moans. He pushed Church and McClure aside, grabbed the door-handle, and half-turned it. Then he suddenly noticed that the platform was gliding away.

"Great pip! We've started!" he ejaculated. "We're on the move—and we're in the same compartment as these blessed fags! Oh, my goodness! Pull the communication-cord somebody!"

Church grinned.

"It's all right—no need to make a fuss, old man," he said. "We're lucky on the whole—only six of us in one compartment."

"But look who the other three are!" howled Handforth.

"If anybody's entitled to complain, we are," put in Willy feebly. "This is our carriage—we collared it—and you bounders calmly barge in and start grumbling!"

By this time the train was out of the station and speeding up. It was too late to make any alteration. The six occupants sat down on opposite sides of the compartment and glared at one another.

"We've got to stick it now, I suppose," said Handforth gruffly. "Well, I'm not the chap to grumble—but you fags get out of this carriage at the first stop!"

"Right you are!" said Willy, nodding.

"What, you'll go?"

"Of course we'll go," said Willy, with a sniff. "We don't want to stay where we're not wanted. It's our carriage, and we've got every right to claim it—but we'll agree to get out at the first stop."

"Of course we will," said Chubby and Juicy promptly.

Handforth regarded the fags with deep suspicion.

"You're jolly obliging, aren't you?" he asked.

"Not at all," replied Willy smoothly. "You want us to get out at the first stop, and there's an end to it. Why argue?"

Church and McClure were grinning joyously.

"Anything funny going on?" demanded Handforth, with a stare.

"Rather!" replied Church. "You seem to have forgotten that this is an express train—and that Bannington is the first stop!"

"We've got to change there, anyway," explained Willy blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The other occupants of the compartment roared with laughter as the truth dawned upon Edward Oswald. Now he could under-

stand why the fags had complied so readily with his peremptory order.

"You young sweeps!" roared Handforth. "If you think I'm going to share this compartment with you all the way to Bannington you made a bloomer! You'll jolly well clear out now! I'll pull the cord, and stop the train! It's worth five quid to get rid of you!"

"No need to waste your money like that, Ted," said Willy. "Give us the money, and we'll climb along the footboard while the train's going."

Handforth frowned.

"I don't want any sarcasm, my lad!" he said severely. "I suppose we've got to stick it, so it's no use grumbling. But I won't put up with any of your Third Form chatter! As long as you keep quiet, I'll leave you alone."

After such a speech, of course, there was only one thing to be done. Willy & Co. not only commenced discussing the Fourth in loud tones, but they even included whistling and singing in their repertory.

CHAPTER IV.

FULLWOOD'S QUEER BEHAVIOUR.



AN awkward silence reigned in a first-class compartment a little further down the train. Fullwood & Co. were making themselves comfortable in their reserved quarters.

It was a fast train, and Bannington was the first stop, so there was plenty of time for a little recreation on the way—without any fear of being disturbed.

Gulliver and Bell were not only disappointed, but rather uneasy. Somehow or other, Fullwood was different to his old self. There wasn't that same careless, "doggish" air about him, as of old. And his preoccupation was getting worse and worse.

He sat in his own corner, staring in front of him, apparently oblivious of his chums. Even when they discussed him openly he took no notice.

"Something's happened," declared Bell firmly. "He's not the same man as he used to be. Did you notice the way he chucked his cig. down when that cad Russell shoved his face in at the door?"

"Yes, almost as though he were afraid of bein' seen with it," replied Gulliver. "That trip to the South Sea Islands has done him a lot of harm, by the look of things. I say, Fully?" he added, raising his voice.

Fullwood turned his head.

"Well?" he asked.

"Oh, then you can hear?" asked Gulliver.

"Don't be an idiot!" retorted Fullwood.

"Of course I can hear. What's the matter now? What do you want me for?"

"I was goin' to ask you to have a nip out of my flask," replied Gulliver. "Hang it

all, man, be a sport! An' what about a few rounds of 'Nap'—sixpenny points—to pass the time away?"

Fullwood shook his head.

"Sorry, old man—I don't feel like it now," he replied gruffly. "If you'll leave me alone I shall be a lot better pleased. I'm not in a very chummy mood, if you want to know the truth."

"No need to tell us somethin' we know already," growled Bell. "You won't smoke, you won't take a drop of whisky, you won't play cards! Hang it all, you're as goody-goody as all those other cads!"

"Oh, keep quiet!" said Fullwood impatiently.

Gulliver and Bell exchanged glances, and gave up their leader as a bad job. They couldn't make him out at all. He wasn't merely different, but he was totally changed. And that South Seas trip couldn't be solely responsible. It had been a pleasure cruise, and, by all accounts, the fellows had had a rather wonderful time. And here was Fullwood with a worried, anxious expression, and eyes that told of acute inward distress.

Gulliver determined to make one more try.

"Be a pal, Fully," he said gently. "If there's anythin' on your mind, let's hear it! We might be able to help a bit. What do you say, Bell? We've always shared one another's secrets, haven't we?"

"Rather!" said Bell. "Choke it up, old man!"

Fullwood shrugged his shoulders.

"It's nothing," he said shortly. "Can't you leave me alone?"

"Oh, go an' eat coke!" said Gulliver angrily.

He opened a newspaper and glared at it ferociously. Everything was going wrong. This reunion of the chums of Study A was totally different to what Gulliver and Bell had expected. They were keenly upset. And Gulliver obtained no consolation from his newspaper.

There was one item, however, which certainly did attract his attention. Two columns were headed in thick lines of type, and it seemed that something of a sensational character had occurred.

"Carey!" said Gulliver, frowning. "Eustace Carey—"

"Eh?" ejaculated Fullwood, swinging round with staring eyes.

"Gad, don't look at me like that!" said Gulliver, startled. "I was only readin' out a name here. Fellow named Eustace Carey—an Oxford undergrad. The name seems a bit familiar—"

"Eustace Carey," repeated Bell reminiscently. "Come to think of it, I seem to have heard the name before, too. What's he done? Won some big sports event, or somethin'?"

Gulliver laughed.

"He's done somethin' a bit more sensational than that," he said dryly. "Practically committed murder, by the look of things—"

"Can't you keep your infernal mouth closed?" snarled Fullwood, in a sudden burst of rage. "Confound Carey, or whatever his name is! Who wants to hear that drivellin' tosh?"

Fullwood's outburst was so violent that Gulliver and Bell were quite alarmed. There seemed to be no reason for Ralph Leslie's attitude. He seemed to realise it himself, too, for he suddenly grew calm, and sank back.

"Sorry!" he muttered. "Don't mind me!"

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Bell. "What's the matter with the ass, Gully? An' what's that you were sayin' about this fellow Carey?"

"Too long to tell you, old man," replied Gulliver. "You can have the paper when I've finished with it."

"That be hanged for a yarn!" said Bell. "Can't you tell me the gist of it?"

"Well, in a nutshell, this chap Carey is wanted by the police," said Gulliver. "A frightful scandal, by gad! The whole 'Varsity is in a bally uproar about it. Oxford is fairly on the mat to-day."

"But what's the man wanted by the police for?"

"It seems that he was discovered last night in the act of robbin' another undergrad's rooms—red-handed, in fact," said Gulliver. "This other chap was a careless ass—always kept pots of cash about the place. Anyhow, there was a fight, or something, an' Carey biffed the other fellow through the window, an' he fell down on to the paved path."

"Sounds excitin'," commented Bell.

"I should think so," agreed Gulliver. "Carey bunked with two hundred quid, an' hasn't been seen since—an' the other poor chap is in hospital, with a broken leg, concussion, an' goodness knows what else. The paper says he may not live——"

"It's a lie!" snapped Fullwood harshly. "Of course he'll live—he's not hurt much! These papers always exaggerate."

"You seem bally anxious about it!" said Gulliver curiously. "By gad! Do you know this chap, Carey, by any chance?"

"Know him?" retorted Fullwood. "Of course I don't know him."

But he turned away, and gazed out through the window at the fleeting landscape, and there was a haggard expression in his eyes, and his underlip was caught firmly between his teeth.

CHAPTER V.

ON FAMILIAR GROUND.



DICK HAMILTON, of the Fourth, jumped out of the train at Bannington, and then came to a halt, staring. He was accompanied by Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West. And they stared, too.

"Why, hallo, Nipper!" said Reggie Pitt, bustling up.

"Wait a minute," grinned Nipper. "Look at that!"

He nodded to an adjacent compartment, and Reginald Pitt chuckled. A curious procession was emerging from this particular portion of the train. First of all came Edward Oswald Handforth—but a chastened, subdued looking edition of the famous leader of Study D. He was dishevelled, dusty, and one eye was slightly discoloured on the under rim. The opposite ear stood out in a kind of thick bulge, and his expression was dazed and dreamy.

Church followed, and Church was the owner of a wonderful nose—at least half as big again as it ought to have been. McClure was the next, but except for a torn jacket, a crumpled collar, a cut lip, and a black eye, he was quite himself. He was blowing tenderly upon the knuckles of his right hand, as though they hurt him.

"Trouble, by the look of it," remarked Nipper.

"What about this lot?" grinned Pitt.

The procession hadn't finished. Willy Handforth, Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon also emerged from that fatal compartment. They were scarcely recognisable. Their beautiful new Etons were of a patchy, dust colour. Rents were liberally distributed, and buttons were missing. The facial expressions of the three fags had undergone certain structural alterations. There were so many bruises, swellings, and bumps that one fag was hardly distinguishable from another. But in spite of these many wounds, they all seemed supremely happy.

"Good gad!" observed Archie Glenthorne, lounging up in all his regal elegance. "I mean to say, a few ambulances required, what? Odds cuts and wounds! Hadn't somebody better dash like anything for the good old doctor?"

"Talking about us?" asked Willy. "No need to worry—we're all right. As a matter of fact, we've had a lovely time."

"You look it!" grinned Pitt.

"My major started being funny, so we just piled in," explained Willy carelessly. "One of the finest mills you could wish to see. For about half-an-hour we couldn't see one another for dust."

"But we won," said Chubby Heath happily.

"You've only got to look at those fat-heads to prove it!" added Juicy, with a nod towards Handforth & Co.

The others grinned more widely than ever. Juicy Lemon was apparently unconscious of the fact that his own appearance was slightly ghastly. It was generally concluded that honours were even all round.

William Napoleon Browne strolled up, and looked severe.

"Alas and alack!" he said sadly. "What is this, Brother Handforth? What fearsome objects do I see? Is it possible

that you have descended to the pastime of fighting with mere fags?"

Handforth snorted.

"You Fifth Form fathead!" he said tartly. "We haven't touched 'em! They did all that among themselves!"

"But your own war-worn appearance, brother?"

"Oh, I found it necessary to correct Church and McClure a bit," explained Handforth carelessly. "Those silly fags started a row at the same time, so there was a bit of a muddle. I daresay we received a few stoshes that weren't intended for one another. As a matter of fact, we

In fact, by the time the local steamed into Bellton Station, Handforth & Co., and Willy & Co. were almost themselves again. They manifested extraordinary powers of recuperation.

"Just the same as ever," remarked Handforth, as he looked round the picturesque little station. "A few more weeds, and a lot of dead leaves—that's about the only difference. I always said this railway was slow."

"What did you expect to find—a second Victoria?" asked Church. "I suppose Bellton will be the same when we're sixty years old! There's no need for a station of this



They were so anxious about losing the train that they pushed Handforth headlong in, and tumbled in after him.

couldn't see very well. I believe we came through a fog bank for a time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought it was a tunnel," said Church dreamily. "But it's all over now, thank goodness. Keep your eye on your minor, Handy—let's steer clear of their compartment in the local! My hat! Look at our togs!"

By the time they had settled themselves in the local train they were looking a little better. Kindly fellows had brushed them down, had loaned them combs, and had generally assisted in the task of eradicating the traces.

sort to get larger. But, by Jove, isn't it ripping to be back? Good old Bellton!"

"There's something chummy about it, isn't there?" said McClure fondly.

He stood there on the platform, looking over the modest fence towards the road which curved round into the village. He looked beyond, at the winding River Stowe, the green meadows, the dense bulk of Bellton Wood peeping out from beyond the roof tops in the distance.

"My hat! It's good to be back!" he said softly.

Handforth stared.

"What's the idea of standing there with a moony look in your eyes—just like a cow staring over a gate?" he asked tartly. "I'm blessed if I can see anything to go dotty about!"

McClure waved his hand.

"It's all so jolly peaceful and homely," he explained.

"Rats!" said Handforth, upon whom the finest scenery in the world was wasted. "You're crazy! You've seen it thousands of times before, and all you can do is to go off your giddy rocker!"

"By jingo!" ejaculated Church, starting.

"Look over there! I can see St. Frank's."

"Marvellous!" sneered Handforth. "Anything else?"

"But—but there are two towers now, instead of one!" ejaculated McClure, in surprise. "Can't you see? You remember the old clock tower of the Ancient House? Well, there are two of them now!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEW ST. FRANK'S.



HANDFORTH sniffed. "Oh, you're seeing double!" he said gruffly. "It must

be the result of that cosh you got when your head nearly went through into the next compartment! There can't be two towers—By George!" he added, staring. "It looks like it, though! I can see two myself!"

"Then there must be two," declared Reggie Pitt. "If Handforth says a thing, it is so! You ought to register that as a slogan, old man."

Many of the juniors were delaying their departure from the station in order to gaze across the landscape. And there was no doubt about those two towers. They could be distinctly seen—one an exact replica of the other.

"It's rummy," said Nipper. "We knew there was one tower, of course—it was still standing, after the disaster, when three parts of the school was shaken down by that explosion. But where does the other tower come in?"

"Dear old boy, why not stroll up to the school an' see?" suggested Sir Montie mildly.

"Good idea," grinned Nipper. "We'll do it."

All the fellows were as keen as mustard. Returning to school after the holidays was generally an ordinary event. Some were downhearted, some almost fearful, whilst others were glad to be back. But on this occasion there was a universal eagerness—an eagerness born of curiosity.

Rumour had it that St. Frank's was totally changed—transformed in practically

every particular. There were, indeed, some new Houses added, and other changes too numerous to mention.

The boys were prepared for something startling. It was months since they had been at the old school, and it was a positive joy to be back. Even previous to the long summer vacation they had lived elsewhere—for practically a whole term had been spent in camp, as boy scouts. To most of the fellows, it seemed ages and ages since they had occupied their old cosy studies—since they had slept in their familiar dormitories—since they had performed their lessons in the well appointed Form-rooms.

"Let's get a move on, and be up there before the others," said Handforth crisply. "By George, if they've messed about with Study D there's going to be some trouble! And I'm going to insist upon having my old bed in the dormitory! They can't play about with me!"

Church and McClure chuckled, and accompanied their leader. They had an idea that Handforth would receive plenty of shocks. Edward Oswald was extremely conservative—he liked things to go on in the same old way, without any changes. While he always preached that progress was essential to humanity, the least sign of progress in his own particular sphere upset him completely.

Bellton village was practically unchanged. Even the tuck shop failed to attract Handforth & Co. at the moment—although the worthy Mr. Binks could be seen hovering behind the counter, like a spider in the corner of his web. He was sadly disappointed with the juniors, for hardly any of them were making their customary halt. Such was the eagerness to see the new St. Frank's that Mr. Binks was left flat. Indeed, he was getting anxious. Even Fatty Little—who was busy at the counter—could not demolish the large supplies of extra tuck that Mr. Binks had laid in.

The sole topic of conversation, as the juniors walked along, was the school. They recalled that dramatic evening, when the Modern House had crashed to fragments, and when the rest of the school had almost followed suit. And they recalled the tremendous army of workmen who had been busy at St. Frank's previous to the summer holidays.

"I hear that it's cost the Governors a fortune to rebuild the school," declared Reggie Pitt. "A number of rich old Johnnies stepped into the breach with pots of money, and made the thing possible. And St. Frank's is now reckoned to be one of the three finest public schools in England—the others, of course, being Eton and Harrow."

"And the fees have gone up, too," said Jack Grey. "My pater knows all about that—and he grumbled, too. I hear there's room for lots more chaps, although there won't be many new fellows this term."

"We needed more room," said Reggie. "There was a bit of a squash in the junior studies in the old school. There'll be tons of space to spare now—Hullo! Moat Hollow looks a bit dilapidated!"

They had crossed the ridge at the end of the village, and the sombre old place known as Moat Hollow was within sight. The high walls were creeper grown, and the great gates were locked. There was a general air of neglect about the place.

"Blow Moat Hollow!" said Jack Grey. "It's St. Frank's we want!"

They hurried on, and noticed that several of the other fellows were breaking into a trot. Handforth & Co., in fact, were already disappearing round the bend, running for it. But they paused some little distance before they came to the main gates leading into the Triangle.

"By George! What's this?" asked Handforth breathlessly.

"Why, they've made a new road here," ejaculated McClure. "Look! Gate-posts, gates, and everything! The road goes right round towards the playing-fields—and it's all concrete! This is something new, if you like!"

"There seems to be a building up there, too, on the right-hand side," put in Church. "Let's go up and look."

"Not likely!" interrupted Handforth. "We'll explore the school first!"

They made a run for the main gates, and turned into the familiar old Triangle. They hardly knew what to expect—but all of them had a vague impression that they would see the old Ancient House, and a collection of stark new edifices that would mar the former picturesque aspect of the great college.

The reality was something like a shock.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" ejaculated Handforth blankly.

"My only aunt!" breathed Church.

"Great jumping corks!" gasped McClure.

They stood there, staring in amazement. They were not the only ones, either. Juniors were coming in all the time, and all of them experienced the same sensations.

CHAPTER VII.

TRANSFORMED—AND YET THE SAME.



ST. FRANK'S COLLEGE was an architectural triumph.

Every boy had pictured in his own mind what the school would now be like—and every boy was absolutely wrong. For the reality was extraordinarily different from the imaginary.

"I—I can't believe it!" exclaimed Handforth at length. "There aren't any new buildings at all—and yet they're all fresh! There's not a giddy sign of newness or ugliness!"

"It's marvellous!" said Church, taking a deep breath. "The Ancient House seems the same—although that's different, too! It's got two entrances now, in addition to the big arch under the tower. But look on the other side of the Triangle! It's exactly the same!"

"The twin brother of the Ancient House!" declared McClure. "The tower's the same—the arch—every chimney and every window! Even the main steps are alike! And the new building looks just as old as the Ancient House!"

"But look in front!" said Handforth. "Where's the Head's House gone to? It used to be there—joined up to the other buildings. Now there's a paved pathway on both sides, and a whacking great new building. And the clock's in the middle of it—right up there!"

"Yes; and it looks hundreds of years old, too!" said Church.

Even Handforth was so impressed that he stood there incapable of further speech for a minute or two. The old school had undergone a complete transformation—and yet, curiously enough, it was the same as of old. All the new buildings were of grey granite. But they weren't fresh-looking. The buildings rose in majestic splendour, every wall showing evidence of maturity. A stranger would have declared that the entire range of buildings had been erected before the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

The architecture was purely Tudor, and the modern buildings had followed the graceful, picturesque style of their artistic ancestors. The wonderful appearance of age had been obtained by the use of ancient stone. Practically all of it had been brought to St. Frank's from the ruins of Helmford Castle. It so happened that Helmford was building a great new reservoir on the castle heights, and the ruins had been condemned. The St. Frank's governors had been quick to seize the opportunity, and had bought the entire castle. The contractors had demolished the ruins with such care that each granite block had been relaid with perfection. Until examined at close range, the new buildings could not be detected as such.

"I say, this is ripping, if you like!" said Reggie Pitt enthusiastically. "Look at the space now! There are pathways everywhere—and they've built complete new wings, too. Let's go under this arch, and have a look."

Several juniors walked through the arch they knew so well, and then found themselves in a new world. There was a wide square here, with buildings in front and behind. The new wings were in the same Tudor style as the main front.

On the other side of the Triangle it was exactly the same. And it wasn't long before the boys discovered that there were now five Houses—instead of the former two. What

had once been the Ancient House Tower was now the West Tower.

It formed the dividing line between the Ancient House and the West House. Similarly, on the other side of the Triangle, the East Tower formed the dividing line between the Modern House and the East House.

In consequence of the great wings, each of the four Houses was now as big as the old ones. And they were boarding Houses purely and simply. Here the boys would sleep, eat, and spend their recreation. The four Houses were entirely composed of dining-rooms, libraries, dormitories, common-rooms, and studies.

The School House was an entirely new building.

It faced the main gates, and was, if anything, the most imposing of all the St. Frank's piles. It spread out fanwise from the great frontage, the Junior Wing to the left, and the Senior Wing to the right. Another arch—much bigger than the other two—led through the Inner Court, and so to the Head's private residence.*

The general scheme of things was as perfect as could possibly be. The architects had planned everything with perfect symmetry—but not so perfect as to be uninteresting. In almost every respect St. Frank's could be regarded as a model school. The plan was positively unique.

The new road which Handforth and Co. had commented upon extended completely round the school grounds, enclosing all the main buildings and the Head's residence. At the rear, on either side, stretched the great playing-fields.

Enthusiasm was already beginning to run high among the fellows. But there was positive excitement when a closer examination was made. Wonderful as the exterior was, the interior proved a sheer joy.

"Let's go indoors!" suggested Church eagerly.

"Good egg!" said Handforth.

They promptly made a rush for the fine granite steps which led up into the nearest building. They were confronted by Arthur Morrow, of the Sixth.

"Hallo, you youngsters—jolly glad to see you again!" said Morrow genially. "I hear you had a pretty good time on that yacht—"

"Sorry, Morrow," interrupted Handforth. "Jolly pleased to see you, but we want to go and have a look at our study—"

"Then you'd better try next door," grinned Morrow. "You've come to the wrong place, my son—this is the West House."

"The which?" asked Handforth blankly.

"The West House," explained Morrow.

"The Ancient House is further up the

Triangle on the same side—past the West Arch. "Don't look so startled. You'll find heaps of changes before you've done."

Handforth & Co. went off to the end of the Triangle, and there found another flight of imposing steps leading up to the Ancient House. They marched in, with Nipper & Co. and many others close behind.

CHAPTER VIII.

MORE CHANGES.



THE Ancient House lobby was very much the same as it had always been. But the junior passage was completely different. It now led straight ahead, and Handforth & Co.

soon discovered that there were now merely ten junior studies in all. But, as there were a similar number in each of the four Houses, the accommodation was more than ample.

"It's all different!" growled Handforth, as he grasped the door of Study D and opened it. "Even the room's in a different place—in fact, it's a new room altogether! By George! If they've moved any of our things I'll go and have a row with the Head!"

"My dear ass, did you expect them to shift the room entirely, with all its walls standing?" asked Church. "Let's have a look inside—I say! This is pretty good, you know!"

"Thundering fine!" declared McClure joyfully.

Handforth made no comment for a moment. Study D was, of course, a completely new room. Everything had been altered in the general plan, and all the junior studies were now in the newly erected wing.

Church and McClure were delighted. The new Study D was nearly half as big again as the old one. The window was wide and bright, and looked straight out upon the West Square. There was not only a cosy fireplace, but radiators as well. This was a fine improvement. There were two electric lights, a built-in bookcase, and a built-in cupboard on the other side to match. All Handforth & Co.'s old furniture was in place, and their own maps and photographs were on the walls. In all, there was a general air of brightness and cheeriness about the apartment.

"H'm!" said Handforth at last. "I believe it's better!"

"You believe!" shouted Church. "Why, you ass, it's fifty times as good! Let's go and look at the other studies, and then have a squint at the dormitory."

"No need to look at the other studies," said Cecil de Valerie at the door. "We've got 'G' further along, and they're all the same. There can't be any jealousy about

* A careful examination of the Bird's-eye View Map, on page ii. of the cover, will explain the details of the new St. Frank's far more clearly than my humble pen.—AUTHOR.

size or lighting now. We're in luck, my sons. There's not another school in the kingdom as finely equipped as this!"

A glance into a few of the adjoining studies proved that de Valerie was right. They were all the same. Handforth & Co. continued exploring—following the example of practically every newcomer. The whole school was bubbling with an unusual excitement and delight.

The senior studies were even bigger than the junior, and the common-rooms were really magnificent. They were big, airy, with plenty of easy-chairs and lounges, and every possible equipment for the recreation of the boys.

Upstairs a surprise awaited the explorers.

"Where's the dormitory?" asked Handforth, as he met Nipper & Co. in the corridor. "I say, this is jolly light!" he added, glancing up. "There's no end to the giddy improvements."

There were skylights all along the wide corridor, giving the upstairs region an air of spacious cheer.

"The dormitory?" repeated Nipper. "You mean the dormitories."

"I mean the Fourth-Form dormitory—ours."

"That's all changed," explained Nipper. "In fact, the Fourth itself is changed. As there are four Houses—five with the School House—the Fourth can't be called Ancient and Modern now. So it's divided in another way. We're in the Upper Fourth, Handy."

"The Upper Fourth?" ejaculated Handy. "What about the others?"

"The old Modern Fourth is now called the Lower Fourth," said Nipper. "Mr. Pyecraft is the Form-master—and, of course, we've got old Crowell. I hear the other chaps are kicking pretty strongly. They don't like being called the Lower Fourth."

"A lot of fuss over nothing," said Tommy Watson. "They don't lose any prestige—it's only a term to distinguish the two sections of the Fourth. But about the dormitory, Handy. Instead of one, we've got ten."

"Ten!" ejaculated Handforth.

"Yes," said Nipper. "I expect you'll share one with Church and McClure. Three in a room is the limit under the new system. A lot better, too! The rest of us will be able to sleep without your giddy snores!"

"What rot!" snorted Handforth indignantly.

He strode into the first dormitory, and Church and McClure followed. There were ten, and they corresponded to the ten junior studies. The Fifth and Sixth were similarly provided for. The Third was the only Form which was destined to occupy one great dormitory.

"Ripping!" said Church. "My hat! Three jolly good beds, too—and all to ourselves! This is heaps better than it used to be."

And even Handforth was forced to admit the truth of it. There was something exclusive in the thought of having a private bed-room to themselves. The Fourth was divided up into little collections of close chums—generally in threes. Henceforth, these chums would share the same study and the same dormitory. It was an ideal arrangement—one that the juniors had often longed for, but had never believed possible of accomplishment.

"Why, it's as good as being in the senior school," said McClure enthusiastically. "We've got just the same accommodation as the Fifth and Sixth. I can tell you, the Fourth is looking up!"

"Rather!" agreed Church. "By jingo, doesn't the school look fine from here?" he added, standing at the window. "We're on the same side as our study—looking across the West Square. The seniors have got the other side of the House, I suppose?"

They stood there, looking at the picturesque architecture of the West House, which of course was a replica of their own. They couldn't get accustomed to their new surroundings. Like most of the other juniors, they were inwardly excited—elated at the many splendours which now surrounded them.

Life at St. Frank's had always been interesting and jolly. In future it promised to be even more lively. For now there would be four junior House captains, and consequently four junior football teams. House rivalry, so far as sports were concerned, would evidently be a great feature in the life of the new St. Frank's.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. BARNABY GOOLE.



WILLY HANDFORTH stood on the Ancient House steps, and gave an approving nod.

"Topping!" he declared. "Absolutely topping!"

"Best she's ever made," said Chubby Heath, nodding.

"Eh?"

"Special for the first day of term, I suppose?" went on Chubby, as he took another bite of his beef patty. "That's the worst of Mrs. Hake—she reduces the quality after the term's fairly started."

Willy looked at his chum coldly.

"I wasn't talking about these beef patties," he said, with a sniff. "All you can think about is your silly tummy! I was referring to the architecture."

"Oh, that!" said Chubby, with a careless glance round. "I must admit they've made St. Frank's a lot better; but I can

work up a lot more enthusiasm about these patties—"

"Hear, hear!" said Juicy Lemon heartily.

The three shining lights of the Third Form distributed themselves on the steps, and assisted in the task of holding up the heavy granite balustrade. They had just completed a tour of exploration, and were more than satisfied. Willy Handforth was full of enthusiasm, indeed. He had never hoped to find anything so truly splendid as this.

"It'll be like old times again," he declared. "Mr. Lee's our Housemaster this term—"

"By jingo, is he?" asked Chubby.

"Of course he is."

"But what about Barry Stokes?"

"Old Barry is Housemaster of the West House now," replied Willy. "That's the best of having these extra Houses; there's a job for everybody. Nipper can be junior skipper again and Reggie Pitt won't be pushed out of his own spot of limelight. He'll be junior skipper, too, but in the West House."

"It's a bit confusing to me," said Juicy, gazing regretfully into his empty paper bag. "I say, what about some more grub?"

"Don't be greedy; it'll be teatime soon," said Willy, frowning. "Which reminds me. We haven't got enough crocks in our study. Buzz along, Chubby, and borrow a couple of saucers. And you rake up some plates, Juicy."

"Where from?" asked Chubby.

"That's your concern," replied Willy calmly. "Anywhere; there are plenty of cups and saucers about. Thank goodness we've got real studies now, instead of those old converted box-rooms. They're a bit small, but they're select!"

Willy paused, and watched Juicy Lemon with interest. Juicy had just emptied the entire contents of his lungs into the paper bag, which now bulged out like a miniature balloon.

"Hold tight!" he grinned.

Bang!

The noise of that bursting bag was akin to a minor explosion. And a tall, thin gentleman, who was just emerging from the Ancient House, leapt a clear yard into the air.

"Great heavens!" he gasped. "What—what was that?"

"Cave!" hissed Juicy. "Oh, my hat!"

"Stand your ground, fathead!" snapped Willy. "It's all right, sir," he added, turning to the thin gentleman. "Nothing to be scared about. Only a paper bag."

The stranger recovered himself, and attempted to hide his confusion. In the meantime, Willy Handforth & Co. examined him from head to foot with somewhat embarrassing attention to detail. Appar-

ently the gentleman was one of the new innovations at St. Frank's. He certainly wasn't a visitor, because he was wearing a scholastic gown and a mortar-board.

And he was thin—appallingly, unbelievably thin. Although under six feet, he looked much taller, and his shoulders were so narrow that Willy looked broad in comparison. The stranger's face was clean-shaven, fresh, and his cheeks were sunken into little hollows. His nose was long and thin, and slightly ruddy at the tip. His eyes were particularly keen and alert.

"Only a paper bag?" he repeated suspiciously. "So you had the effrontery to burst a paper bag at the very moment I was making my exit? My boys, do you know who I am?"

Willy was tempted to hazard a guess that the stranger was known as the living skeleton, but he manfully refrained from his rash suggestion.

"I haven't the faintest idea, sir," he replied.

"I am Mr. Barnaby Goole," said the stranger sternly.

"That's ripping, sir," replied Willy. "I particularly like the Barnaby part. It goes so well—skids off the tongue beautifully."

Mr. Goole looked more suspicious than ever.

"I am not sure whether you are deliberately impertinent, but I will give you the benefit of the doubt," he said at length.

"I am Mr. Barnaby Goole, and I am the new Housemaster of the East House."

"Oh!" ejaculated Willy & Co. in unison.

Mr. Goole condescended to smile. He had created an impression at last.

"So, you see, I have a right to demand respect and obedience," he went on sternly.

"As yet you have not even saluted me."

Willy & Co. promptly repaired the omission by removing their caps in one sweep, as though actuated by the same wire. Then they bowed low, with exaggerated deference.

"We are honoured, sir," said Willy sweetly. "But will you allow me to make a slight correction? You have a right to demand our respect, but not our obedience."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Barnaby Goole, staring.

"Yes, indeed," replied Willy. "Our obedience is due to Mr. Nelson Lee—our own Housemaster. Your own flock is on the other side of the Triangle. Just a little point, sir; but I thought I might as well mention it."

This was Mr. Goole's first experience of Willy, and although he was a man of strong mentality, he somehow felt a sensation of being out of his depth. There was something about Willy which rendered all

his stock phrases inadequate. Like many another before him, he experienced a desire to escape.

"Er! Exactly—exactly!" he said gruffly. "You were quite right, my boy—the Ease House. I am well aware, is on the other side of the Triangle."

He prepared to make his retreat as orderly as possible, but Chubby Heath injudiciously took a bite out of his final beef patty. And Mr. Barnaby Goole fixed his gaze upon it with a kind of horrified glare.

CHAPTER X.

A QUESTION OF FOOD.



CHUBBY HEATH did his best under the circumstances, but it was a very poor performance, in Willy's opinion. He hastily jerked the beef patty behind his back, and pushed the bitten-off chunk into his left cheek. If Chubby believed that it was concealed, he was sadly fooling himself. His cheek bulged out like a shiny beacon. "What—what is that you are eating?" demanded Mr. Goole sternly.

For a moment Chubby Heath looked something like an ostrich. He gave one gulp, and swallowed his mouthful whole. Willy afterwards declared that he distinctly saw the bulge passing down his throat.

"N-nothing, sir," gurgled Chubby.

"Don't be ridiculous, boy!" retorted Mr. Goole. "I may be mistaken, but I have an impression that that disgusting confection contains meat. Am I right?"

Further concealment was a mere paltering with fact.

"Yes, sir," replied Chubby. "What about it? It's beef. Jolly good beef, too. Mrs. Hake always gives us the best. None of that Argentine stuff for her, you know. She thinks it's poison."

Mr. Goole's eyes glittered with sudden triumph.

"And she thinks correctly, too," he exclaimed. "It is poison—rank poison. But the unhappy female makes a grave mistake in believing that English meat is any better. Throw that thing away, my boy. Cast it from you as you would cast away a plague!"

Chubby Heath looked at the patty with horror.

"My hat!" he gasped. "Has Mrs. Hake been using squiffy meat then?"

"All meat is squiffy!" roared Mr. Goole.

"That—that is to say, all meat is fatal to the human system. How dare you trap me into repeating your ridiculous slang! Meat, my boy, is the curse of mankind!"

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Chubby Heath blankly.

Juicy Lemon looked on with a kind of dumb surprise, but Willy Handforth's eyes were already twinkling. He was beginning to get a glimmering of Mr. Barnaby Goole's meaning.

"It's all right, Chubby," he said soothingly. "The patty's safe enough—good, sound meat, you know. Mr. Goole is simply telling us that meat of any kind is harmful. I take it, sir, that you're a vegetarian?" he went on, turning to the new Housemaster.

"I am!" retorted Mr. Goole defiantly.

Willy regarded him with pitying gaze.

"I might have known it at first, sir," he observed, casting a comprehensive glance over Mr. Goole's spare form. "I'm afraid you won't get many supporters at St. Frank's, sir. We're great meat eaters here."

"Revolt!" said Mr. Goole, with a shudder.

"Bacon for breakfast, you know, sir—and sometimes sausages," said Willy.

"Sausages!" repeated Mr. Goole, with glassy eyes.

"Heaps of 'em, sir," said Willy cheerfully. "Then at mid-day we have mutton or beef—sometimes two meat courses, even. And at tea-time, in our own studies, we get our supplies in specially. Most of the fellows have sardines, or salmon, or eggs; but potted meat is a big favourite, to say nothing of corned beef, ham loaf, glass tongue, and bacon."

Mr. Goole was shaken to the very marrow.

"I am horrified!" he said sadly. "This is distressing news, indeed. Unfortunately, I have not the power to command you to throw that obnoxious patty away. But be guided by me, young man, and cast it forth. Meat is the root cause of all humanity's ills."

"I shouldn't be surprised, sir," said Chubby, taking another big bite out of the patty, now that he knew it was safe. "All the same, it tastes good, sir."

"Your palate is depraved, young man—horribly depraved!"

"I'm healthy enough, sir."

"Ah, that is always the parrot cry!" ejaculated Mr. Goole fiercely. "But do people realise the insanity of their actions? Month after month, year after year, from childhood onwards, they poison their tissues with these meats. They little realise that they are slowly killing themselves. At the age of forty you will be dyspeptic, at the age of sixty you will cease to enjoy the fulness of life. And why? Because meat eating has wrecked your constitution."

Chubby finished the patty, and brushed the crumbs away.

"Well, I've still got about twenty-five

years of happiness before I'm forty, sir," he said thankfully. "That's something to look forward to, anyway."

"I am grieved beyond measure at your foolish attitude," said Mr. Goole darkly. "I am only sorry that you are not in my House. In that building, I can assure you, there will be some drastic changes. I am the master there, and I shall be obeyed!"

He strode away, his eyes burning fiercely, almost fanatically. And Willy & Co. looked after him, and then gazed at one another.

"He's off his rocker!" said Juicy Lemon bluntly.

"Up the pole!" remarked Chubby, with scorn.

"Anyway, he's a distinct acquisition to St. Frank's," declared Willy. "Better than all your normal Housemasters. As far as I'm concerned, I'm jolly glad he's come."

"Glad to have that crank here?" asked Chubby, staring.

"Rather!" replied Willy. "His dotty ideas won't affect us, because we're not under his gentle wing. But I can see some stirring times ahead for the East House, my sons. A sensation—an uproar. Mark my words—heed the voice of the soothsayer—it won't be a week before the East House fellows arise in their might and do valiant deeds!"

CHAPTER XI.

CONCERNING A KEYHOLE.



HUBBARD, of the Upper Fourth, poured the boiling water into the teapot with a flourish—with such a flourish, indeed, that he spilled a good proportion of it on the tablecloth. But these trifles were as nothing in a junior study.

"Shove over the milk, Teddy, and don't scoff all that bread and butter," said Hubbard briskly. "My hat, you greedy young beast! You've half-emptied the plate, and I haven't even started!"

"There's plenty more," said Teddy Long, with his mouth full.

The pair were taking tea in Study B—their old quarters in the Ancient House, although, of course, the room was as new as any of the others. But it was comforting to realise that they still had the same letter on the door.

It can hardly be said that Hubbard and Long were chums. They shared the same

study, certainly, and they knew one another's intimate secrets; but they weren't the type of juniors to be particularly chummy. Hubbard was a self-important, brainless sort of nonentity, and Teddy Long was every kind of a sneak. He was the spy of the Fourth, and served no good purpose on earth whatever.

"What about the sugar?" asked Hubbard. "Didn't you get some?"

"Sugar?"

"It's sweet!" explained Hubbard. "You buy it in lumps——"

"I know what sugar is, you fathead!" roared Teddy Long. "I forgot all about it. I got the tea and the butter and the bread while you lazed about doing nothing——"

"You fibber! I was clearing the study up!" retorted Hubbard. "In any case, you bought the grub with my tin! Buzz round to the school shop, and get a pound of sugar—and look sharp about it!"

Teddy Long glared.

"Go and get it yourself!" he said defiantly.

"My hat!" ejaculated Hubbard, with a gasp.

He made a dive for the corner, grabbed a cricket-stump, but before he could use it Teddy Long had vanished. It was always the same. Teddy never failed to object, and he never failed to obey under the threat of personal violence. In all respects, he was a worm.

He marched along the passage with a glowering countenance. He noticed that the door of the next study was open, and he also observed the table was spread for tea. A number of bags reposed on the polished cupboard-top, in the recess. Teddy Long paused.

He had money in his pocket to buy a pound of sugar, but if it was at all possible to get the sugar on the cheap, he wouldn't hesitate. He didn't regard it as theft to take food from another study. In his opinion, it wasn't even pilfering. All food was fair game.

Study A was empty, and it was only the work of a moment for Teddy Long to examine the bags on the cupboard, and discovered one half-full of lump sugar. He seized it greedily and made for the door.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated blankly.

Familiar voices sounded, and the next second Fullwood & Co. strode in, catching Teddy red-handed. He strove to conceal the tell-tale bag, but he was too late. He forced a weak sort of smile.

"Hallo, you chaps!" he said nervously. "Just—just having a look round, you know. Your study's better than ours—— I—I mean, they're all the same, except for the furniture——"

"What's that behind you?" asked Gulliver bluntly.

"Nun—nothing!"

Gulliver and Bell seized Teddy, swung him round, and rescued the packet of sugar.

ANSWERS

Every Saturday. Price 2d.

Fullwood, in the meantime, flung himself into a chair, and took no interest in the proceedings.

"You confounded little thief!" said Bell indignantly. "Our sugar! He calmly came in here an' pinched it!"

"I—I was only borrowing——"

"By gad, you deserve chokey for this!" roared Gulliver. "Take that, you burglar!"

Crash!

Terry Long received a resounding cuff on the side of his head. His wild howl of anguish was cut short by another fearful biff from Bell. Staggering under the blows, he reeled towards the door. Bell obligingly helped him out with the toe of his boot. Teddy careered into the passage, crashed over, and the door of Study A was slammed.

"Beasts!" moaned Teddy unhappily.

He sat there, in mortal pain for a few moments. And during that brief space, fiendish methods of revenge passed through his mind—all of them impracticable, since they involved such materials as boiling oil, molten lead, and other trifles.

"All the same, I'll make 'em smart for this!" muttered Teddy fiercely, as he crawled painfully to his feet. "The rotten cads! Half-killing me just because I borrowed a few lumps of sugar!"

He stood there, rubbing a certain section of his anatomy with tender regard. And as he was in a crouching attitude for this purpose, his left ear was quite close to the keyhole. For once in his life, Teddy Long overheard a few words of a private conversation by sheer accident. At the moment he wasn't in the mood for eavesdropping—he hadn't any idea, in fact, that the words within Study A were worth listening to. But he heard a few, all the same.

"By gad!" came Gulliver's voice, raised in sudden astonishment. "I just remember! That chap Carey—the fellow who half-murdered another undergrad. at Oxford——"

"Just remembered?" came Fullwood's voice, fraught with intensity and apprehension. "You fool! What have you just remembered?"

"He's your cousin!" said Gulliver triumphantly.

"Great Scott!" yelled Bell. "That's right—so he is! Why the deuce didn't we think of it before? Eustace Carey? I knew I'd heard the name somewhere! He's your cousin at Oxford, Fully!"

"And he's committed murder!" added Gulliver.

There was a crash as something overturned in the study.

"You—you mad lunatics!" came Fullwood's voice, in a hissing fury. "Don't yell like that—do you want the whole school to know? The thing was an accident—a pure accident!"

"In that case, why did you lie to us in the train, an' say that you'd never heard of Carey before?" asked Gulliver. "You



Willy & Co. promptly repaired the omission by removing their caps in one sweep, as though actuated by the same wire.

can't fool us' with that kind of stuff, old man! No wonder you've been lookin' so bally scared!"

Outside, Teddy Long had completely forgotten his surroundings. He crouched there, now thoroughly glued to the keyhole. By the purest chance he was hearing some news which filled him with an intense and burning joy. Revenge! He'd have it now, and in a way he loved best of all!

CHAPTER XII.

FULLWOOD'S ORDEAL.



R ALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD slowly picked up the overturned chair, and set it in place. The haggard, anxious expression was still apparent on his face, but there was

now a trace of relief in his eyes. Although he was startled that his chums should have fathomed his secret, he had known from the first that the truth must come out sooner or later. It was good to have the suspense ended.

"Well?" he said curtly. "You've got the truth now—an' perhaps you're satisfied.

I hope I can trust you to keep it to yourselves."

Gulliver snorted.

"What do you take us for?" he demanded angrily.

"Well, I wouldn't like this story to get about—"

"We'll buy a couple of megaphones, and go up on the roof," said Bell, with sarcasm. "We'll shout it out so that the whole school will know."

Fullwood little realised that an object just outside the door was far more effective than a couple of megaphones—when it came to spreading news abroad.

"Don't be funny!" he said sourly.

"You're a bit of a dirty dog, you know," declared Gulliver. "Why the deuce didn't you admit the thing at once, instead of lying to us?"

"It isn't a thing anybody likes to admit," retorted Fullwood. "My nerves have been on edge all day—ever since I saw that beastly report. The pater was nearly mad about it, I can tell you. The disgrace to the family, you know. A ghastly affair!"

"It's pretty steep, I'll admit," said Bell thoughtfully. "Your cousin, eh? By gad, that's tough! An' he not only had a disgraceful mill with another undergrad., but he chucked him out of the window, broke the chap's leg, an' generally smashed him up. Then he walked off with the two hundred quid!"

"And the police are searchin' for him!" added Gulliver.

Teddy Long heard this amazing news with a gulp of sheer delight. Scandal of the most trivial kind was welcome. But this story was almost too good to be true. It would cause a real sensation. Lots of the fellows had heard about it, of course, but they didn't know the all-important fact that Eustace Carey was Ralph Leslie Fullwood's cousin. That would be the sensational disclosure.

"It's a bit rotten havin' a thief for a cousin," said Bell, with a certain amount of relish in his tone. "Even a thief wouldn't be so bad—but this chap looks like bein' a murderer, too—"

"Don't be an infernal idiot!" snarled Fullwood.

"Well, the paper says the chap may not live—"

"The paper's wrong!" interrupted Fullwood. "It must be wrong! People don't die from a broken leg—"

"But his skull was cracked, too!"

"It's all exaggerated—it must be!" insisted Fullwood. "Besides, even at the very worst, it could only be called manslaughter. That's bad enough, goodness knows! But it's the other part that makes me squirm. Carey cleared out after the affair, an' took a pile of money with him! He's a thief! That's the worst of all!"

"The school's bound to know before long—"

"Why is it bound to know?" demanded Fullwood sharply. "You fellows won't say anythin'—"

"Of course we won't, but bad news always gets out," said Bell.

"There's no reason why this bad news should get out," retorted Fullwood. "I've never mentioned my cousin's name to a soul here—except you two. How can Eustace Carey be connected with me? I tell you it's impossible. The pater will see that the newspapers don't give anythin' away. My family needn't be connected with Carey at all. It's got to be kept a dead secret."

"Well, you can trust us," said Gulliver. "It's fearfully startlin' an' we shall have to go jolly easy. But Bell an' I will respect your bally secret, old man."

"Thanks!" grunted Fullwood, with real gratitude. "It's not my fault—I can't help what Carey does. He's always been a beast—a weak, miserable toad! I haven't seen him for years, but even when I was a kid I used to loathe him. One of those speedy beggars, you know."

Bell laughed.

"We're not so very slow, are we?" he asked.

"Talkin' about bein' slow, what about you, Fully?" asked Gulliver. "You're not the same chap this term. You won't smoke, you won't take a nip—you won't play cards! If you want us to keep your rotten secrets, you'll have to be your old self!"

Fullwood looked up, his eyes gleaming.

"Are you threatenin' me?" he asked, taking a deep breath.

"No, you ass—"

"Then don't say things like that!" snapped Fullwood.

During the last few hours he had made a startling discovery—a discovery that had come upon him with a real shock. The shock would have been much more severe had his mind been unoccupied. But the disgrace concerning his cousin had nullified the effects of this other surprise to a very large degree.

But now Fullwood was realizing it strongly. Gulliver and Bell grated upon him. Formerly he and they had pulled together as one. But now, for some strange reason, they irritated him beyond measure. It wasn't entirely due to his worried state of mind. They were different—they were unutterably caddish and mean. They revealed it in every word and action.

And, Fullwood, with a jarring jolt, realised that it was he who was different. Gulliver and Bell were just the same as ever—and not so very long ago he had been just the same! Now, in some subtle way, his view-point was altered. He looked at life from a different angle.

Was it because he had spent so many pleasant weeks in the company of Nipper and Pitt and Christine, and all the other decent fellows? Had they automatically and unconsciously moulded his character into a different shape? He hated admitting such

a thing, but he was forced to confess that he had a secret liking for them. Previously, he had loathed them heartily.

And now his loathing was directed towards Gulliver and Bell—his own chums! Until this day of actual contact with them, he hadn't had the faintest conception of the change that had been going on within him—unknown, and unsuspected. He tried to shake the sensation off, but it clung.

"We'd better have tea," said Gulliver gruffly. "There's no sense in arguin'. You'll be in a better mood to-morrow, Fully."

He gave Bell a glance, and they understood one another perfectly. Their minds ran in the same channel. Fullwood had a secret—a guilty secret—which they shared. Fullwood also had money. And there was no reason why they shouldn't share that, too!

CHAPTER XIII.

BERNARD FORREST—A SHADY CUSTOMER.



JACK GREY raised his tea-cup with a flourish. "A toast!" he said lightly. "A toast to our junior House captain! May he reign for many days—"

"Even when it snows!" grinned Reggie Pitt. "Chuck it, Jack, old man! You're making me blush!"

Jack Grey sat down again, chuckling. As a matter of fact, he and Reggie Pitt were quite alone in the cosy room—Study K, in the West House. These were their new quarters. Formerly they had occupied Study E, in the Ancient House; but, as Reginald Pitt was now junior skipper in this new domain, he had naturally changed his address. And Jack Grey, as a matter of course, had accompanied him, for they were bosom chums.

"It's a bit of a come-down, us being pushed into another House," said Grey, as he selected a jam-puff. "And yet, in another way, it's all for the best. Nipper occupies his old place as junior skipper, and you keep the same prestige. I'm not grumbling."

"I should think you're not," retorted Reggie. "The West House is just as good as the Ancient House, and I mean to make it better! My son, we'll cause things to hum this term! Up till now there's only been one House at St. Frank's—the Ancient House. The old Modern House was always in the background. But now we're starting on level terms—Ancient House, Modern House, West House, and East House. And we've got to make the West House the top dog."

"Hear, hear!"

"It'll be a stiff job, to whack Nipper, but we'll have a jolly good try at it," went on Reggie. "That's the ticket, all along—friendly rivalry. Why, under the new system, life will be ten times as interesting at St. Frank's. We shall have endless

opportunities for sport. Just wait until we get fairly going."

"We'll show 'em something," said Jack Grey firmly.

"And if you've finished that tea, we might as well stroll out and have a look round," went on Pitt. "We haven't half explored yet."

They left the study, and strolled out into the open, where the evening sunlight was slanting across the stately buildings. Reggie Pitt was quite content to be the junior captain of his own House—he was by no means jealous because Nipper would now become skipper of the Upper Fourth. Under the new order of things the Form was made up of fellows of all Houses—although, as a matter of fact, practically all the Upper Fourth fellows were distributed in the Ancient House and the West House.

Outside in the Triangle Pitt and Grey strolled along towards the Big Arch, in the centre of the new School House. It was an imposing, stately building, with the great clock tower rising high above.

"Let's go through to the Inner Court," suggested Jack. "Strictly speaking, it's out of bounds, but anything's allowed to-day. Besides, it's only fair that we should have a look round."

They went towards the Big Arch, and were just in time to meet an elegant youth who was strolling out. He was a stranger to them—and obviously a newcomer. There were only a few new boys this term, and most of them were obvious at a glance. This new fellow, however, was different.

He was elegant, but not over-dressed. He was strikingly handsome, too—a boy of about fifteen, with a very aristocratic bearing. His features were almost classic, and he paused and regarded Pitt and Grey with a cool, insolent stare. It was as though he regarded them as mere dirt.

"You'll know us next time!" remarked Grey coldly.

"I believe I shall," replied the other. "Once seen, never forgotten, eh? Do you fellows belong to the Upper Fourth?"

"Yes."

"So do I," said the new boy. "I'm in the East House."

"That's one blessing, anyway—we're in the West House," said Pitt.

The other frowned.

"Perhaps you don't know who I am?" he asked haughtily.

"One of the Upper Ten, by any chance?" asked Grey.

"My name is Bernard Forrest!"

"Forrest?" repeated Reggie Pitt slowly. "Something shady, eh?"

"You insulting hound!" said Bernard Forrest, with a flush of anger. "I suppose you know that remark is infernally personal, don't you?"

"I may be wrong, of course," said Pitt; "but I was always under the impression that forests were shady. To be quite frank, my son, I don't quite like the look of you."

And it won't do you a bit of good to go about eyeing people as though they were bits of garbage. We're not all lords and dukes, but you can never tell!"

"Witty—very witty!" said Bernard Forrest, with a sneer. "It is quite a good thing, as you mentioned yourself, that we are not in the same House. I am afraid I shouldn't get on very well with you."

"Then we're all agreed," said Pitt smoothly. "Come on, Jack."

They walked through the shady arch, emerged into the Inner Court, and stood there looking round. Bernard Forrest, after one contemptuous glance over his shoulder, continued his way towards the East House.

"That fellow's going to cause trouble," commented Reggie Pitt slowly. "I don't like the look of him at all, Jack—a sort of super-Fullwood. He's got a handsome face, but I wouldn't like to count his vices. To my mind, he's a bad lot."

"Hardly fair to compare him with Fullwood," said Grey. "I don't know, Reggie—Fullwood doesn't seem quite the same nowadays. He's always revealed one or two good qualities—even at his worst—but just lately he's showing signs of real decency."

"Let's hope they last," said Pitt. "They may be a flash in the pan, you know—the effect of the vac., and all that. Now that he's back in the old spot, he may get as bad as ever. For his sake, I hope not."

They stood there, admiring the beauties of the Inner Court. There were trees there—stately old trees which had originally stood in a mere meadow. That meadow was now converted into this fine view, with the Head's private residence straight ahead. It was a fine house—long, low, and built in the true Gothic style to match all the other edifices.

Pitt and Grey strolled across the Inner Court, and then turned and looked at the two spreading wings of the School House—which, from this side, spread gracefully towards them.

"We shall have to go inside and have a look round," said Jack Grey.

CHAPTER XIV.

SURPRISING NEWS.



NELSON LEE came out of the main doorway of the Head's residence, accompanied by Dr. Malcolm Stafford himself. They parted on the steps, and Lee approached

the chums of Study K.

"What's this—what's this?" he said, with mock severity. "I presume you young gentlemen know that you are on forbidden ground?"

Reggie grinned.

"It's not forbidden to-day, sir?" he asked.

"Well, I suppose not," laughed Nelson Lee. "But from to-morrow onwards, my boys, the Inner Court is out of bounds—no

admittance except on business, as it were. At last our kindly old Head is provided with a dwelling befitting his dignity. Tucked away behind the School House, there will be peace and quietness here, and Dr. Stafford will be undisturbed."

"It's a big advantage, sir," declared Pitt. "In the old days the Head could look out of his study window and see everything that went on in the Triangle. There'll be no risks of that kind now."

The Housemaster of the Ancient House allowed his eyes to twinkle.

"H'm! I'm not so sure!" he exclaimed. "It may be a disadvantage, Reggie. You youngsters needn't imagine that the Triangle will be unobserved by eagle eyes. My own study looks directly upon it—and, for that matter, the study of every other Housemaster."

"I thought there was a catch in it somewhere, sir," said Pitt cheerfully. "But it doesn't matter—we're all delighted with the new school."

"Yes, I fancy we shall pull together splendidly," said Nelson Lee. "You are junior captain of the West House, I understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"And Nipper is back in his old place as captain of the Ancient House?" said Lee. "That's all to the good. Boots, I hear, will take the reins in the Modern House—as before."

"What about the East House, sir?" asked Jack Grey. "I suppose there'll be a job for Bob Christine there?"

"No; Christine prefers to remain in the Modern House," replied Lee. "He doesn't altogether care for responsibility, I gather. Bob's keen on sport, but he prefers somebody else to do the directing. He's remaining under Boots' captaincy."

"Then who's the junior skipper of the East House, sir?"

"I don't think it's quite decided—there may be an election," replied Nelson Lee. "But there's already some talk of Armstrong taking the lead. Armstrong has always had a keen desire to shine as a leader—but so far he hasn't had the opportunity."

"My hat, Armstrong!" said Pitt. "He'll make a hash of it, sir."

"If he does, he'll have to stand down—that's all," replied Nelson Lee. "In any case, it's not my affair, neither is it yours. We are all connected with different Houses now."

Nelson Lee nodded, and walked away, and the two Fourth-Formers discussed the fresh item of news they had learned.

"So Bob remains in the Modern House," said Reggie thoughtfully. "The ass! It was only necessary for him to transfer to the East House, and he could be junior captain right away. Armstrong's stolen a march on him."

"Bob allowed him to steal it, in my opinion," said Jack. "It'll be rather interesting to see what kind of a hash Armstrong

makes. What with that fellow Forrest in the East House—to say nothing of a new Housemaster—some lively times seem likely. Old Pycraft's in the East House, too."

"A regular collection of duds," said Reggie. "It's just as well for them all to be under one roof. When it comes to a race for supremacy, the East House looks like being left in the cold."

They retraced their steps through the Big Arch, turned to the right, and passed up the steps and into the Junior Wing. The School House was equally divided into these great main sections, so that the seniors and juniors were separated. Between the two wings lay Big Hall, the floor of which was some distance from the ground—being, in fact, over the Big Arch.

Thus, when the school gathered for lessons, the roll could be taken in the various form-rooms, and then the fellows would troop into Big Hall for prayers—the Lower School from the Junior Wing, and the Upper School from the Senior Wing. There were two great staircases leading down from Big Hall—one on either side—to the class-rooms.

Handforth & Co, De Valerie, Christine, Archie Glenthorne, and many others were going over the School House when Pitt and Grey arrived. Everybody was impressed. These new school buildings not only contained class-rooms, but libraries, laboratories, lecture halls, music-rooms, studios, carpentry and metal workshops, and many other improvements.

The other four Houses were designed purely for living in, and the idea was to make them as homely as it was possible for a school to be. With private studies and bedrooms for each little group of chums, life at St. Frank's would be much more congenial than formerly. It was small wonder that the entire school was glowing with satisfaction and delight.

Pitt and Grey entered the Ancient House, and made their way to the junior common-room. They found quite a number of fellows there.

"Trespassers, by jingo!" ejaculated Nipper severely. "What are you West House fellows doing beneath this forbidden roof?"

Pitt and Grey grinned.

"Rats!" said Reggie. "We've got as much right here as you have—pretty nearly, anyhow. We still regard ourselves as Ancient House fellows. What's all the talk about over in the corner?" he added, nodding towards a group of excited fellows who were in the midst of a big discussion.

"Oh, something about Fullwood," grunted Tommy Watson. "Scandal, of course. It's leaked out that Eustace Carey is Fullwood's cousin."

"Who's Eustace Carey?" asked Jack Grey.

"Didn't you see the paper this morning?" said Nipper. "Carey's an Oxford undergrad.—a young blackguard who murderously

assaulted another undergrad, and bunked with a lot of cash. He's Fullwood's cousin, it seems."

"Hard luck for Fullwood," said Reggie Pitt. "It's a pity it leaked out—he'll get plenty of sneers and gibes now. Just when he was showing signs of being decent, too. What rotten hard lines!"

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE PUBLIC EYE.



STUDY A was filled with a slightly bluish haze. Gulliver and Bell were lounging about, smoking, but Fullwood had again refused to join in. He was sitting apart, near the win-

dow, gazing across the square.

Tea was over, and Gulliver and Bell were rather exasperated. They didn't like this new side of Fullwood's character. He wasn't his old careless, free-and-easy self.

"Look here, Fully," said Gulliver at last. "We know all about your secret, and we can understand your feelings. But that's no reason why you should be so bally changed. Why can't you be a sport, an' join in a little game of cards. We're safe enough to-day."

"Everything's lax on the first evenin'," said Bell.

Fullwood looked round impatiently.

"I don't feel like playin'," he retorted. "I don't want to play—an', what's more, I won't."

"You won't smoke, either?"

"I'll smoke when I choose to, an' not before," said Fullwood, with his old sneer. "The more you fools try to force me, the more I'll stick out. Smokin' isn't much of a sport, anyhow."

"By gad!" said Gulliver, taking a deep breath. "This is what comes of spendin' a month or two with those goody-goody bounders! An' you with a thief for a cousin! Why, if those chaps ever heard about Carey they'd cut you dead! You'd soon find out their bally attitude!"

"We needn't discuss the matter!" snapped Fullwood. "In fact, the least said the better. If you idiots keep jawin', somebody might overhear you. An' it would only need half a word to get the yarn spread everywhere. You've promised to keep mum. Why the deuce can't you stick to your word?"

Gulliver grunted.

"Oh, you're in a filthy temper still!" he said sourly. "Come on, Bell—we'll go out an' have a look round. By the way, Fully—you might lend us a quid, old man."

"I'm a bit short, too," added Bell carelessly.

Fullwood regarded them with a keen eye.

"This is the first day of term," he said

deliberately. "Have you fellows come back to school broke?"

"Not exactly——"

"Then why borrow money from me?"

"Well, you're flush—you always are—an' we thought about runnin' over to Bannin'ton to-night an' havin' a quid or two on with the bookie for to-morrow's three-thirty," said Gulliver.

"By gad, you've got a nerve!" said Fullwood angrily. "You want to risk money on a horse—but your own cash is too good! Be hanged to you! I'm not lendin' a brass farthin'!"

Gulliver shrugged his shoulders.

"All right—please yourself," he said deliberately. "But if you ask favours of us we've got a right to ask favours of you. An' if you like to be so bally mean, you can't blame us if we get a bit careless——"

Fullwood sprang to his feet.

"What's this—blackmail?" he asked hotly. The other two recoiled.

"Don't be so jolly touchy——" began Bell.

"Blackmail!" repeated Fullwood harshly. "That's your game, you contemptible hounds! You know all about Carey, an' unless I whack out cash at your demand, you'll grow careless an' blab the news! Great Scott! An' you've always called yourselves my pals! I'm learnin' a few things!"

They stared at one another in silence for a few moments. Gulliver and Bell were in no way ashamed. In fact, they rather gloated over their superior position. They held Fullwood in their grasp, and they knew it.

Ralph Leslie's feelings were mixed. It came to him as a big shock that his own chums could act in this way. His contempt for them was beyond all utterance. But he bitterly realised that he was in a cleft stick.

"Here's the money—an' be hanged to you!" he said, between his teeth. "Get out of this study, an' leave me alone!"

He took out his wallet, and was in the act of extracting some currency notes when the door opened, and Grayson of the Fifth looked in. There was a peculiar grin on Grayson's unpleasant face.

"Oh, here you are!" he said, looking at Fullwood. "And Gulliver and Bell are still safe and sound. The family trait hasn't revealed itself yet?"

"The family trait?" repeated Fullwood. "What do you mean?"

"You haven't slung one of them out of the window, and cracked his head," explained Grayson, with relish. "You haven't even bunked with a pile of cash?"

Fullwood gave a violent start.

"I don't know what you're talkin' about," he said thickly.

"No?" grinned Grayson. "Never heard of Eustace Carey, I suppose?"

"My hat!" ejaculated Bell blankly.

"Come inside an' close that door!" snapped Fullwood. "For Heaven's sake,

don't talk loud, Grayson! I don't want the whole school to know——"

"That's tough luck!" interrupted Grayson. "The whole school knows already. My dear, deluded idiot, you're in the public eye. Everybody's ripping your character to shreds as fast as they can go."

Fullwood said nothing. He stood there, pale and drawn. So his attempts to hide the story were of no avail! Gulliver and Bell were looking positively beaten. Their hold over Fullwood had slipped from their grasp. There would be no easy money for them. And they had revealed their contemptible plan to Fullwood without receiving a penny of compensation—for Fullwood had put his wallet back into his pocket.

"Who—who told you this?" asked Fullwood tensely.

"Oh, I don't know—one of the fellows," replied Grayson. "I understand that young Long has been busily spreading the yarn——"

"Long!" ejaculated Bell. "We kicked him out of here, Fully! The awful young rotter must have listened at the keyhole while we were talkin'——"

"Then it's quite true?" asked Grayson. "I thought so all along. In future Fullwood, I'll trouble you not to speak to me in public! We can be pals privately, if you like—but I've got to be careful——"

"Get out of here!" shouted Fullwood fiercely.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FINGER OF SCORN.



GRAYSON stared in blank amazement. "You'd better not use that tone to me——" he began.

"This is my study, an' you'll get out of it!" thundered Fullwood. "If I'm not good enough for you in public, I'm not good enough for you in private! In any case, I wouldn't touch you with a barge pole! Are you goin', or shall I kick you out?"

Grayson was fairly staggered.

"You young idiot!" he snapped. "If you think you can taunt me into a disgraceful brawl, you make a mistake! I'm a senior, and I've got to think of my position."

"At the moment your position is perpendicular; but unless you go it'll be horizontal!" said Fullwood, with cool grimness. "Thanks very much, Grayson, for lettin' me know your point of view. It's just as well to have these little details settled."

He made a move forward, and Grayson hastily retreated. He was a bully, and not altogether a coward. But there was something about Fullwood's sudden calmness—something about his eye—that told Grayson he had better take his departure.

"I'm going," he said curtly. "And don't forget what I told you—if you address me in

public, I shan't answer you! I'm a bit particular, and I don't like the relatives of a thief hanging round me."

He went out and slammed the door. And Fullwood stood against the table with a sensation akin to relief. He had hardly dared to hope that the secret could be kept—and it was just as well, perhaps, for the truth to be out at once.

And Grayson's attitude came as a surprise, too. He had always been thick with Grayson—had regarded Grayson as a friend. Yet the Fifth-Former had been the first to come to Study A and deliberately insult him. And Gulliver and Bell had tried to blackmail him!

Ralph Leslie Fullwood was beginning to learn the ways of the world. Those whom he had counted as his friends were the very first to turn against him. As yet he couldn't quite get over the astonishment that filled him. Things were turning out so differently to what he had expected.

"Sorry to have upset your plans," he said, turning to Gulliver and Bell, and eyeing them contemptuously. "That little blackmailin' stunt didn't come off, did it? Long has blown the gaff, an' you're dished!"

Gulliver flushed.

"Blackmail be hanged!" he snapped. "It's a pity you can't use sensible words——"

"I used the right word."

"All right—we don't care what you think!" growled Gulliver. "The truth's out now, an' you'll soon know all about it! By gad! I can just hear Nipper an' Pitt an' Handforth an' all those chaps! They'll be on you like a pack of wolves, Fully! They'll tear you to shreds!"

"They can't be worse than my own friends!" said Fullwood bitterly.

"Oh, can't they?" sneered Bell. "Just you wait! You won't get a minute's peace! They'll jibe an' jeer an' make your life a misery! You can't have peace in this world if you've got a murderer for a cousin!"

Gulliver and Bell made a swift exit, for Fullwood looked dangerous again. He no longer regarded the pair as pals. Their recent attitude was the biggest eye-opener that Fullwood had ever received.

For some moments he remained alone in the study. This was a fine first day at school! And the bitterest point of all was that nobody could accuse him of the slightest thing! It was his cousin who had committed the offence—and Fullwood was being made to suffer for his cousin's sins. The injustice of it was like the sear of a hot iron.

Now that the truth was out, Fullwood gritted his teeth and determined to sally forward. Why should he hide? He had nothing to blame himself for. A feeling of defiance crept into him. Of course, Nipper and Handforth and the rest would cut him dead—that was a certainty—and they would probably openly sneer as well. Well, let them!



Fullwood sprang to his feet. "What's this—blackmail?" he asked hotly. The other two recoiled.

He walked out of the study, strode down the passage, and arrived in the big lobby. Merrell and Marriott—now of the East House—happened to be passing, and they deliberately squeezed themselves against the wall, in order to avoid contact with Fullwood. It was an exaggerated exhibition of their attitude.

Fullwood walked straight on with set lips. Another little shock! Merrell and Marriott had always toadied to him in the past—had regarded him as their ideal. Even they were among the first to insult him.

Fullwood's attitude underwent a change. In a certain way, he was beginning to enjoy himself. Now that the worst was out, the blow wasn't so hard. The whole school could hang itself for all he cared! His own conscience was clear enough, anyhow.

And he was experiencing a sensation of curiosity now. He was wondering how the various fellows would treat him. Handforth & Co. were just against the doorway, talking with Clive Russell and Archie Glen-thorne.

"Hallo! Just the chap we wanted!" said Handforth, grabbing Fullwood as he was about to pass. "Half-a-tick, Fully."

"Well?" said Fullwood.

He was aware that all eyes were regarding him with intense interest. The expres-

sions of the fellows were different to usual. Fullwood knew that they had all heard the story about Eustace Carey.

"It's about football," said Handforth briskly. "There aren't so many of us in the Ancient House now, and we want our team to beat all the others. Some of the chaps are saying that you're going in for football this term. Is that right, Fully?"

Fullwood stared, his brain in a whirl.

"I—I— Well, I did mention it to Russell once," he replied, after a moment. "But that was long ago—on the Wanderer—"

"Sure it was," agreed Clive, nodding. "You were telling me that you hadn't played football much in the past, but were keen on it this term. You said you were going to ask the Form skipper to give you a trial."

Fullwood flushed.

"Well, yes," he admitted. "I did say that."

"Good man!" ejaculated Church. "If you'll only throw yourself into football with a will, Fullwood, you'll make a jolly good player! I've always said so."

"But none of your old tricks, mind," said Handforth admonishingly. "No slacking off and smoking, and playing cards! You're a bit different now, Fully, so we'll let bygones be bygones."

Ralph Leslie Fullwood gave a kind of gulp. This was the biggest shock of all. While his own friends had insulted him and cut him dead, the very ones he had expected the worst sneers from had not even mentioned his cousin at all! They were treating him as though they had heard nothing!

CHAPTER XVII.

UNEXPECTED CHAMPIONS.



FULLWOOD was utterly startled.

He had the decency to tell himself that he would have been one of the first to sneer if somebody else's cousin had been exposed as a blackguard instead of Eustace Carey. He would have gloated over the unfortunate's discomfiture just as Gulliver and Bell and many more were gloating over his.

But Handforth & Co. didn't gloat at all!

On the contrary, they were treating him with greater friendliness than ever before. They were even suggesting that he should play football! He felt no resentment against Edward Oswald because he had referred to smoking and card playing. In his heart, Fullwood knew that Handforth's caution had been just.

But the overwhelming fact remained. They were treating him better than ever. The truth, of course, was simple. Fullwood's code of honour had been very similar

to the code of honour of his associates. They sneered and jibed at an unfortunate fellow creature as a matter of course.

But Handforth's code of honour was totally different. By sheer instinct, he affected a greater friendliness towards a fellow than he really felt—when that fellow was down. Handforth was doing his utmost—quite unconsciously—to make Fullwood feel comfortable.

And that was the keynote of Handforth's code. He behaved decently because it was impossible for him to behave in any other way. He accepted no credit, because he wasn't even aware that he was acting in any way out of the common. And Church and McClure and Russell and Glen-thorne and many others were unconscious adherents to the same code.

"Yes, by jingo!" exclaimed Nipper, joining the group. "Didn't I hear you talking about football? You're welcome to turn out for practice if you like, Fully. Glad to see you on the field."

"Thanks," muttered Fullwood uncomfortably.

"Absolutely," said Archie Glen-thorne, screwing his monocle into his eye. "I mean to say, shoving the old leather sphere to and fro, what? It isn't absolutely the stuff that suits the Hope of the Glen-thornes, but you chappies are great warriors at the good old pastime."

"Yes, that's all right, Fullwood," said Nipper, clapping Ralph Leslie on the back. "Turn out whenever you like. Always welcome."

"I say, it's jolly decent of you—" he began Fullwood huskily.

"Rats!" interrupted Nipper. "I'm out to get the best players, and if you've come to St. Frank's this term with the determination to play the game— Well, we'll all do our little bit to make things easy."

Fullwood turned away. He wanted to say all sorts of things, but he couldn't frame his words. For the first time within his remembrance he was experiencing the emotion of gratitude. The decency of these fellows was beyond his understanding. He could not appreciate the very simple fact that they were just their normal selves. Fullwood had always been so cynical, and at the first sign of a human touch, they responded automatically. With regard to his cousin. The news concerning Eustace Carey made no difference in their attitude towards him.

But others were different.

"You're mad, Nipper!" said Hubbard indignantly. "You can't admit Fullwood into the team after what's happened."

"Oh!" said Nipper. "I don't understand."

"About that chap, Carey," shouted Hubbard.

"What about him?"

"Haven't you seen the papers?" demanded Hubbard. "He half-murdered

somebody, and then ran off with a lot of money! The police are looking for him now—and he's Fullwood's cousin!"

"What about it?" asked Nipper quietly. "But—but— Can't you see?" asked Hubbard, aghast. "Dash it all, we Ancient House chaps can't allow a fellow like Fullwood in the junior team! He's always been a gay dog—"

"Fullwood's past is nothing to do with the matter," interrupted Nipper sharply. "If he wants to play football this term—he's welcome. Until he shows that he's not in earnest, he's at liberty to turn out with the rest of us."

"And you'll even put him in the team?" asked somebody.

"Yes, if his form's good enough," replied Nipper.

"The chap's mad!" said Merrell sneeringly. "Thank goodness I'm in the East House! We wouldn't have Fullwood there for a giddy pension! In fact, he ought to be sent away from St. Frank's! With a cousin like that in the family——"

"What on earth has his cousin got to do with football?" interrupted Handforth, glaring. "Blow his cousin!"

"But he's a thief—wanted by the police!" snorted Hubbard.

"My dear idiot, that's nothing to do with us," said Nipper patiently. "And we can't blame Fullwood for his cousin's misdeeds, I suppose? Hang it all, be fair! Fullwood can't be responsible for what Carey did at Oxford—and as far as I'm concerned I've forgotten all about it."

"Hear, hear!" said Handforth promptly. "Some of you chaps ought to be kicked! And don't be so jolly swanky, either! One of your cousins might do something shady one of these days."

"Or yours!" sneered Marriott.

"It's quite likely!" roared Handforth defiantly. "I've got heaps of cousins, but I can't be answerable for what they do, can I? All the same, if anybody starts running 'em down——"

"For goodness' sake drop the whole thing," interrupted Nipper. "Don't take any notice of these cads, Fullwood. Let's hope that yarn in the paper's wrong, and that Carey turns up trumps. There's no telling."

Fullwood shook his head.

"Thanks for the thought, but I'm afraid it's pretty hopeless," he replied. "Carey's a beast—always has been. But just because he acts like a blackguard, am I to take the blame?" he went on, facing the others defiantly. "Confound you, haven't you got any sense of proportion? I haven't seen Carey for years! What's the idea of kickin' me?"

He strode away with gleaming eyes, and Hubbard made a swift movement to get out of the way. Merrell and Marriott laughed jeeringly. But most of the others strolled out, discussing football

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE TELEPHONE.



THE Ancient House junior common-room was nearly empty when Fullwood walked in. He took his seat on one of the lounges, and sat there, trying to

straighten out his thoughts.

He was usually keen witted and quick. But so much had recently happened in direct contradiction to all his suppositions that it required a small amount of time to readjust his focus.

"By gad!" he muttered, beneath his breath. "The contemptible cads!"

He was thinking of Gulliver and Bell—of Hubbard—of Grayson—of Merrell and Marriott. He was thinking of all those fellows whom he had previously regarded as his friends. They were all members of his own set—fellows who prided themselves upon being "men of the world."

Under the acid test they had revealed their true worth.

And the others—the goody-goody juniors whom Fullwood had always held in contempt—had stuck up for him as one man! Instead of jeering and jibing, they had placed themselves by his side. And Nipper—the one fellow whom Fullwood had regarded as his bitterest foe—had severely chastised the cads for their ungentlemanly attitude.

Fullwood's assumption that Nipper was his foe was, of course, totally wrong. Nipper had never displayed any animosity towards him. But Fullwood made the common mistake of judging others by his own standards. He assumed that his own viewpoint must also be theirs. He had always hated Nipper, and he had taken it for granted that Nipper hated him. Nothing was further from the truth.

And at last Fullwood was beginning to have a glimmering of the true position. His outlook was gradually and imperceptibly changing—although to-day it had received a jolt or two that speeded up the change effectively.

His old, cynical spirit was still to the fore. He sought to find a reason for the championship of Nipper and Handforth and the rest. It seemed to him that they must have some ulterior motive—although he couldn't find one. At present he was unable to grasp the fact that just ordinary decency is not an assumed mask, but an inborn trait.

Fullwood didn't even know that he had a lot of decency himself. It had always been smothered—hidden away and deliberately kept in the background. He had thought it rather fine and manly to be different to the others. It had seemed sporting to smoke, to gamble, and to do all the other things that the "goody-goodies" refused to do.

Although he didn't know it yet, he was beginning to be a little jealous of these fellows he had formerly sneered at.

Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey came in. They were talking football with Nipper, and already a preliminary inter-House match was being fixed up. The rival skippers were soon getting down to business.

"Oh, here you are, Fully," said Pitt, as he came over. "Nipper's been telling me that you're going to take football seriously this term?"

"Yes, I think so," replied Fullwood. "It's not exactly in my line—I mean, I've been rather against football in the past. Such a fag, you know—practice, an' all that bother."

Pitt laughed.

"My dear ass, you won't call it a bother once you get down to it," he replied. "Why, you haven't lived until you've played football! Every chap ought to be compelled to—Hullo! What's that?"

He broke off as a pair of bells tinkled musically throughout the common-room. They kept up an intermittent buzz.

"It's the telephone," said Tommy Watson.

"By Jove, yes," said Pitt. "We've all got our own telephone now, haven't we? Who's going to answer it? Shall I?"

"Might as well," said Nipper. "See who the call's for."

Reggie experienced a sense of some importance as he strode across to the sound-proof cubicle in the corner. Each junior common-room now had its own telephone—a thing undreamt of in the old days.

But St. Frank's was moving with the times. Each of its five Houses had its own little network, with a central operator. The Ancient House, for example, had telephones in the junior common-room, in the prefects' room, in the Senior day-room, in all the masters' studies, and in the domestic quarters. The directors had realised that telephones are a necessity of modern life.

Pitt entered the little cubicle, and left the door open. He put the receiver to his ear, and pulled down the adjustable transmitter.

"Hullo!" he called. "This is the Junior Common-room, Ancient House."

"I want to speak to a fellow named Fullwood," said a voice over the wires. "Awfully sorry to trouble you, but if you can find him—"

"That's all right," interrupted Pitt. "He's here. I can get him in two ticks. Who shall I say?"

"Oh, tell him his father's on the line."

"All right," said Pitt. "Hang on!"

He left the box, and glanced at Fullwood.

"You're wanted my son," he said briskly.

"Your pater's on the line."

Fullwood started up and flushed. He guessed at once that his father had put through a trunk call in order to tell him some news about Carey. Fullwood knew

that the other fellows in the common room guessed the same thing. He went into the cubicle and closed the door.

"Hullo, pater!" he said gruffly. "Anythin' fresh?"

"Is that you, Ralph?" came an eager voice.

"Yes, I—"

"I'm not your father—you know that!" came the voice tensely. "Look here, old man, I want to speak to you badly. I'm Eustace, you know—your cousin!"

Fullwood nearly dropped the receiver.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT.



EUSTACE CAREY!

He was the last person in the world whom Fullwood had expected to be at the other end of the wire. For a moment his mind was in a whirl. And something told him that this wasn't a trunk call at all—but a purely local one. The voice was too distinct and clear to be travelling from "long distance."

His cousin was near the school! It was a staggering shock. Carey, the thief—the Oxford undergrad, who was wanted by the police! His actions alone had brought trouble upon Fullwood's head. Now the fellow in person had come to torture him!

"You're—you're Eustace Carey?" asked Fullwood hoarsely.

"Yes, and I want you to help me," came the voice. "You're Ralph, aren't you? You're Ralph Fullwood—"

"Of course I am," interrupted Fullwood. "I don't recognise your voice. But that's nothin'—we haven't met for years—since I was a little kid. You can't talk to me now. I'm in the Common-room—"

"That doesn't matter—listen to me!" interrupted the other.

Fullwood glanced through the glass sides of the cubicle rather apprehensively. He was acutely conscious of the close proximity of the other juniors. Teddy Long was even hovering quite near by, pretending to be carelessly examining a map. Fortunately, Handforth guessed Teddy's intentions, and lugged him away by his ear. And from this incident Fullwood gained much comfort.

For he saw Teddy Long howling, but scarcely heard him. Which proved quite clearly that the cubicle was indeed sound-proof. Nobody outside could possibly hear what was being said within. Fullwood felt better.

"It's all right—we've got a telephone-box in the room here, an' I find it's quite private!" he exclaimed. "Where are you, Carey? What on earth are you ringin' me up for? I've had enough trouble—"

"I'm in Bannington."
"Bannin'ton!" echoed Fullwood, his suspicions verified. "Look here, is it true about that affair at Oxford? I saw something in the papers this mornin'. Are the police after you?"

"Yes, confound 'em!" said Eustace Carey, his voice betraying his acute agitation. "I'm afraid to be in this infernal call-box, even! I've got money, but I daren't move—"

"The money you pinched, you mean?"

"Don't be a young fool!" interrupted Carey. "The papers got it all wrong. I took the money, but it was mine. The police are after me, and I daren't show myself in any big town. I want to get across to France, but I'm afraid to until the hue and cry is over. I must see you to-night!"

"It's impossible!" retorted Fullwood sharply. "You mustn't come here!"

"I am coming there!" insisted Carey. "You're the only fellow I can turn to, and you've got to help me. I can't go into details now, but I've got it all planned. Be outside the main gates at midnight, and I'll meet you there. Everything will be quiet then."

"I tell you I can't—"

"Never broken bounds, I suppose?" asked Carey sneeringly.

"Of course I have; but this is different—"

"If you don't meet me outside the main gates at midnight, I'll climb over the wall and find your dormitory!" said Carey. "I've got to see you—I'm desperate! For heaven's sake, give me your word! There's a confounded policeman about here somewhere—"

Fullwood made up his mind swiftly.

"All right; I'll be there!" he said curtly.

"Promise?"

"Yes."

"Thanks awfully!" said Carey eagerly. "Midnight, outside the main gates. You'll find me waiting."

Fullwood heard his cousin hang up the receiver, and the line became dead. But for a few moments Fullwood held his own receiver to his ear. He wanted time to compose himself, and he knew that eyes were upon him.

He had taken the only course possible. If he had refused, Eustace Carey would have done something desperate. It was better to see the fellow, hear his story, and persuade him to clear out of the district.

But Fullwood's nerves were severely shaken. It was startling in the extreme to find his blackguardly cousin so near by. If the other fellows got to know anything about it they would be upon him like a pack of hounds.

He left the cubicle, assuming a careless air.

"News about the prodigal?" asked Hubbard. "Has he been pinched yet?"

"Mind your own business!" retorted Fullwood curtly.

"You miserable rotter—"

"If you don't, I'll knock you down!" went on Fullwood, squaring up to Hubbard with blazing eyes. "I've stood enough of this taunting! Well, why don't you say somethin' else?"

Hubbard backed hastily away.

"All right—no need to jump down my throat!" he muttered, walking off.

Fullwood strode out of the Common-room, and Handforth gave Hubbard a glare that was meant to shrivel him. And it must be acknowledged that Hubbard actually seemed to grow a size smaller.

"What are you looking at me like that for?" he asked.

"Fullwood made a mistake," said Handforth gruffly. "It's no good threatening to knock a chap like you down. He ought to have biffed you one, and laid you flat! By George! I've a good mind to do it myself! Haven't you got any more decency than to taunt the chap?"

Hubbard turned rather pale, and left the Common-room in haste. There was something about Edward Oswald's attitude that looked very dangerous.

CHAPTER XX.

BEDTIME IN THE ANCIENT HOUSE.



BY bedtime, most of the juniors had fairly shaken down. Each fellow knew his new quarters, and his new sleeping apartment—for each fellow made it his business to find out these all-important particulars.

The only grumble of any kind—and it was one that was already dying down—came from those juniors who had formerly belonged to the Modern House—the old Modern Fourth.

Their grumble was against the new designation of their Form. It was undignified, in their opinion, to be called the Lower Fourth. It suggested that the Upper Fourth was a higher Form.

"It's all rot," John Busterfield Boots had declared. "It's a pity they couldn't think of something better than that! Why not simply call us the Fourth?"

"And what about the Upper Fourth?" asked Denny.

"It could be called the Remove," replied Boots practically. "We'd be the Fourth, and they would be the Remove. No crowing on their side, and no loss of dignity on ours."

"Better suggest it to the Head," said Bob Christine, grinning.

"I've a dashed good mind to!" declared Boots.

And he was as good as his word, too! He went to Mr. Stockdale first, and Mr. Stockdale took him to the Head. Dr. Stafford was amused, and by no means hard to get on with.

"Fortunately, it is a trivial matter," he said, after thinking for a few moments. "If you boys really want the change, there is no reason why you should not have it. This is, after all, a time of many changes."

"Then we can do as we like, sir?" asked Boots eagerly.

"I'll think it over, and let the House-masters know in the morning," replied the Head. "In any case, the matter must be decided at once, for we must start as we are going on. We cannot have any more alterations after to-day."

So Buster Boots thanked the Head and departed. He was almost certain that Dr. Stafford would agree. It may as well be mentioned that he did. Henceforth, Mr. Crowell's boys would be known as the Remove—as of old—and Mr. Pycraft's Form would be called the Fourth.

In the Ancient House, the fellows were preparing for bed under rather novel conditions. It was new to have small dormitories—one room for merely three fellows. There were some who were even against this.

"It's not half so good as it used to be," declared De Valerie, as he got undressed. "No more dormitory feeds—"

"Why not?" asked Somerton languidly. "In my opinion, it's a lot better. We can have a feed in peace, and less fear of being dropped on."

"Supposing we want to make a raid on one of the other Houses?" demanded De Valerie. "There's going to be all sorts of rivalry this term, and if we want to make a night raid—"

"Better still," interrupted the schoolboy duke. "It's only a matter of prearrangement. Just tip the fellows before going to bed, and we can all gather at a given spot at a given time. What could be better? Not half so much danger of a lot of noise and a prefect jumping on us."

De Valerie looked thoughtful.

"Jove, I believe you're right," he admitted. "I hadn't thought of it that way. And if we want to have a read after lights out, we can have one and nobody will be the wiser. It's easy enough to keep a few candles handy."

And most of the other fellows came to the same conclusions. Upon due consideration, these small dormitories were much better than the old style. They meant more privacy and were certainly more home-like.

Further along the passage, an argument was proceeding in one dormitory which would not have been permitted under the

old order of things. One 'junior, in fact, was overjoyed with the new arrangements. His two chums weren't so enthusiastic.

"There's nothing to beat it!" declared Handforth, as he tossed one of his boots across the room. "We can jaw in peace, without being interrupted, and if you fellows get too lively—"

"Steady on with those boots!" gasped McClure, as one sang past his ear. "Look at that—nearly went through the window! If we were in the old dormitory, a dozen chaps would drop on you for that!"

"That's why it's better here," said Handforth promptly. "By the way, which is my bed?"

"The one you're sitting on, of course," said Church.

"Rats!" said Handforth, getting up and examining the three beds closely. "H'm! They're all the same."

"Did you expect to find one with a silk mattress and a satin overlay, especially for you?" asked McClure sarcastically. "If you'll wait a minute, I'll go and ask Mrs. Poulter for a feather bed!"

Handforth looked at him suspiciously.

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" he retorted. "I don't like feather beds. I think I'll have the middle one," he went on thoughtfully. "Then, if there's any draught from the window you'll catch it, Church—and if there's any draught from the door—"

"I shall get it!" said McClure. "All right—we don't mind. Anything for a quiet life."

Church and McClure were quite indifferent. They readily agreed to Handforth's suggestion for the sake of peace. They tumbled into bed, thinking that the matter was settled. The beds met with their approval. They were springy and comfortable. Handforth got into his, stretched himself out, and then sat up.

"I don't know," he said slowly. "I think I'll have the bed by the window. There's nothing like fresh air, and—"

"Rats!" interrupted Church. "I'm all settled now. If you think I'm going to turn out for one of your whims—Hi! What the— Stop it, you crazy idiot!"

But Handforth had already got out of bed, and had whisked Church's bed-clothes off in one movement. They lay in a confused heap on the floor.

"Out of it!" said Handforth gruffly. "This is my bed."

Church looked at the disarranged bed-clothes, he looked at the neat centre bed, and nodded.

"All right—you can have it!" he said promptly. "I don't mind!"

He nipped in with alacrity, and McClure grinned.

"Now you can make the giddy bed again," said Church, with relish. "It's yours, so you can't grumble."

Handforth started, realising the position

"You rotter!" he ejaculated. "If you think I'm going to make your bed—" "It's not mine—it's yours!" retorted Church.

He had a vague sense of uneasiness that the second bed would share the fate of the first. And McClure was clinging to his blankets and quilt in a desperate kind of way.

They needn't have worried, however. For Fenton looked in at that minute in order to put the lights out. And Church and McClure were extremely edified by the sight of Handforth making his own bed under Fenton's directions.

day was generally strenuous—early rising, rushing about from first thing in the morning until last thing at night. And when bed-time came sleep was sound.

Fullwood himself wasn't feeling sleepy in the least. He was tired, but his mind was too active for slumber. By now Eustace Carey would be out in the lane, waiting.

"Let him wait!" muttered Fullwood. "I've a dashed good mind not to go out at all!"

He had determined not to move until midnight chimed, and for over half an hour he had sat at the window looking out upon



Even now, force had to be applied before the door could be opened. A chunk of wood from the grounds was employed to batter the portal open.

CHAPTER XXI.

AT THE HOUR OF MIDNIGHT.



BOOM—BOOM—BOOM!

Ralph Leslie Fullwood softly rose to his feet as the big clock solemnly rolled out the twelve notes of midnight.

He had been sitting near the window of his dormitory. Gulliver and Bell were fast asleep, quite unconscious of their leader's activities. They had been asleep for nearly two hours.

Fullwood had no fear that they would awaken. The fellows were always extra tired on the first night of school. Opening

the West Square. The September night was mild and calm. Only one or two lights remained within view, and Fullwood didn't fear these. There was no moon, and the darkness was friendly.

Leaving the dormitory, he crept noiselessly downstairs, and almost lost his bearings in the lower passage—for everything was still new to him. However, he managed to locate Study A at last, and it was a comparatively simple matter to open the window and slip out.

He didn't risk passing through the West Arch into the Triangle. There was a much better way of reaching the road now. With silent footsteps, he moved across the West Square, keeping to the dense shadow of

the Ancient House. Then he scrambled up the wall, and dropped over into the little private road which led round the school buildings.

He felt comparatively safe now, and he moved quickly towards Bellton Lane. Double gates barred the end, but they were comparatively low. It was the work of a moment to climb over.

The lane was black, and scarcely a sound broke the stillness. Just a faint rustle from the trees, and the calling of one or two night creatures in the distance. There was no sign of human presence. Fullwood advanced along the lane towards the main gates.

me? Do you think I haven't had enough trouble over the newspaper reports?"

"Good lor! Do the chaps here know?"

"Of course they know!" growled Fullwood. "I've had an infernal time! An' let me tell you somethin'—if anybody finds out that I've met you here after lights-out I shall probably get the sack. Breakin' bounds at night is bad enough at any ordinary time—but to come out an' meet you is worse still. You're wanted by the police, an' I'm makin' myself an accessory after the fact—"

"Don't talk drivell!" interrupted Carey hotly. "Aren't you my cousin? Dash it, blood's thicker than water! I couldn't go

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A dim figure moved out from the wall.

"Who's that?" it exclaimed softly.

"Is that you?" breathed Fullwood.

The figure approached, and resolved itself into a smallish individual in tweeds and a light overcoat. He looked no more than seventeen or eighteen, and his face was weak and almost characterless.

"Eustace!" muttered Fullwood.

"Gad, I hardly recognised you!" exclaimed the other. "You're practically as big as I am—and you must be six years younger. I remember you as a mere kid—"

"Never mind about that," interrupted Fullwood. "What have you come here for? Haven't you got more sense than to pester

home—my pater would half kill me, and then hand me over to the police! He's as hard as nails! You ought to know what your Uncle John is like! I've come to you because I can't get help anywhere else—"

"Well, we can't stand here talkin'," interrupted Fullwood. "Your voice is a bit high, Eustace. Let's walk down the lane towards the wood."

They went, Fullwood even angrier than he had been at the time of Eustace Carey's telephone-call. Personal contact with his cousin did nothing to improve his temper. The fellow was an absolute outsider. The very whine of his voice, the cringe of his

attitude, the appalling weakness of his features—all these things grated upon Fullwood's nerves.

Now that his eyes had grown accustomed to the night, he could see Carey better. Actually, he was just over twenty-one. A man! The very term seemed ridiculous to Ralph Leslie. He couldn't possibly look upon this weakling as a man. Carey's hair was fair, and he had only recently started shaving. He had watery blue eyes, and his frame was thin, and his chest was narrow. To a muscular fellow like Fullwood the other only inspired contempt.

"It's better here," said Carey, at length. "I've had the most frightful time you could imagine. All day long I've been expecting a policeman to grab me. I was in London this morning, but I managed to get down to Bannington. A rotten lodging-house in Bayswater, you know—I got there this morning, and booked a room for a week. Then I changed my mind, after thinking about you. So I came straight down——"

"Why the deuce can't you speak lucidly?" interrupted Fullwood. "What did you come here for? How in the name of all that's mad can I help you? I'm not a magician—I can't whisk you over to France with a wand!"

Carey clutched at Fullwood's sleeve.

"No, but you can do something else!" he said tensely. "You can hide me."

"Hide you?" repeated Fullwood, aghast. "You're absolutely mad!"

CHAPTER XXII.

EUSTACE CAREY'S PLAN.



FOR a moment the pair looked at one another in silence. Then Carey shook Fullwood's arm.

"I'm not mad!" he insisted. "You can hide me—and you must! I tell you, I can't go on like this! The police'll have me in no time. I'm afraid to go to a hotel—I'm afraid to take lodgings. They're on the lookout everywhere. But if you help me, I shall be safe."

Fullwood became hot.

"I tell you it's impossible!" he said harshly. "Where's your sense? Are you a blitherin' imbecile? What can I do—stuck down here at St. Frank's? There's no place in the world less likely to provide a hidin' place! Do you think I can stuff you in my Form-room desk?"

"I've got a plan all ready!" said Carey, his voice shaking with inward excitement. "Don't be funny—but listen! Of course, you can't hide me in the school—I know that. I never expected you could. In any case, it's only for a few days——"

"Only for a few days?" repeated Fullwood sharply.

"That's all—until the hue-and-cry's died down," went on Carey. "I'm not a murderer—they haven't put bloodhounds on my track! Within a week I shall be forgotten, and it'll be safe for me to move about again. But to-morrow and the next day—all this week, in fact—I shall be in frightful danger. So you've got to help me."

"If it's money you want——"

"It isn't—I've got plenty of cash!" said Carey impatiently, his voice still tense with anxiety. "I've got all the money I need."

"Yes, I forgot!" said Fullwood bitterly. "Two hundred quid! The money you pinched from that fellow——"

"It's a lie!" broke in Carey hotly. "I tell you, the papers have got it all wrong! They always get things wrong."

"Did you take the money?"

"Yes, but it's mine!" replied Carey. "That beast, Roper, won it from me at roulette—his own infernal table and wheel! And I found out afterwards that it was on the crook. So I went there and had a row with him."

Fullwood listened with deep suspicion.

"Well?" he asked. "That's not much of an admission, is it? I thought you went up to Oxford to get your 'blue.'"

"You needn't sneer—you're not so saintly yourself!"

It was a thrust that went home, and Fullwood winced. He was glad that the darkness concealed his flush.

"Go on!" he muttered.

"I went to Roper's rooms and had a fearful row with him. The beast had been drinking, and instead of listening, he went for me with a confounded ruler," went on Eustace Carey. "Nearly brained me, too. Anyhow, I got wild, and flew at him. He tripped, and went clean through the window—and crashed down on to the stones beneath."

"An' what then?"

"I don't seem to remember much," muttered Carey shakily. "I took the money out of his drawer—it was mine, anyhow—and cleared straight off. I just managed to catch the last train to London before the thing was found out. I walked about all night—in Hyde Park and other places——"

"Gad! Didn't you try to help Roper?" asked Fullwood, staring. "Do you mean to say you ran off an' left him lyin' on the stones?"

"I—I thought he was dead!" panted Carey. "I took one look at him, and he was so still that I—— Then, this morning, I saw the papers. I can tell you I was relieved."

"You needn't be," granted Fullwood. "The doctors say that he's probably a fatal case. What a fool you are, Eustace! Gettin' yourself into a ghastly mess of this sort! An' I don't mind tellin' you that I don't believe your yarn. You've faked it."

"I haven't—I haven't!" he insisted feverishly. "I tell you I haven't!"

His very vehemence was suspicious, and Fullwood was more than ever convinced. In his own mind, Ralph Leslie suspected that Carey had been drunk. Roper may or may not have cheated with his roulette wheel, but that was beside the point. Carey had gone to Roper's rooms the worse for drink, and the catastrophe was the result. A weakling of this sort could never have performed an assault unless he had been driven by liquor. The thing was obvious.

"I'll bet you were drunk," said Fullwood bluntly.

"I wasn't," panted Carey. "I'd had one or two whiskies——"

"Oh, well, we needn't talk about it," interrupted Fullwood contemptuously. "A perfectly disgraceful business, as far as I can see. It's all very well to prattle about blood bein' thicker than water, but I'm dashed if I relish doin' anythin'. You deserve to be in chokey!"

Eustace Carey shook pitifully.

"You've got to help me, Ralph!" he pleaded. "Look here—just for a week! That's all! It's as easy as A B C! I'll hide somewhere, and you can bring me some food every day. That's all. And as soon as the hue-and-cry is over I'll clear out."

"It's all very well to talk about hidin'," said Fullwood impatiently. "It can't be done so easily. There's nowhere to hide in the school, you know that as well as I do. An' it's autumn now, an' you can't live for a week in the wood."

"But there's somewhere else," said Carey tensely. "I had a good look at the place as I was coming up the lane. I've been here since ten o'clock, as a matter of fact. It's that old house at the bottom, just by the river."

Fullwood started.

"You mean Moat Hollow?" he asked quickly.

"Is that what it's called?" said Carey. "The place is empty—all barred and bolted up. Why shouldn't I be safe there?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

AT MOAT HOLLOW.



RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD was silent for a few moments.

His brain was working at its usual speed now, and in spite of his contempt for Carey, he was forced to admit that the scheme was sound. In Moat Hollow the fugitive would be perfectly safe. There wasn't one chance in a thousand of anybody going there to discover his hiding-place.

Since the infamous Mr. Creepe had

finished his school, Moat Hollow had been empty. And none of the villagers cared to go near the place. It had a sinister record, and although there was no actual talk of Moat Hollow being haunted, the country people instinctively avoided the gloomy old place.

"Well?" asked Carey impatiently.

"I hadn't thought of Moat Hollow," said Fullwood. "Yes, you might be safe there; but only for a few days."

"That's all I want."

"The police wouldn't go near the place unless they had direct suspicions," went on Fullwood. "I suppose you haven't told anybody you were comin' down here? If they suspected anythin', they might search——"

"Don't be a fool!" interrupted Carey. "You're the only soul in the world who knows where I am, and I had to tell you because I want you to help me. Look here, is it all right? Will you do it?"

"It's not so easy to decide," growled Fullwood. "How are you goin' to live, in the first place? That house hasn't been occupied for months. You can't sleep on the bare boards——"

"I thought you could get me some blankets from the school?"

"It sounds easy, but it isn't," retorted Fullwood. "I'll have a shot at it, perhaps, but I can't guarantee anythin'. An' what about food? If you think I can be dancin' attendance on you all day long——"

"No need to be so infernally nasty about it," interrupted Carey. "Who wants you to dance attendance? The thing's simple; it's easy enough for you. You'll only need to come once a day with a parcel of grub. There's bound to be water there. I don't mind what I get for these few days. But I must escape the police; I'm scared out of my wits."

"All right—wait here," said Fullwood curtly.

"Where are you goin' to?" asked the other, with sudden alarm.

"Don't you want some blankets?" asked Fullwood. "I'm goin' back to the school. I'll bring three or four if I can; but I'm not so sure about a pillow. An' perhaps you'd like some grub, too?"

"I'm starving!" muttered Carey. "I haven't eaten a thing since yesterday. Not a thing. I daren't go into a restaurant to-day——"

"All right—I'll bring somethin'," interrupted Fullwood. "You stick here, an' wait until I get back. Remember, I hate doin' this—an' I'm takin' a big risk. But you're my cousin, an' I suppose I've got to help. But if a word of it ever comes out, I shall not only get the sack, but find myself in trouble with the police."

He walked off, aware that Carey was babbling out some kind of thanks. It

wasn't often that Fullwood did anything generous. Sometimes he had been prompted to do so by instinct, but his supercilious falseness had stifled his better feelings.

Even now he was helping Carey in a grudging spirit. But he couldn't help a little sensation of satisfaction creeping into his being. Carey was down—absolutely at the end of his tether, and it was quite true that blood was thicker than water. Whatever his cousin's crime, Fullwood could do nothing else but assist him in his hour of desperation.

Ralph Leslie got back into the Ancient House safely, noting with satisfaction that every light in the school was now extinguished. Creeping cautiously up the stairs, he found his way to a big store cupboard at the end of the upper passage. He had seen it earlier—quite by chance, as a matter of fact. The door was unlocked, and he soon found a number of neatly folded blankets, and even one or two pillows. The chances were that the missing blankets would not be noticed. If they were noticed, nobody could prove where they had got to. So Fullwood felt safe in taking them.

Five minutes later he was out in the open again, hurrying down Bellton Lane with his burden. He had made a pause in Study A to fill his pockets with rolls, cheese, a tin of sardines, and a full pound of biscuits. He had even brought a small electric-torch.

"I say, you're a brick!" exclaimed Carey, as he came out to meet the other. "Blankets—pillows! I shall be fine down there, in that old house. It may be a bit lonely——"

"Don't jaw so much—take these!" interrupted Fullwood.

Carey relieved him of half the burden, and they walked down the lane towards the river. Reaching the little side road, they passed down it, and were confronted by the enormously high walls which encircled Moat Hollow. The huge gates were closed, and securely locked.

"Perhaps you thought of a way to get in, while you were examin'g the place?" asked Fullwood gruffly. "How do you suppose we can climb over?"

"Why, not tie the blankets together, and——"

"Yes, that's a good idea," interrupted Fullwood. "We'll tie them up, and hook them over one of the spikes. But I can't climb this infernal wall every time I come to see you. We shall have to fix on somethin'."

By tying the blankets together they made a rope, and succeeded in slinging it round one of the great spikes which protected the top of the wall. Within a few minutes they were safely on the other side. One

of the blankets was ripped and torn, but this was only a detail.

Moat Hollow lay before them, gloomy and desolate. At any other time, Eustace Carey would have shuddered at the very thought of remaining alone in such a haven. Pluck was not one of his chief qualities. Moat Hollow looked sinister and ghostly, and was certainly not the place for a nervous fellow to stay in alone.

But Carey was more afraid of the police than he was afraid of the dark. Just at present he was ready to hide anywhere. He stifled his inward fears, and followed Fullwood across the grounds towards the old house.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SANCTUARY.



IT was no easy task to gain admittance.

The moat was full of stagnant water, but happily one of the old draw-bridges had been left down.

Even now force had to be applied before the door could be opened. A huge chunk of wood from the grounds was employed to batter the portal open.

"It's all right—there's nobody here!" panted Fullwood, as the door gave way. "Well, we're inside. You take these blankets an' I'll lead the way with the torch. Would you rather go upstairs, or somewhere down here?"

"Better be on the ground floor, I suppose?" said Grey, looking round nervously. "By Jove, it's pretty vile in here, isn't it? Creepy and smelly, you know. All damp, and like a church-yard——"

"Don't be a fool!" interrupted Fullwood. "That's not the way to keep your nerve!"

They passed down the passage, and arrived in a small room which had been one of the living-rooms of Mr. Creepe. There were still some articles of furniture there—a small table, a chair, and even an old-fashioned couch. Dust smothered everything thickly, and there was an air of decay over the whole.

"You're lucky," said Fullwood, looking round. "This couch isn't so bad—you can sleep like a top on there. Here's the grub," he added, emptying his pockets on to the table. "You'd better take the torch, an' burn it as little as you can. The battery won't last too long. I'm off."

"Oh, look here—can't you stay with me——"

"I'm hanged if I can!" interrupted Fullwood flatly. "What more do you want? I've brought grub, I've brought the blankets, an' I've helped you to get in here! If you're

not satisfied you'll have to do the other thing!"

"Be a sport——"

"Confound you; no!" insisted Fullwood. "If somebody finds me missin' from my dormitory I shall be expelled! I've taken quite enough risks already. I'll come down in the mornin' an' see you."

"What time?"

"I don't know—as soon as I can manage it," replied Ralph Leslie. "It may be before breakfast, or perhaps I shan't get down until after lessons. When I do come I'll bring candles an' a spirit-stove, an' a supply of tea an' condensed milk—as well as other grub. Now I'll be off."

And all Carey's pleadings were in vain. Fullwood was getting very anxious. His cousin wasn't worth risking the sack for. The sooner he got back to his dormitory the better. He had already done all that could be expected of him—and more.

Fullwood walked back to the school in a strange mood.

His changing attitude towards his former chums puzzled him. As yet, he couldn't determine his own will. And now Carey had come along to complicate the problems in his mind. It was all very well to say that there wasn't much trouble. But the fugitive in Moat Hollow would require daily attention, and there would always be risks. There were plenty of eyes to spy.

As for Eustace Carey himself, he was already suffering torment.

Out in the lane he had been afraid of meeting a rural constable. He had been on edge all the time. His one desire had been to reach a safe sanctuary, where he would be secure from the police.

But now that he was within that sanctuary his feelings were mixed. He wasn't sure that the lane wasn't better. There was something ghostly about this place—something creepy and horrible. It wasn't so bad while he was eating; but after he had finished his meal the torch gave out. He was left in the darkness.

And he crouched beneath the blankets, his heart palpitating, fear strongly within him. He could hear innumerable sounds—small sounds which seemed to come from nowhere. Eustace Carey was regretting that he had come to this district at all.

In the meantime, Fullwood was getting back into his own bed. He had accomplished everything safely. Not a soul was the wiser for his midnight expedition, and he was convinced that the blankets would not be missed.

But he was almost as sleepless as Carey himself.

He felt the responsibility that had been thrust upon him. Never had he started a term so dramatically as this. On the very first day he had broken with all his former friends. But he had made up his mind that he would cut them in future—whether they cut him or not. He wouldn't even have anything to do with Gulliver and Bell.

There were no others whom he could chum with. Perhaps it was all the better. He would be alone—then there wouldn't be anybody to question him, or remark upon his movements. He would be alone.

This first day of term, too, had been an agony to him on account of the news in the paper. And now Carey was here—practically on the spot! Even Fullwood could hardly believe that his ordeal would be over in a few days. Carey would stick here—he might bring about all kinds of unlooked-for complications.

And in this worried frame of mind, Ralph Leslie Fullwood finally went to sleep. The cad of the Remove dreamed, and in his dreams he passed through all manner of extraordinary adventures.

But none of them were as fantastic as the events which were even now shaping themselves for the immediate future in real life! Eustace Carey was hiding at Moat Hollow—but developments of the most extraordinary nature were soon to burst upon Fullwood like a thunderbolt!

THE END.

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Mr EDWY SEARLES BROOKS CHATS TO HIS READERS



NOTE.—If any reader writes 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. Every letter acknowledged below has been personally read by me, and I thank each writer most heartily. But, although ALL letters afford me an equal amount of pleasure. I am reluctantly compelled to confine my individual replies to those of general interest.—E. S. B.

Have you read this week's story yet, or are you afraid to begin? It's the first yarn of the new series, and St. Frank's has now got five Houses, instead of the familiar two. But don't be alarmed. The old school is precisely the same in the main, and you'll still find Handforth & Co. in Study D. You can be quite sure that the new order of things will give me more opportunities of introducing House rivalry and keen competition in sports.

Some of you have been a bit dubious about drastic changes, as you call them. But when you get down to brass tacks, you'll find that the changes aren't drastic at all. There's nothing whatever to be alarmed about. If you've read this week's story, I'm sure you will agree with me. If you haven't read it, then buck up and start. I'm particularly anxious to get your opinions about the new St. Frank's. And what do you think of the bird's-eye view of the old school? Just what you wanted, eh? You can now read about some juniors strolling out of the Ancient House, passing through the East Arch, crossing the East Square, doubling back to Big Arch, and going through to the Inner Court. You can read such things, and then turn to the map and follow the track of things as clearly as though you were on the actual spot. That's the whole idea of the map—to give you the benefit of SEEING St. Frank's as though you were there. Now, listen! I'm going to suggest something, and I advise you to do it NOW. Cut out that map, and preserve it. I don't mean make it into jam, but paste it on a piece of cardboard, or push it in a

frame, or tack it on the wall. You'll want it later on, mark my words. And don't forget—do it NOW. Do it before you read another word of this chat of mine, and then you'll know it's done. If you neglect it, you'll only lose this week's copy, and then where will you be when you want to consult the map? As old Browne would say, "Up to the chin in the ox-tail!"

* * *

Good! You've tacked that map up somewhere by this time, so we'll continue. (Half a minute, Tom, or Elsie, or whatever your name is—I believe you've ignored my advice! If you can't find the scissors, tear it out, and trim it up afterwards). What was I going to say? Oh, about the Fourth! Towards the end of this week's yarn you'll notice that Mr. Crowell's Form will henceforth be known as the Remove—and Mr. Pycraft's Form alone remains the Fourth. How's that? Lots of you like the Remove better, so now you've got your wish. After all, the two Forms use different class-rooms they have different masters, so they might just as well have different names. Now, I've got a few letters to acknowledge, so if you haven't written to me, you can skip the next paragraph completely.

* * *

Nelson Lee Fan (Hales Owen), W. W. (Weybridge), William Sayer (Canterbury), Eric Palmer (St. Andrew's, New Zealand), True Blue New Zealander (Wellington, N.Z.), Thomas Graham (Gisborne, New Zealand), R. Anderson (Wanganui, New Zealand), Ronald S. Bagley (Knottingley, Yorks.), No. 647 (Bradford), Wilfred (Swindon), Phil Morgan-Smith (Jersey), Harry G. Payne (Liverpool), A True Blue Supporter—Romeo (Southport).

* * *

I don't like to call you a silly ass, W.W., but, after due consideration, there's no other way to describe you. You've got lots of back numbers to sell, and you don't even give me your name and address! What's the idea? Please send them both along as soon as you read this. It's a matter of general interest, because I'll bet there are all sorts of fellows who want those back numbers of yours.

Well, Eric Palmer, I'm certainly busy, but if you like to send me that story of yours I'll read it and give you my opinion of it. But don't trouble to send it all the way from New Zealand until you've had some advice from several of your elders. If they think the story is good enough, then push it along. But you'll only be wasting postage stamps, and I shall be wasting my time, if your yarn is "a schoolboy's first effort." This applies to everybody else, too. If you've written something that experienced grown-ups have praised, then I'll willingly give you my advice. But, for goodness' sake, don't send me hopeless efforts that nobody has seen except yourself.

With this week's very story, Thomas Graham, your long-desired wish has come to pass. Nipper is again captain of the Remove—the one and only leader of the St. Frank's juniors. And Reggie Pitt is well in the front, too, as he is now skipper of the West House juniors. So everybody ought to be pleased.

There are several points in your letter that need discussing, No. 647. Firstly, you want Fatty Little to the fore again. Fatty is a useful sort of junior at certain times, but too much of him would be rather tiresome, I'm afraid. Still, I'll remember your hint, and make more use of Fatty in future. I think I shall be pleasing the rest of you, too. I'm not so sure about another barring-out series, though. I think I've got something better than that in mind—but it's a bit too early to say anything yet. Between now and Christmas there will be plenty of sport in the stories, to say nothing of adventure and mystery. Particularly mystery. I'm already at work on what the Editor calls a Big Autumn Series (they'll follow these Fullwood stories now beginning), and if it's mystery you want, then I fancy I shall please you. I won't give any secrets away, but I'll tell you that I'm determined to make these new mystery yarns more thrilling than any I've given you for many a long day.

It's all right, No. 647, I haven't forgotten those other points. When the Editor and I make promises, we stick to them, and you needn't worry about the big St. Frank's map. The one published this week is only a kind of taster, as it were—a bird's-eye view of the school. The real map will come later on, and, as I have explained before, it will be in sections. Briefly, our old friend the Editor means to publish it like a serial, and when it's all complete you'll have a huge map that you can be proud of. I dare say the Editor will give you details of this when he's ready. And we haven't forgotten the Portrait Gallery, either. The Moor View girls will certainly appear, to say nothing of the various local characters whom you are

also interested in. I am quite sure you want to see a portrait of Farmer Holt, and you'd like to know what Mr. Binks looks like, and you're keen on seeing such people as Lumpy Bill, Josh Cuttle, Mrs. Hake, Tubbs, Mudford, the postman, and so on. Patience, they say, is a virtue. I wonder how much virtue you've got of that kind? You'll need a little now.

I say, Wilfred, what's the good of the Chief Officer printing his instructions on the League Application Forms so clearly if you don't read them? You've sent your Application Form to me, and I've had to pass it on to the Chief Officer. You're not the only one, either, my lad. I wish everybody would realise that this feature is just a pally chat on general subjects—between ourselves. It's a good thing I've got a sweet temper—ahem!—or all these misdirected Application Forms would decorate my wastepaper-basket, and you'd be wondering why the dickens you hadn't got your certificate. Regarding Rugger at St. Frank's, it would be popular with a few, but I'm afraid the majority would kick. (Puzzle, find the joke.) Soccer, after all, is the great winter game, so Soccer it will have to be.

Last week I mentioned something about adopting short and sharp tactics, and I've only just remembered it! That's a nice kettle of fish, isn't it? I'm almost at the end of my space, and I've been running on like a river. And what's a river but two or three Brooks? Har-har! Quite so! I know it's rotten, but you needn't cackle like that! I've got to fill this bit of space somehow, so I may as well make you suffer. The fact is, I'm downright scared of dipping into that arrears pile this week. There are lots of you expecting an answer, but there's always one consolation—you can go on expecting. It all depends upon my letter bag.

But you ask—what the dickens has my letter bag got to do with it? Ah, I reply, everything! If I get a big lot of letters to answer, I haven't got any space for the old and whiskery ones in the heap. So it's quite on the cards that some of you won't see those replies at all. I hope you won't be hard on me, and send a few bombs in your next letters. But if you don't see those answers you expect, just write to me again, and then you'll be sure of attention. Dash it all, I wouldn't let you down twice! And now that we thoroughly understand one another, I'll give myself a rest till next week. A rest? Odds typewriters and paper! What about the next story? A fat lot of rest for me—I do NOT think! Still, hard work is the best thing in life, so why should I worry?

E. S. B.

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TINKER'S QUEER ADVENTURE.

THE man in uniform raised a warning hand, and then gave a salute as the motor-cyclist came to a stop.

"Anything the matter?" asked the motor-cyclist.

"The road's flooded in Dyke Hollow, sir, and I don't think you'll get through without a wetting. If you're for London, sir, it's only an extra mile or two through Calcroft Town. Go steady through the town, for the High Street is pretty steep, and there's a ten-mile speed limit, and the magistrates are very hot stuff."

"Calcroft Town," said the motor-cyclist. "Till you mentioned it, I didn't know I was near it. Thanks very much!"

Presently the motor-cyclist, who happened to be Tinker, assistant to Sexton Blake, the world-famous private detective, found himself in familiar surroundings. He recognised Calcroft Green, the pond with the white railings round it, and the old-fashioned tuck-shop at the corner. He swung into the private road along the avenue of tall elms, crossed the bridge, and entered the quadrangle of the grand old school.

"Bindley anywhere about, can you tell me?" he asked one of the juniors.

"Pycroft's House," said the youngster; "that barracks right in front of you, with the ivy on it. If the kid's at home, he'll be in Study Nine. Upstairs and first corridor on the right. Don't go in without knocking, or you'll get something shied at you."

Tinker obeyed the instructions. A murder case, which Sexton Blake had successfully investigated, had brought Tinker to Calcroft during the previous term, and enabled him

to become acquainted with a few of the lively juniors of the celebrated school.

"Come in!" yelled a voice, as the visitor knocked; and, pushing back his goggles, Tinker entered the study.

"Why, it's old Tinker!"

There was a yell of delight. The three juniors who had just sat down to a tea of bread-and-butter, watercress, and shrimps, sprang up with outstretched hands to welcome the unexpected visitor. A chair was placed for him at the table.

"Help yourself to shrimps, old man!" said Bindley. "Got 'em from Jerry Diles, all alive-o, this morning, and Pye boiled 'em. Sorry we have to give you a cup without a handle, but our crockery is getting a bit mildewed. Well, we are glad to see you, aren't we, chaps? Fane has gone into the town to get his wig clipped, and he'll be jolly wild if he misses you."

"Staying long, Tinker?" asked Pye.

"No; I'm only running through on my bike," said Tinker. "I should like to stay a month. Jolly fine shrimps these. How are things?"

"Oh, quiet," answered Bindley. "We haven't had a good rag for ages. Old Pycroft is a bit savage at the moment, but we've got used to his tantrums. Had any fearsome, blood-curdling cases lately?"

"Like you, jolly quiet, old son; nothing doing, and no Pycroft to jump on us and keep us lively. Something may pop up at any minute, though, for we generally get some excitement after a slump. Sling me salt this way, Manners, and I'll try some of your rabbit-food, the watercress."

"Careful with it," warned Bindley. "Look at it before you bite it, or you may find yourself chewing a water-snail or some other sort of a wild beast. Manners washed this stuff, and as he was born tired, you can guess the sort of wash he gave it."

"If you only washed yourself as well as I washed that watercress nobody would recognise you," said Manners, "you'd look so jolly different with the dirt off. I wish you were staying over to-morrow, Tinker. We shall have the day off, for it's half-term, and we could have fixed up some sort of a jape together. Fane has got a motor-bike and side-car. With about five of us in that side-car, it's some joy-ride if you don't happen to be at the bottom with the other louts treading on your ears and walking over your face. Do stop till to-morrow night. There's a spare bed in our dormitory, and old Pycroft wouldn't say a word, for I know the old boy likes you."

"Shows his good taste," said Tinker; "but it can't be done this trip, and I wish it could. I'll have a day with you as soon as ever I can manage it. Sorry and all that. I've got another seventy miles to do, so I'll have another hour with you and then clear off."

The hour quickly passed, and then Tinker shook hands with Pye, Bindley, and Manners, and departed. He had just reached the bottom of the avenue with the dense Calcroft woods on either side of him, when the engine spluttered and gave out.

"Hallo," thought Tinker, "I might have guessed it! Somebody has japed me!"

His petrol-tank had been emptied, and it was quite two miles into the town, and though it was all downhill after the first mile, Tinker did not relish the idea of having the push the machine so far. He knew that a motor-bus passed the gates of the avenue about every half-hour, and he knew he could buy or beg enough petrol from the driver to take him into Calcroft Town, where he could fill up his tank.

He stood at the gate, whistling a tune and watching for the omnibus. Suddenly he heard a rustling of branches, and turned his head. For an instant he was startled to see a masked face peering at him through the screen of leaves, but only for an instant, for he was within a stone's throw of Calcroft School, and he knew that the Calcroftians were full of tricks.

The thought came to him at once that, after emptying his petrol-tank, the juniors had plotted to kidnap him and compel him by main force to stay the night at the school and spend the half-term holiday with them.

"Oh, chuck it!" he said. "I can't stop with you fellows. Don't do the masked brigand trick on me, for I must clear out. I say——"

The masked face vanished and a whistle sounded. Tinker looked the other way as two masked figures burst through the hedge and leapt down at him from the bank. A pair of powerful arms were locked round

him and a rough hand was placed over his mouth, the thumb and fingers of the hand digging into his cheeks. The next moment he was down on his back in the road with one of his assailants kneeling on his chest and stifling his attempts to shout, while the other swiftly tied a cord round his ankles and knotted it tightly.

Tinker knew that this was no jape. Many of the seniors at Calcroft had almost reached manhood, but they did not grow beards, and through his goggles Tinker saw a scrubby black beard on the chin of the rascal who was kneeling on him, a beard that could not possibly have been a false one. He struck upwards at it with his fist, and the man jerked back his head with a grunt of pain and rage, and then threw himself flat on Tinker, pinning his wrists. Finding his mouth free, Tinker yelled lustily for help, but the yell was swiftly stifled as the second man passed a handkerchief over his mouth and gagged him. Then his wrists were brought together and tied as a closed motor-car slid noiselessly along the road and stopped at the gate.

Tinker was lifted and bundled into the car just as the omnibus from Calcroft Town came round the bend of the road. The car took the side road that ran round Barren Tor, and one of his captors lifted Tinker's goggles and peered into his face. The man uttered a curious kind of grunt, and then pulled off the prisoner's cap. Then both of them peered at him and began to talk in low but excited voices. A moment later they had searched Tinker's pockets. Tinker had a few letters in his pocket in addition to his notebook, keys, and money. The car stopped and the driver got down, and Tinker could hear the three of them jabbering together in some harsh, unknown language. A minute or two later his notebook and letters were thrust back into his pockets, and he was hauled out by the shoulders and heels, and dumped into a dry ditch. The car, driven at a rapid pace, climbed the hill and disappeared over the crest.

The knots that could hold Tinker a prisoner for any length of time had to be tied with great cunning. The whole affair had only occupied a few minutes, and though he had been roughly handled he had not been hurt. He sat up in the ditch and quickly discovered that the man who tied the knots was a bungler. He got his strong teeth to the cord, after dragging the handkerchief away from his mouth, and quickly freed his wrists.

To free his ankles was quicker work; and after examining the handkerchief, which was a cheap cotton affair without either name or laundry mark on it, he used it to brush his coat. His money, keys, letters and note-book were all safe.

"A queer little adventure," he thought. "When those three guys got me they got the wrong 'un, and I'm jolly glad they soon found it out."

It was obvious that the kidnappers had made a mistake. They had been ambushed in Caleroft woods with the car waiting near, not to entrap and carry off Tinker, but some other boy for whom they had mistaken him.

"I suppose I ought to go back to the school and tell Mr. Pycroft or the headmaster about this gadget, and put them on their guard, for it's sure to be one of the Caleroft boys those three foreign louts were after," he thought. "After making this bloomer they'll be too scared to try the game on again without giving it a rest. Hallo! This is new and useful!"

and found his motor-cycle safe and sound. At Caleroft post-office he rang up Mr. Pycroft on the telephone. Though he had not heard the Housemaster's thin, high-pitched voice for a long time, he recognised it at once.

"It's Tinker speaking, sir—if you remember me. Mr. Sexton Blake's assistant, you know. The private detective, sir."

"Ah, yes, to be sure," replied Mr. Pycroft. "Good—er—good gracious, yes. I—er—I trust you have nothing unpleasant to impart, Mr. Tinker."

"Only that after I'd had tea in their study with Bindley, Pye and Manners, I got



Tinker looked the other way as two masked figures burst through the hedge and leapt down at him from the bank.

Enterprising Mr. Gollit, of Caleroft Town, had opened a branch shop on the hill for the repair of motor cars and the supply of petrol. From Gollit junior Tinker bought a tin of petrol, and asked that youth if he had noticed the number of the car that had passed about ten minutes before, but Gollit could give no information.

"I didn't even 'ear it," he said dismally; "but I don't want telling that it did go past. They all go past and never stop, and business is absolutely rotten. That can of juice and mending one busted tyre is all the trade I've done to-day."

Tinker made his way back to the avenue

collared by three masked men at the avenue gates, sir," said Tinker. "They tied and gagged me and shoved me into a car, and—"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Pycroft in astonishment. "You amaze me! They did what? Kindly—er—speak more slowly and distinctly."

"And—er—what construction do you place on this extraordinary outrage?" asked the Housemaster when Tinker had recounted his adventure.

"Only that I was the wrong chap, sir," answered Tinker. "It seems pretty plain they wanted one of the Caleroft boys, and

when they discovered I wasn't the right one they hauled me out of the car. I can't describe the car, except that it was a closed one, upholstered in grey leather, and I couldn't see the number. All three men were slight and middle-sized, and one had a thin black beard. They were foreigners, and their lingo wasn't French, German, Spanish or Italian—or Yiddish. It may have been Russian, but I can't be sure."

"Good gracious! And what do you advise me to do?"

"Tell the police, sir. They won't come again just yet, but it's perfectly plain to me that they're out to kidnap some boy from the school. Ask the police to watch for strangers lurking about. That's all, sir. It's getting late and I've a longish ride in front of me."

Tinker met with no further adventure on his homeward way. He left his motor-cycle in the garage.

"Guv'nor been round, Drewitt?" he asked the garage manager.

"No, both your cars are here, sir," answered Drewitt. "Had a spill, then? Your coat looks as if you'd taken a tumble."

"Nothing to do much damage," said Tinker. "I didn't fall, I was pushed."

Tinker crossed Baker Street and let himself in with his latch-key. Sexton Blake gave his assistant a nod through a cloud of tobacco smoke and glanced at the clock.

"You're pretty late, young 'un," he said. "Had a breakdown?"

"No; the old jigger stuck it finely, guv'nor," said Tinker. "I was shoved off my track by a flooded road and had to buzz along past Calcroft School, so I made a call there for tea and shrimps, and the kids gave me a ripping welcome."

"I expect they did, for they're a lively crowd from my recollection of them. Did you see our friend Mr. Pycroft?"

"I didn't, but I had a talk with him on the 'phone," said Tinker, "for I've had quite an odd adventure, guv'nor."

Tinker told the story of his surprising capture, and of being dumped into the ditch, gagged and bound, by the three masked strangers.

"If there's any trouble going, young 'un, you seem to find it," said the private detective, smiling. "Was it your face that made them discard you?"

"Well, I can't help my face, anyhow, guv'nor," said Tinker, "for it's the only one I've got, or am likely to get. I don't think it was my face so much, though I think the two masked beasts got a bit doubtful when they shifted my goggles and cap and took a dekko at me. If they couldn't talk English they could read it, for when they got hold of the letters I had in my pocket, they seemed to realise they'd made a big bloomer, for they stopped the car, heaved me out, and beat it. They weren't out for robbery, for they didn't

touch a farthing of my cash, though I had close on seven pounds in my wallet and pocket."

"And what was their lingo?"

"That beat me, guv'nor. I can tell German, French and Yiddish easily, and if they don't jabber too fast, I know the difference between Spanish and Italian. I think what they pattered was Russian, though I'm only guessing. I wish I'd asked Pycroft if they had a Russian boy at the school, but I didn't think of it, and just told him he'd better warn the police to watch out for strangers and suspicious characters."

Sexton Blake stretched himself lazily and yawned.

"You'd have done better to have warned the headmaster, young 'un," he said, "for if my memory serves me correctly, Mr. Pycroft is an absent-minded sort of gentleman, and has probably forgotten all about it by this time. And if the boy these fellows are trying to kidnap was about your size, it isn't likely he's with Pycroft. It's a big school, and Pycroft's is a junior House, isn't it?"

"A few prefects live there—Sixth Form chaps—but they're all English boys, or were, guv'nor. Anyhow, it's not our business. I got one smack in at the guy with the beard, but not half hard enough. Of course, I wasn't ready. They'd cleared my track, and when I saw the masked face I thought it was Bindley or Manners playing at brigands to collar me and make me step with them over the holiday. I give you my word, if I'd suspected any real mischief those louts wouldn't have got me so easily."

"I'm quite sure of that, Tinker," said Sexton Blake, reaching for the tobacco jar. "When you've had a rest and something to eat write to the Head of the school, for there may be something really serious at the back of this, and Mr. Pycroft is sure to forget."

"Right, I'll do that, guv'nor," said Tinker. "I don't think Mr. Pycroft will forget, for he seemed jolly startled and astonished, but I'll be on the safe side, and drop a line to headquarters. Now I'll see what Mrs. Bardell can do for me in the refreshment line."

A ROYAL VISITOR.

"GEE! The postman hasn't got a pain in the back bringing our correspondence this journey, guv'nor," said Tinker, as they sat down to breakfast next morning. "Instead of the usual pile, there's only one solitary letter, and that's for you."

The letter was from Sir Randolph Brayling, of his Majesty's Foreign Office. This great functionary had written it with his own hand, and so abominably that even Sexton Blake found considerable difficulty in deciphering it. He passed it over to Tinker.

"Gosh! Do I get a prize for working out this puzzle, guv'nor?" asked Tinker. "It looks as if he'd written it with a tarbrush, and then sat on it a few times to blot it. 'Dear Mr. Shift-and-Shake'—it's not that, but that's exactly what it looks like. 'Can you sausagely shave me with a ball?' Wow—you wow! 'Dear Mr. Sexton Blake,—Can you possibly favour me with a call a balloon to pay? Some fist, this, guv'nor! 'Can you possibly favour me with a call about noon—to-day—Wednesday. I wish to insult you conquering a ghost pouring out butter.' Gee! Some handwriting! I think I'll go with you, guv'nor, for I'd like to see a ghost pouring out butter. 'I wish to consult you concerning a most important matter. With kind regards, faithfully yours, Randolph Brayling.' I got the last bit in once."

"And quite correctly, young 'un. I suppose I shall have to find out what he wants, though I'm not too keen on working for the Foreign Office, as it usually means a rush abroad."

"If you take on the job, put me in it, too," said Tinker. "I hate to be left behind to twiddle my thumbs and kick my heels."

"I'll attend to that," said Sexton Blake. "Give me another cup of coffee, please. It must be important, or Brayling wouldn't have written to me privately, and he says himself that it's most important. 'Have you anything special on to-day, young 'un?'"

"Nothing at all with no letters to answer. I'll look over the newspapers to see if there's anything worth clipping out and filing for reference, and if there's not a regular batch of letters by the next post, I'm free. I'll wait till you come back, anyway, and then we'll know what's doing."

"Very well, young 'un. If a client comes along in the meantime don't make any promise to deal with the case, however interesting it may be, till you know what arrangements I have made with Sir Randolph."

"I'll watch it, guv'nor."

At about twenty minutes to twelve Tinker telephoned to the garage for the car, and at twelve o'clock exactly the bell of the consulting-room rang loudly, and Tinker opened the door.

"Hallo, Tinker, you queer young weasel," said the visitor. "How are you this morning as ever was?"

On the doormat stood a young gentleman, wearing, in addition to a neat grey flannel suit, a straw boater, with the badge of Calcroft School, and a broad grin. To Tinker he was a complete stranger. He was a good-looking boy, in spite of his red hair, and not unlike Tinker in build and features, except that Tinker was slimmer.

"You're pretty familiar, ain't yer?" asked Sexton Blake's assistant. "I suppose we've been introduced, and all that sort of thing, as you're so handy with my name, though I don't seem to remember it. Are you sure you've come to the right house?"

"I hope so, but I'll ask Blimp. Hi, Blimp! Waddle up and show yourself! Is this the right house?"

"It says Sexton Blake on the door, King," answered a gruff voice, and Blimp mounted the stairs and presented himself.

"This is Blimp, Tinker," said the boy with the Calcroft badge on his hat, "otherwise Sergeant Coggs, late of that gallant regiment the Barshires, and performer of odd jobs at Calcroft, when he wasn't too tired to do them. I have now honoured him by taking him into my service."

Ex-sergeant Coggs was a huge man, with a complexion that reminded Tinker of mahogany-coloured sandpaper. His eyes were blue and bright, and though he held himself erect in a soldierly way, he had long, sloping shoulders and a tremendous reach of arm. He saluted smartly.

"Morning, sergeant," said Tinker. "Now I've been introduced to you, perhaps you'll introduce me to your boss."

"Mr. Tinker, the King," said the gruff-voiced sergeant. "The King, Mr. Tinker. Gawsh! That's easy. The King."

Blimp retreated into the background, his gorilla-like arms folded across his chest.

"The which?" asked Tinker.

"If your education hadn't been neglected, you'd be down grovelling on your marrow-bones instead of answering silly questions," said the youngster. "I'm a king right enough, though I don't want to brag about it. Are you going to keep us all day on your giddy doorstep?"

"Come in, if only for the sake of the badge you are wearing," said Tinker; "and if you can pull my leg, you're welcome to try. You Calcroft chaps are all prize japers. Who sent you along? Bindley or Fane, or any of Mr. Pycroft's crush."

"No. I came right on my own. You wait outside, Blimp, and see that nobody pinches the handle off the door."

"I think you'd better bring him inside," said Tinker. "If a client came along the sight of your chap might frighten him away."

"He's not what you'd call handsome," the visitor admitted, beckoning to Blimp; "but as I'm not thinking of trying to win prizes at beauty shows with him, I can put up with it. Quite a nice room you have here, walls, ceiling, and windows complete, and a real fire-place. Seems a pity to leave a happy home like this to get shot, doesn't it, Tinker?"

"Oh, tell me about it," said Tinker. "I know it's half-term at Calcroft and a holiday, so if you've begged the day off and have come for an afternoon in London, and some of my pals at the school told you to give me a call, let's hear about it."

"The fact is, I've cleared out of Calcroft!"

(What does the boy mean by saying he has cleared out? And why has he been introduced as the King? Read next week's exciting chapters of this fine new serial and you will learn.)

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE

(All communications to the League should be addressed to the Chief Officer,
The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway
House, London, E.C.4.)

My Dear Leagueites and Readers,—

As I write, the League is just nine weeks old. It is still only an infant with a membership approaching 2,000. We all hope when you read these lines it will have grown many times this size. But it no use sitting still and hoping—or even moping. We must first of all realise that unless there is not a decided improvement in the number of readers joining up, we shall have to wait nearly a year before the 10,000 membership is reached—and that is assuming an average of 200 new members every week. So far, I have not had one solitary letter from a reader saying that he does not want the League; whereas, there are 2,000 enthusiastic members who are really keen about it. There must be, then, a large proportion of readers who are either indifferent, or who are meaning to join some time or other in the dim and distant future.

A girl reader, whose initials are "E. M.," has made it her business to find out from her friends, who are readers of the "N.L.L.," why they do not join the League. The answers she usually receives are as follows: "I would join the League, but why should I have to purchase another copy of the 'N.L.L.,' besides the one I generally buy, in order to give away to a non-reader? Surely, if I gave my own copy away after reading it, that should be enough? I can't afford to buy two copies of the 'N.L.L.' I am prepared to give my copy of the 'N.L.L.' away each week to a different non-reader, but not to buy another copy as well as my own. I can't afford it."

There is a great deal in what "E. M."

says. Pocket-money, I know, is not so plentiful in these days, and it is far from my wishes that the League should cost my readers a halfpenny more than is necessary. The extra copy, as I have already pointed out, does not cover the cost of enrolling a member, though it represents a contribution towards this cost, which, I am sure, none of my readers who can afford it, will grudge. For the reader who cannot afford to buy an extra copy to give to a likely reader, there is no reason why he should not introduce the "N.L.L." to his new reader by lending his copy on condition that the new reader will (if he likes the Old Paper) buy next week's issue for himself, and let his introducer have the Form filled in as required. "Where there's a will, there's a way," goes the old saying, and if there are any readers who have a will to join the League but not the pocket-money to buy an extra copy of the "N.L.L.," I hope I have shown them a way in which they can overcome that difficulty.

O.O., F.M. 141 wants to know what is going to happen when there are a great many O.O.'s in one district, and if that will make any difference to an O.O., such as himself, who offered his services before the League started. Every member cannot be an O.O., but every member can have an opportunity of attaining that post. It all depends on his capacity as a leader and an organiser. I shall have more to say on this important topic next week.

Your sincere friend,

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

SOME ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

- (1) Getting to know your fellow-readers from near at home to the most distant outposts of the Empire.
- (2) Joining local sports and social clubs affiliated to the League.
- (3) Entering for competitions run for the benefit of members.
- (4) Qualifying for various awards by promoting the growth of the League.
- (5) Opportunities for contributing short articles, stories, and sketches to the League Magazine.
- (6) Space for short notices and free adverts. for members in the above Magazine.
- (7) Advice on choosing a trade or calling in life, on emigration to the colonies, dependencies, or abroad.
- (8) An employment bureau for members of the League.
- (9) Tours to interesting places in England and on the Continent, camping-out holidays, and sea-trips, specially arranged for members of the League.

AS SIMPLE AS A B C.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership: Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from TWO copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms fill in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C by running the pen diagonally across both Sections. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

Member Applying for Bronze Medal: It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms are needed, and these must be taken from copies of the latest issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY at the time when the forms are sent in. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out

Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided the forms are taken from the latest issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY at the time when the forms are sent in.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medal can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B, which has been revised for this purpose. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when the League reaches the required number of members, they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver or gold one, according to the number of introductions with which they are credited.

These Application Forms can be posted for $\frac{1}{2}$ d., provided the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

IMPORTANT.—Complete and post off this form before the next issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY is on sale. It then becomes out of date and useless.

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 13. Sept. 19, 1925

SECTION

A

READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.

Being a regular reader of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY," I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare myself to be a staunch supporter of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and that I have introduced Our Paper to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with Membership Number assigned to me.

SECTION

B

MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS.

I, Member No.....(give Membership No.) hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me.....(state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.

SECTION

C

NEW READER'S DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY," which I will read with a view to becoming a regular reader of this paper.

(FULL NAME).....

(ADDRESS).....

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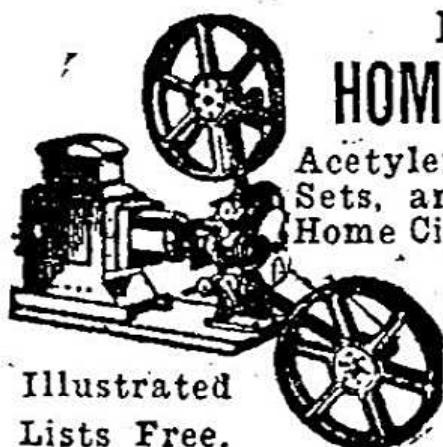
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