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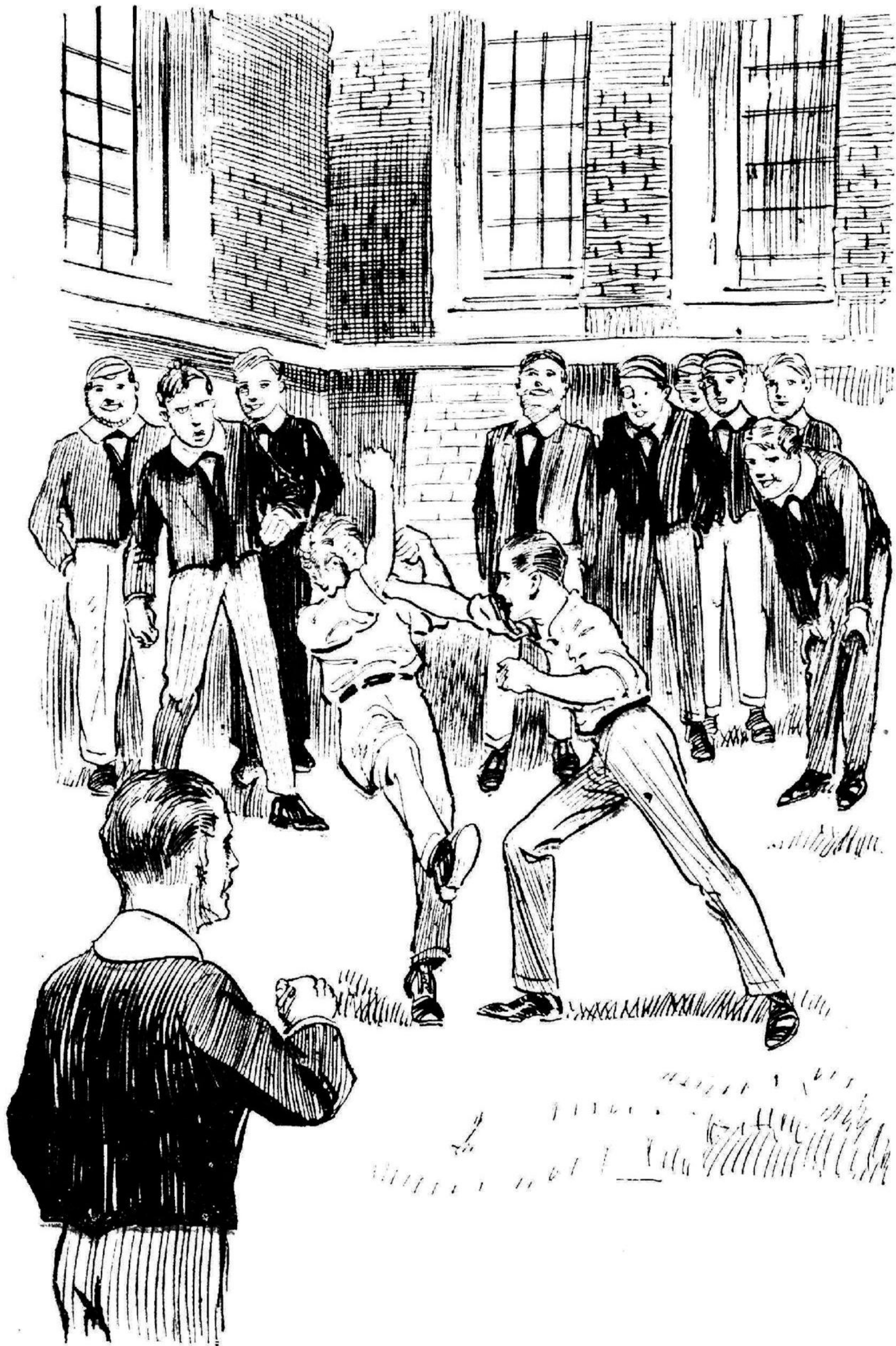
THE RASCAL OF THE REMOVE

The first story of a gripping new series of school life and mystery yarns, featuring the Boys of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 72.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

September 17th, 1927.



The fight was a fiasco. Castleton had come to St. Frank's with the reputation of being a clever boxer, but he knew absolutely nothing about the noble art. Crash! Reggie delivered a smashing blow to the chin, and Castleton sprawled backwards on to the grass, there to be counted out by the jeering juniors.

Opening Story of a Stunning New Series!

THE RASCAL OF THE REMOVE!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

A thrilling yarn of school life and mystery at St. Frank's, introducing Nipper, Handforth, and many other popular juniors —also a new character, Alan Castleton.

CHAPTER 1.

The New Boy.

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH inspected the photograph critically.

"Don't think much of the chap!" he said. "Who is he?"

"Can't you read?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"Of course I can read, you funny ass!" frowned Handforth. "H'm! 'A. Castleton.' That tells me a lot, doesn't it? Who the dickens is A. Castleton, anyhow?"

"He's the new fellow for the Remove," replied Pitt. "Coming this afternoon, I understand."

"Oh!" said Handforth in a different voice.

They were standing in the lobby of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, and Church and McClure were interested listeners. Reggie Pitt had just come in, looking for Nipper, and he had encountered the chums

of Study D on the way. Naturally, Handforth had wanted to know Pitt's business.

It was a Wednesday, and, therefore, a half-holiday. Handforth's expression changed as he looked at the photograph more closely. This fellow was coming to St. Frank's that afternoon, and Handforth remembered that he had nothing particular to do when lessons were over. It might be just as well to give this new kid an inspection.

"Oh!" he repeated. "He's a new chap for the Remove, is he? All right, Pitt, my son, you can leave him to me."

Reggie Pitt grinned.

"If it's all the same to you, Handy, I'll take charge of him when he arrives," he replied calmly. "No need for you to butt in."

"Rats!" said Edward Oswald frowning. "If there's a new kid coming into the Ancient House——"

"But there isn't!" interrupted Pitt.

"What!"

"There isn't!"

"Why, you silly ass, you just said——"

"I said he was coming into the Remove—and so he is," replied Pitt sweetly. "But Mr. Stokes tells me that he's going to board in the West House. So that rather lets you out of it, Handy."

Handforth glared.

"Why didn't you tell me so at first?" he demanded. "Do you think I'm interested in your silly new kids? Who is the fellow, anyway? I told you I didn't think much of him, as soon as I set eyes on the photograph!"

"He's not so bad, Handy!" said Church, as he passed the photograph to McClure.

"Decent looking merchant!" agreed Mac.

It wasn't actually a photograph, but a cutting from one of the high-class illustrated weeklies. As a matter of fact, Mr. Beverley Stokes, the Housemaster of the West House, had given it to Reggie Pitt earlier that morning, when he had first told the West House junior skipper of the new boy's coming.

"He must be somebody pretty important, mustn't he?" asked Church curiously. "It isn't every chap who gets his dial into the illustrated weeklies!"

"By Jupiter!" said McClure, staring. "Did you read what it says under here, Handy?"

"Under where?"

"Under the photograph, of course."

"I've got something better to do!" replied Handforth tartly.

"But, my dear chap, you don't seem to realise the importance of this new kid!" went on Mac. "He seems to be a pretty big bug, in his own way."

"Rather!" agreed Reggie Pitt. "We can do with him in the West House. An all-round sportsman, by the sound of it. The more we get of that sort, the better."

"Let's have a look at the photograph!" said Handforth authoritatively.

It was handed back to him, and he read the wording underneath the photographic reproduction:

"A. CASTLETON.

"Above is a portrait of A. Castleton, late captain of Walsing Grammar School. Castleton is to be congratulated on his wonderful record. Under his able leadership, Walsing Grammar School won every match of the past season, home and away. In general sports, too, this able young skipper excels, for he took first prizes in running, jumping and swimming. In addition, he gained the boxing championship of the school for three years in succession, and is considered to be the best footballer that Walsing ever produced. He is the son of Mr. Graham Castleton, J.P., D.L., of Castleton Manor, Swanfield, Suffolk."

"By George!" said Handforth.

"He seems to be a bit of a wonder, doesn't he?" asked Pitt genially.

"And he's going into the West House?" demanded Handforth aggressively.

"Yes!"

"It's all rot, of course!" said Handforth. "A chap like that ought to come into the Ancient House. What's the good of bringing him to St. Frank's, and then shoving him into a rotten old barn of a place like the West House?"

"A barn is better than a rabbit-hutch!" retorted Pitt coolly. "But, still, if you don't like it, Handy, you've easily got a remedy."

"And what is it?" asked Edward Oswald.

"Why, you can go to the Head, and tell him that he doesn't know his own business," replied Pitt, grinning. "He may listen to you, or he may not. Somehow, I rather think he'll reach for his cane and give you a good swishing. But you can take the risk if you like. I don't mind."

"You funny ass!" said Handforth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! What's all the fun about?" asked Nipper, strolling round the corner from the Remove passage. "Hallo, Reggie! First time I've seen you this morning! How goes it, old son?"

"Fine, thanks!" replied Pitt. "We're just talking about the new chap for the West House. Here's his photo, if you'd like to look at it."

Nipper inspected the photograph, and read the words beneath.

"H'm! He seems to be a bit of a scorcher!" he said. "I expect you'll put him in the footer eleven, won't you, Reggie? Your side's a bit weak, as it stands. You can do with some new blood."

Reggie Pitt frowned.

"Weak, is it?" he replied. "That's all you know! You wait until the House match on Saturday. We're going to wipe you fellows up!"

Handforth laughed mockingly.

"You poor, pitiful ass!" he said wittingly. "Have you forgotten that I'm going to be in goal for the Ancient House?"

"No, I was just remembering it!" replied Reggie calmly.

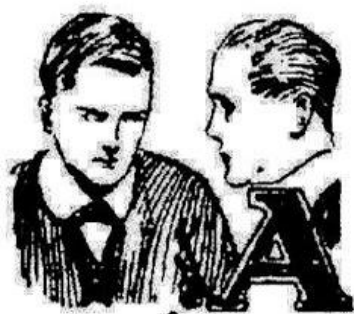
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All right—cackle away!" said Handforth darkly. "But wait until Saturday! If any of you West House chaps get a goal I'll eat my footer boots, laces and all! And if the new chap gets a goal I'll make another meal off my jersey!"

And Handforth passed outside, taking Church and McClure with him. He didn't seem to be particularly impressed with Castleton's splendid record. But Reggie Pitt was very much impressed, and he was determined to give the new boy a real hearty welcome.

CHAPTER 2.

Two A. Castletons!



CASTLETON climbed out of the taxi, followed by his father, Mr. Graham Castleton, J.P., D.L. And then A. Castleton got out also.

No, there's no mistake about this.

To be exact, there were three Castletons altogether—Castleton senior, and his twin sons. Alan Castleton and Arthur Castleton were so much alike that a porter, who happened to be standing near, and who had recently indulged in a pint of the best, started violently, and passed a hand over his eyes.

"Crikey!" muttered the porter. "Thought I'd got 'em!"

Mr. Castleton, a tall, refined-looking gentleman, with a genial, clean-shaven face, paid the taxi-driver, and turned to his sons.

"Come along, boys," he said cheerily. "Plenty of time. You both take the same train, don't you?"

"Yes, dad, as far as Abbotsford," replied Arthur. "We change there, and I go to St. Jim's and Alan takes another train for St. Frank's."

"A beastly rotten bore!" complained Alan. "I don't see why I should go all the way round by Abbotsford? Why can't I take one of the main line trains, direct to Bannington? It'll be a lot quicker."

"Don't you want to travel some of the way with your brother?" asked Mr. Castleton quietly.

"Oh, what's the difference, pater?" asked Alan. "We've got to part when we get to Abbotsford, haven't we? We might just as well part here, at Victoria."

Arthur looked uncomfortable.

"Oh, cheese it, Alan!" he said. "Let's stick to the original plan, and both take the Abbotsford train. There's lots we want to talk about on the way down."

"All right, then," growled Alan. "But I hope we get a compartment to ourselves. I don't like people staring and gaping at us as though we were two freaks out of a blessed circus!"

Their father had passed ahead, and he did not hear this muttered comment of Alan's. But Arthur heard it, and he nudged his twin brother.

"Chuck it, Alan!" he muttered. "You know dad doesn't like you to talk in that way."

"I can't help it," said Alan ungraciously. "I'm fed-up this morning already. We've been stared at until we ought to be blue in the face!"

They went into Victoria Station and found that their train was waiting in the platform. There was still ten minutes to go, and after the twins had secured a first-class compartment to themselves, Mr. Castleton entered and smiled upon his two sons.

"Well, boys, you're going to big schools

this time," he said. "I'm not going to preach to you, and I'm not going to give you any advice that you might resent. But you must remember that St. Frank's and St. Jim's are very different to the grammar schools you have previously attended. They are two of the biggest colleges in the country—two of the most important. I shall expect you to acquit yourselves well."

"We'll do our best, dad," said Arthur enthusiastically.

"Rely on us, pater!" said Alan, yawning.

"You went to different grammar schools, and now you are going to different public schools," continued Mr. Castleton. "I really think it is the better way. Each of you is thus enabled to hoe his own row, so to speak. There would only be confusion for the two of you if I sent you both to St. Frank's—or both to St. Jim's."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Alan. "I must say, pater, you've got the right idea. Whenever we come home for the holidays everybody stares at us and points at us and makes things generally uncomfortable. If we're at different schools there can't be any of that rot."

"I don't see why you should call it rot, Alan," said his father. "You must remember that you and Arthur are very much alike. Indeed, I have been told that you are really the record twins. No two have been so identical as you two. And, really, to be perfectly candid, I find it difficult to identify you myself—until you commence speaking."

"And does that give us away, dad?" smiled Arthur.

"Generally," replied Mr. Castleton quietly. "I am afraid Alan is developing a somewhat cynical outlook. He doesn't possess your sunny nature, Arthur—"

"I thought you weren't going to preach, pater," interrupted Alan unpleasantly.

"No, I'm not," said Mr. Castleton. "I hope you don't think I was preaching, Alan. Well, I wish you the best of luck in your respective schools. I hope you will write to me if you are in any difficulties and let me know of your little troubles; in any case, I shall be interested to hear from you whether you are in trouble or not. And I need hardly say that your mother will expect regular weekly letters."

"I'll write twice a week, dad," said Arthur promptly.

"Same here!" yawned Alan. "Tell the mater to expect 'em."

There was, indeed, a vast difference between the two twins once they started speaking. In repose they looked identical. But when Arthur spoke his face lit up, and his whole expression was one of good-nature and sunny likeableness. But when Alan opened his mouth a trace of a sneer showed, and his whole bearing was affected by a supercilious manner. These two brothers were alike in form and alike in features, but vastly different in nature!

"Hitherto nobody at your respective schools has known that you were twins," said

Mr. Castleton. "I really think it is better that the matter should be kept secret. Some people have a prejudice against twins. And schoolboys, I know, are very harsh critics. If the fact is disclosed it may affect your careers. There may be prejudices against you simply because you are twins. So I am sending you to these different schools, just as I sent you before, and each of you will have a full chance. You will be at school independently, and you will go your own ways. Well, good luck, boys! Good-bye, and may you each do well!"

He climbed out of the compartment, and then chuckled as he remembered something. He withdrew his wallet and gave two five-pound notes to each of his sons.

"I have an idea that the first week at a new school is a rather expensive business," he said drily. "When you want some more just let me know. I have made all arrangements, of course, with your respective House-masters for your regular weekly allowance. But all boys like a little extra now and again, don't they, eh?"

"Stand clear of the train, sir!" warned an inspector as he walked by.

"Good-bye, dad!" said Arthur eagerly.

He leaned out of the carriage window and kissed his father—an action which only brought a sneer on to Alan's face. For his own part, Alan contented himself with a lackadaisical wave of the hand.

And so the twins started off to St. Frank's and to St. Jim's.



CHAPTER 3.

Welcome, Stranger!

ALAN CASTLETON tossed his cigarette-end out of the window, and sprawled over the seat.

"Rotten compartment!" he muttered. "These local trains give me the pip!"

He was in the train from Bannington to Bellton, and he knew that he would soon reach the little village station which would be his destination. He was rather looking forward to his arrival at St. Frank's. It was one of the greatest public schools, as he knew, and everything would be fresh to him. Hitherto he had only attended a grammar school.

He reviewed the events of the morning, and was glad that he had parted from Arthur at Abbotsford Junction. Arthur had gone on to St. Jim's, and Alan's interest in his twin brother ceased at that moment. As a matter of fact, he was only too glad to get rid of Arthur. Arthur was altogether too goody-goody for him. Arthur was fond of cricket and football and general sports. And Alan regarded these pastimes as an utter bore.

To be quite frank, Alan was several kinds of a young rascal.

He was fond of games, certainly, but not the same kind of games as Arthur. Alan's idea of a game ran more in the direction of billiards or bridge or solo-whist. His eyes had sparkled somewhat as he had noticed the Bannington race-course from the train. He told himself that he would be able to sneak off occasionally and attend some of the races. Alan was rather keen on race-meetings, and his knowledge of form concerning the popular horses of the day would have surprised many a bookmaker. In his own way, Alan Castleton was something of a "blood."

"Thank goodness I'm on my own now!" he muttered as he watched the fleeting scenery. "It would have been absolutely sickening if Arthur had come to St. Frank's with me. Nothing but stares from everybody, and I should have had him round me morning, noon and night with his rotten growls and grumbles. I never could do a dashed thing without Arthur butting in and complaining. He's too infernally strait-laced. What on earth's the good of living unless you can have a good time? And, by gad, I mean to have a good time at St. Frank's!"

He felt the brakes being applied, and very soon afterwards the train drew to a clattering standstill against the picturesque little platform of Bellton Station. Arthur opened the door of the first-class compartment and walked out. As far as he could see there was only a solitary porter in view—an aged individual who came hurrying forward.

"Nobody here to meet me by the look of it!" muttered Alan. "What's the giddy idea? Hasn't the school got a motor-car of any kind?" He looked at the porter. "Anything waiting outside for me?" he added.

"Not as I know of, young sir," replied the old man. "They don't usually send down from the school if a new young gent comes. I take it as you're for St. Frank's, sir—"

"Then you take it right," said Alan. "Who do I give my ticket to?"

"Me, sir, thank ye kindly."

Alan handed the ticket over and walked out of the station. He took his bag and surprised the old porter by handing him half-a-crown. Alan was always lavish in his tips. On more than one occasion he had found it very useful to be liberal in this way.

"Measly lot of rotters!" he told himself as he set out from the station yard and entered the old Bellton High Street. "Not a soul to meet me! I half expected that some of the fellows would gather round—just to rag me. But I know what to do with ragers. They won't get the better of me in a hurry!"

He knew that he was booked for the Remove. He knew also that he was to enter the West House. Mr. Castleton had arranged all these matters earlier in cor-

respondence with Dr. Stafford, the Head of St. Frank's.

Not that it mattered to Alan which House he went into. He didn't care a rap.

He gazed rather disparagingly upon Bell-ton as he walked through the village. It did not impress him very much.

"Dead, miserable sort of hole!" he decided. "Only one or two mouldy shops, and not even a picture theatre. Why the dickens do they put schools in these out-of-the-way corners? Just like the pater to send me to a place like this!"

He made an inquiry from one of the loungers outside the George Tavern, and was directed up the lane towards St. Frank's. And so he walked on, and got his first view of the great school as he turned a bend in the road. He could see the great clock tower and the other picturesque buildings of St. Frank's. At last he arrived at the gateway, and stood there looking into the wide Triangle, with the West Tower on one hand and the East Tower on the other. And there, straight ahead, was the School House, with Big Arch and a glimpse of Inner Court beyond.

"Not so bad after all!" murmured Alan. "Rather a decent-looking place, as a matter of fact. I didn't expect it to be quite so impressive as this. Hallo! Here come the lads!"

Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey had just emerged from the West House, and they paused for a moment to glance at the new fellow. At the same moment Handforth & Co. came out of the School House. They, too, paused. Then with one accord the five juniors started walking across the Triangle towards the newcomer. They could tell at once that he was the new boy. They had seen his photograph, and they recognised him.

At least, they thought they recognised him.

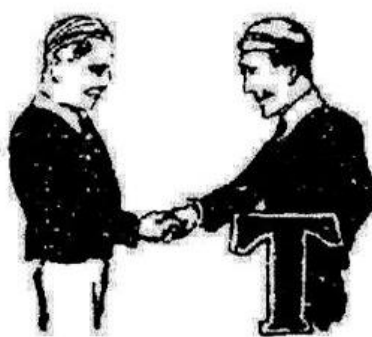
Actually, they had seen the photograph of Arthur Castleton—the cricketer, the footballer, the all-round sportsman! How were they to know that they were now looking at his twin brother? How were they to guess that Alan Castleton didn't care a snap for football, or cricket, or any other kindred game? He was so exactly like the photograph that they accepted him without question—and they accepted Arthur's record with him.

"Welcome, stranger!" said Reggie Pitt genially. "You're Castleton, I suppose? Good man! Put it there!"

He shook hands warmly.

"Thanks!" said Alan. "Pleased to meet you."

"I'm Pitt—skipper of the Juniors in the West House," went on Reggie. "I was coming down to the train to meet you, but I didn't expect you to be here until the second afternoon train. Sorry I neglected you, old man!"



CHAPTER 4.

A Little Mistake!

HERE was such a warmth in Reggie Pitt's greeting that Alan Castleton could not help feeling gratified. His former irritability went, and he smiled good-naturedly upon the juniors who surrounded him. These chaps weren't so bad, after all.

"That's all right!" he said. "I wasn't exactly expecting a brass band to come down to the station, any old how. We must be thankful for small mercies."

Handforth pushed himself forward.

"So you're Castleton?" he asked. "I'm Handforth!"

"That's fine!" said Alan, nodding.

"What do you mean—fine?" asked Handforth suspiciously. "Have you ever heard of me, then?"

"Never in my life!" replied Alan. "I presume you must be somebody famous?"

"It strikes me you've got too much to say!" growled Edward Oswald, who had an idea that the new boy was being "fresh" with him. "So you're the marvellous chap from Walsing Grammar School, eh?"

"What!" said Alan, with a start.

"You're the merchant who is the best footballer that Walsing ever produced!" went on Handforth. "You're the boxing champion? First prize winner in all other giddy sports! Well, Castleton, I must say you've got a pretty good record. It's a pity you're going into the West House. I shall see if I can't get you transferred to the Ancient House before the end of the week."

"That's very kind of you," said Alan. "I didn't expect to be in such demand!"

He was startled—and showed it somewhat, too.

"You're looking a bit scared!" grinned Pitt. "What's the matter? Frightened by your own record?"

Alan shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, you mean about the cricket and the footer?" he asked casually.

"Yes. You're something of a terror at sports, it seems."

"Oh, it's nothing," said Alan, with a wave of his hand. "But I'd just like to know how you got your information. Somebody seems to have been telling tales out of school!"

Pitt produced the cutting from the illustrated weekly.

"Here you are, with your doings all tabulated!" he said, with a chuckle. "So, you see, it's no good trying to hide your light under a bushel, old man. We've got you all tabulated here, as I just remarked."

Alan took the photograph, and smiled inwardly.

It was very much like him—indeed, it was a photograph of him, in a way, since Arthur was his exact counterpart. But Alan knew that there was a mistake. These fellows were taking him for his twin brother! Well, why

should he interfere? If they chose to make such a blunder, it was their funeral—not his!

He now understood why they had been "all over him" as soon as he had entered. He could see the type they were—and they weren't exactly his type, either! These fellows were lovers of outdoor sports. And Alan wasn't at all keen on it himself.

He decided to keep up the deception.

Sooner or later, no doubt, the St. Frank's juniors would know the truth. But what did it matter to him? Alan was a reckless youth, and he rather enjoyed the prospect of fooling these fatheads thoroughly. He would never give any information about his twin anyhow—so he couldn't see what harm could be done. They might discover that he wasn't a champion footballer, or a marvellous cricketer, but they would never be able to solve the actual mystery.

"You'd better come along with me, Castleton," said Reggie Pitt. "I'll show you to your study, and escort you over the House—just so that you can have a look round. I'll introduce you to some of the other chaps, too, and after that you can go along to the Housemaster, and have your jaw with him. You'll find old Barry one of the best chaps under the sun."

"Barry?" repeated Castleton.

"Mr. Beverley Stokes, our Housemaster," said Reggie. "We always call him Barry, for short. A sportsman."

"Here, wait a minute!" said Handforth. "I want to have a few words with the new chap before you cart him away!"

"Sorry! Can't stop!" said Pitt briskly. "You'll have plenty of chances to have a few words with the new fellow another time, Handy. The afternoon's getting on, and once you start there's no stopping you. Come on, Castleton, my son! Don't take any notice of Handy!"

"I won't!" said Alan, nodding. "I didn't mean to, anyhow!"

He walked off, and Handforth glared.

"Did you hear that?" he demanded, turning to Church and McClure.

"Yes," said Church. "Cheeky ass!"

"You ought to slaughter him, Handy!" said Mac.

"I will slaughter him!" roared Handforth. "And I won't waste any time over it, either. I'll go straight along, and——"

"Better go easy!" advised Church. "Old Barry Stokes is in the West House lobby. You can't very well slaughter the new chap in front of his own Housemaster!"

"Rats!" said Handforth, frowning. "I suppose I shall have to wait!"

Handforth was famed for his particular brand of recklessness, but he was not so foolish as to "slaughter" the new boy in front of Mr. Beverley Stokes.

Alan was very cool as he shook hands with the Housemaster, and there was an air of assurance about him which Barry Stokes did not quite appreciate. He liked new boys to be at home during their first hour, but Alan

was rather too self-assertive. He seemed too sophisticated for Mr. Stokes' liking.

"You can come along to my study and have a little chat later on," he said, with a nod. "Pitt will show you round the House now—and take you to your study. Castleton is to share Study S, Pitt, with Pippinton. I'll leave it to you to introduce him."

"That's all right, sir," said Reggie. "It's about time old Pippy had a study mate, anyhow. He needs waking up a bit!"

"You are certainly right there!" said the Housemaster drily.

He nodded, and went off.

"One of those young, athletic beggars!" said Alan. "The sort of master who keeps you up to the scratch, eh? I don't like that kind much. Too jolly nose!"

Reggie looked at the new boy curiously.

"You're a stranger, so you don't understand," he said kindly. "But just let me give you a tip, Castleton. Don't say anything against Mr. Stokes in the hearing of the West House chaps. Old Barry is one of the best under the sun—and if you run him down you're liable to get smashed. Come along, I'll introduce you to Old Pippy."

And they went into the Remove passage, and entered Study S.



CHAPTER 5.

Companion For Old Pippy.

THE RIGHT HON. LORD PIPPINTON was sound asleep when Reggie Pitt ushered Alan Castleton into Study S. Not that there was anything unusual in this. Old Pippy was seldom in any other condition.

Over in the Ancient House, Archie Glen-thorne was popularly supposed to be a bit of a slacker. But Archie was an absolute bunch of electric live wires compared to Lord Pippinton.

"Wake up, Pippy!" sang out Reggie genially. "Here's a new companion for you!"

"By gad!" said Alan, staring. "Have I got to share a study with—that?"

"Oh, he's all right!" grinned Pitt. "One of the most harmless chaps under the sun—not at all bad when you get to know him. Pots of money, and always in a kind of trance."

"Trance?" repeated Alan. "Do you mean that he's mentally affected, or something?"

"Not exactly that!" chuckled Pitt. "The poor chap can't help it—he just wanders about, living in other spheres. Even in the class-room he's just the same. Old Crowell tears his hair over him sometimes."

Alan decided to wait until he got more acquainted with his study mate. There was certainly one very great advantage in having Lord Pippinton on the spot. "Tons of money." That expression of Reggie Pitt's had interested Alan exceedingly. It might



For an instant Lord Pippinton saw the black shape that was pressed against the window. Two baleful, evil-looking eyes were glaring at him—next moment the mysterious thing had vanished!

be very useful to have a study mate who was all over cash.

Lord Pippinton was sprawling on a luxurious lounge, with his mouth wide open. He was a fair-haired youth, with a fresh complexion, and with a chin which tried hard to make itself apparent, but gave up the struggle half-way. His hair was so fair that it seemed to be almost white. A more harmless specimen of humanity would have been difficult to find.

"Hi!" bawled Reggie. "Wake up, slug-gard!"

"Eh?" gasped his lordship, sitting up. "What? Oh!"

He sat up, blinked at Reggie Pitt, and then stared at Alan Castleton.

"Oh!" he repeated. "So here, that is, we are! I mean, what?"

"My stars!" muttered Alan.

"This is Castleton, your new study mate, Pippy," said Reggie. "Pippy—Castleton. Meet one another!"

"Oh, rather!" said Lord Pippinton, extending a feeble hand. "What's this? I mean, what's all this? To be exact, why?"

"You hopeless chump, I explained it all to you this morning!" said Reggie. "I told you there was a fellow coming into your study, and I gave you his name, and warned you to be ready to receive him."

Lord Pippinton started.

"Oh, did you?" he said. "Oh, rather! Of course, Castleton! So this is the chappie

himself? By Jove! Somewhat topping! The new chap, and all that! Wonderful!"

And Lord Pippinton, having done what he considered to be everything necessary, lay back on the lounge again and closed his eyes.

"He's like that!" grinned Pitt. "You mustn't take too much notice of him. In fact, you'll hardly notice him round the place. Well, I'll leave you alone for five or ten minutes, if you like—and then come back and show you the rest of the House. You'll need to be introduced to your bed-room, anyhow."

"Bed-room?" repeated Alan. "I suppose you mean dormitory?"

"Same thing," said Pitt. "But at St. Frank's we don't sleep in ordinary dormitories. You'll share a bed-room with old Pippy. We mostly sleep three in a room, you know, but now and again there are only two in each."

"By gad, that's rather good!" said Alan. "Better than all being herded together in one room. Thanks, Pitt. See you later, then?"

"Yes, in about ten minutes," said Reggie, as he went out.

Alan looked round the study, and was duly impressed. All the furniture had been bought by Lord Pippinton, and money was absolutely no object to this wealthy young scion of a noble House. This particular study was about the best in the whole junior passage in the West House.

"Pretty decent digs!" murmured Alan. "But I'm not so sure about this fellow. To my mind, he seems to be half-loony. A born idiot, by the look of him!"

But Alan was very pleased. He didn't care a rap about Pippinton's brain power. He was a fellow with plenty of money. Just the study-mate he had wanted! In fact, it might be all the better if Pippy proved to be a half-wit. It was so easy to get cash from such people!

Reggie Pitt, of course, believed that Castleton was a sportsman and a thoroughly decent sort. He thought that he could be trusted with a study-mate like the innocent Lord Pippinton.

In point of fact, Reggie had deliberately suggested to Mr. Stokes that Castleton should be put into Study S. For it was high time that Pippy had somebody to look after him. And who better than this valiant from Walsing Grammar School? He was obviously of the right stuff. Anybody with a record like that couldn't be anything else. Unfortunately, Pitt had confused Arthur's record with his twin brother's! If he had known anything of Alan's reputation, he would have placed him as far from Lord Pippinton as possible!

Alan grinned genially.

"It seems to me that I've landed on something soft!" he murmured. "In fact, to me this looks all right! Wake up, Pippy, my son, and let's have a chat!"

"Eh?" said Lord Pippinton, as he felt a hand on his shoulder. "What? Oh, it's you again! How are you? I mean, still here?"

"Yes, I'm still here," said Alan. "Let's get acquainted."

"Rather!" said old Pippy. "But aren't we acquainted, old thing? I mean, I rather thought we were! Didn't we shake flippers, and all that?"

"That was only formal," said Alan. "Let's get really friendly. By the way, could you happen to change a five-quid note for me?"

He produced one of the fivers which his father had given him, but Lord Pippinton shook his head.

"Frightfully sorry," he said. "Can't be done."

"Broke?" asked Alan.

"Eh?" said Pippy. "Well, hardly! I'm a bit short—just a bit. But nothing much. But I've got nothing smaller than tenners in my wallet—tenners and a couple of twenty-fivers. Blessed nuisance, if you know what I mean."

Alan Castleton knew what he meant, and his eyes were gleaming.

said that he was short of cash! Obviously, the chap was simply rolling in money!

"I like St. Frank's!" murmured Alan with a grin. "Gad, I had no idea that I should fall into such a downy spot! This beats the mouldy old Grammar School into a cocked hat!"

He proceeded to look round the study with greater interest, for Lord Pippinton had gone off into another of his trance-like conditions. He was sitting in the lounge, half-awake and half-asleep, like somebody who had suddenly been attacked with suspended animation.

The door opened, and Reggie Pitt looked in.

"Come along!" he said. "I'll take you up to your bed-room, if you're ready."

"Thanks," said Alan. "They do things pretty well at St. Frank's, don't they?" he went on. "This study is pretty decent!"

"Yes, you're lucky!" said Pitt. "You mustn't imagine that all the studies are like this one. But old Pippy is a millionaire, practically, and he doesn't care how much money he chucks about. You ought to consider yourself in clover, Castleton."

"Why?" asked Alan, as they went out into the passage.

"Because I persuaded old Barry to put you into this study," replied Pitt. "You see, I'm trusting you to look after old Pippy. He needs somebody about the place. He's one of the most helpless customers breathing. You'll keep your eye on him, won't you, and give him your protection?"

"Leave it to me!" grinned Alan. "I'll look after him all right!"

"I knew I could rely upon you," said Pitt.

But he gave Alan rather a sharp glance. There had been something in the new boy's tone that he did not quite like. And, from the very first, there had been something in Alan's whole attitude which struck a jarring note on Pitt's sensibilities. Reggie was a very keen judge of character, and more than once he had wondered if he was doing the right thing. Then he remembered that photograph from the illustrated weekly—and the eulogistic wording underneath it. Possibly, he was doing the new chap an injustice. He was obviously made of the right material, or he couldn't have been such a sportsman at Walsing Grammar School.

Alan had tea in Study K with Pitt and Grey, and they made him very welcome. And Alan, for his part, was very careful to be on his best behaviour, and he made a rather more favourable impression. Later on in the evening, Reggie Pitt went over into the Ancient House, and found Nipper in the junior common-room, chatting with Handforth, Fullwood, and one or two other fellows.

"How's the new man getting on?" asked Nipper, as Pitt joined them.

"Oh, he's quite at home already!" said Reggie. "He seems to have plenty of confidence."

"Too much confidence!" said Handforth, frowning. "I think he ought to be taken down a peg or two."



CHAPTER 6.

A Bad Impression.

IN all innocence, Lord Pippinton had told Alan the very thing he wanted to know.

So this chap had nothing smaller than tenners on him! And he had

"Oh, I think he's all right," said Reggie. "I've had a doubt now and again. But we mustn't judge too soon. Anyhow, we know that he's a great boxer, a great cricketer, a great footballer, and a great runner."

"In fact, a great sportsman all round," said Nipper.

"Exactly," said Pitt. "Why don't you give him a trial in the junior eleven at once, Nipper? That's what I came over to ask you. If Castleton is keen on it, he ought to be encouraged."

"He'll have plenty of encouragement," said Nipper. "But I'm not putting any fellow into the junior eleven until he has been tried out. I'll see how he shapes at practice."

"I've a good mind to give him a chance in the preliminary House match to-morrow afternoon," said Pitt. "The elevens are being released at break to-morrow afternoon, aren't they? That'll give us time for a match—West House against Ancient House. I think I'll play Alan."

"What is he—a forward?" asked Fullwood.

"Yes—he plays inside-right," replied Reggie. "I've had a few words on the subject with him already—although I've made him no promise. What do you advise, Nipper?"

"My dear chap, I leave it entirely to you," said Nipper promptly. "He's in your House, and you're skipper over there. Do just as you think best."

"Well, I shan't risk much," said Reggie Pitt. "Old Trotty has got a bad cold, so I can put Castleton in his place."

"Hallo! Here comes the man now!" said Handforth, glancing at the door.

Alan Castleton strolled in as though he owned the whole building.

"Thought I'd just have a look at some of the other Houses," he remarked casually, as he walked in. "I suppose we're allowed to wander about as we like, aren't we?"

"It seems like it!" said Nipper. "You're perfectly welcome, of course."

"I've just decided to play you in the House match to-morrow afternoon, Castleton," said Reggie Pitt. "How will that suit you?"

"Fine!" replied Alan promptly.

Nipper frowned, and glanced at Reggie.

They said nothing, but Handforth was rather more outspoken and blunt.

"You seem to take it as a matter of course!" he growled. "Aren't you going to thank Pitt for giving you a chance on your very second day at St. Frank's? Who do you think you are, anyhow?"

Alan looked at him coolly.

"Well, I'm supposed to be a pretty decent footballer," he replied. "I don't see why I shouldn't be given a chance in a House match. Why not? The sooner I shake down the better."

"That's all very well," said Handforth, "but you've got too much to say for a new kid! If I were Pitt I wouldn't give you a chance like that. You might have the decency to thank him, anyway!"

Alan bowed to Reggie Pitt.

"Thanks awfully, most gracious captain!" he said with mock servility. "This honour is so great that I am duly awed."

"Don't be an idiot!" said Pitt sharply.

He didn't like the new boy's manner. He didn't like his supercilious attitude at all. But perhaps it was only his way. Perhaps at heart Castleton was quite all right. In any case, it wasn't fair to judge him too hurriedly. And nothing could alter the fact that he had a fine record. Pitt remembered that always. His surprise would have been great if he could have known that he was attributing sports honours to Alan which the latter did not deserve in one whit.

Alan strolled out of the common-room with his hands in his pockets, and he was followed by many hostile glances.

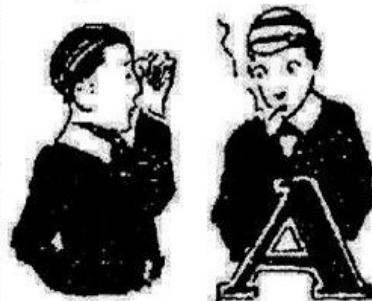
"Cheeky ass!" said Fullwood, frowning. "You ought to take him down a peg or two, Pitt. I wouldn't stand that sort of stuff from a new kid."

"Oh, give him a chance!" said Reggie good-naturedly. "He talks too much, and he's too self-assertive. But we all have our little failings, haven't we?"

He walked out, and Handforth snorted.

"If you ask me, Pitt is too jolly soft with that new chap!" he said aggressively. "I reckon I'm a pretty good judge of character, and if Castleton is a sportsman, then I'm a Zulu!"

And for once in his life Edward Oswald Handforth had hit the nail on the head!



CHAPTER 7.

A Ticking-off From Archie!

LAN grinned to himself as he strolled about in the dusk of the Triangle. He was feeling very contented. Things were going well. Indeed, they were going much better than he had ever anticipated.

"So I am going to play in the footer match to-morrow!" he chuckled. "That's good! I've always fancied myself as a football player. Thanks, Arthur, old man, for your good services!"

He chuckled again. But for that photograph and the resultant confusion he would never have had that offer from Reggie Pitt. Alan knew it well enough. But he had promptly accepted the offer because he knew that it would look very peculiar if he refused it. Moreover, he was quite keen on the game. He had never been brilliant at football, but why shouldn't he play at St. Frank's? Why shouldn't he get right into the team on his very second day at the school? There was a big strain of vanity in Alan's composition, and he held football in such contempt that he considered that any idiot could play it. Constant and persistent

practice made him sick. He hadn't touched a football for months. But he was quite sure that he would be able to give a very good account of himself. Alan's opinion of his own capabilities was very flattering.

"Yes, everything is going O.K.," he murmured as he lounged behind the gymnasium, and took out his cigarette-case. "Smoking strictly prohibited, eh? Oh, well, I shall be safe enough here. I expect they're just as strict as they were at the Grammar School. There's no tolerance nowadays. Smoking ought to be allowed generally, then nobody would want to smoke at all."

He lit up and leaned against the gym. wall while he pondered over the recent events. But he had hardly taken two puffs before a figure came round the angle of the little building and paused. The newcomer was Archibald Winston Derek Glenthorne, of the Ancient House Remove. Archie was taking a little evening stroll, not because he liked it, but because Phipps, his man, had suggested it as a cure for slight indigestion. And as Archie always took Phipps' advice, he was indulging in the exercise.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated, staring.

For a moment Alan thought about throwing his cigarette on the ground and stamping on it. Then he hesitated. Why should he? This fellow was only a junior, and he would probably join him. In his previous school Alan had been associated with fellows who all indulged in surreptitious smoking.

Archie came up, he adjusted his monocle, and then gave Alan a straight, searching look.

"Odds shocks and surprises!" he ejaculated. "I mean to say, dash it, you're the new chappie!"

"Right first time!" nodded Castleton. "And who do you happen to be?"

"I'm Glenthorne—Glenthorne of the Ancient House," replied Archie with dignity. "Kindly allow me to remark, old Gorgonzola, that smoking is a pretty mottled kind of pastime!"

Alan grinned.

"One of your little jokes, eh?" he said. "Care to have a cigarette?"

"Good gad, no!" replied Archie. "I mean to say, absolutely not! To be precise, absolutely not with a lungful of emphasis."

"Just as you like," said Alan, taking another puff.

"But, dash it!" protested Archie. "I mean, it seems to me, you foul blighter, that you're not such a sportsman as we imagined. Decent chappies don't lurk behind the gymnasium smoking like this! It's frightfully bad form, Castleton. I mean to say, it isn't done!"

"Cheese it!" said Alan. "You can't spoof me like that!"

"You mottled chunk of murk!" replied Archie frigidly. "Why, dash it, you're no better than Wallace! It isn't my way to lecture and all that sort of rot, but you'd better not let Pitt see you at this game.

He'll jolly soon chuck you out of his Eleven! A chappie can't be a ripper at football and smoke at the same time. You surely didn't do this sort of foulness at Walsing Grammar School?"

Alan began to realise that he had made a mistake. He threw his cigarette down and stamped on it.

"Sorry!" he said with assumed earnestness. "I was an ass!"

Archie thawed.

"Well, old thing, I am glad you realise it," he said less severely.

"I only took it up recently," went on Alan. "Silly game, isn't it?"

"Absolutely!"

"You seem so shocked that I'll reform from this minute onwards," went on Alan coolly. "The fact is, I rather expected that all you chaps would smoke at St. Frank's. One of my little mistakes. You see, I just wanted to be in the fashion."

"Then let me assure you, old cheese, that it is decidedly against the fashion amongst decent chappies to smoke at St. Frank's," replied Archie promptly. "Wallace and Gulliver and Bell and those bounders do it, but——"

"That's all right!" interrupted Alan. "I apologise. I can see that I've made a mistake, and I won't smoke in future. You'll keep mum about this, won't you? A new chap must learn the ropes, you know."

Archie Glenthorne beamed.

"Right as rain, old article!" he said, smiling. "But don't do it again, will you?"

"Never!" promised Alan.

"It's a frightfully good thing I spotted you," said Archie. "I suppose any chappie is liable to put his foot in it like that, what? I mean, coming to a new school and all that sort of stuff. Good man, Castleton—stout chappie!"

For Alan had taken out his cigarette-case and had emptied its contents on the ground. He then crushed the cigarettes under his foot, and laughed.

"I'll throw the cigarette-case itself over the hedge when I go out for a walk next time," he promised. "Thanks muchly for the tip, Glenthorne. I shall know in future."

He strolled away, and Archie Glenthorne was satisfied. But then it didn't take much to satisfy Archie!



CHAPTER 8.

Finding His Level!

STUDY A in the Remove passage of the Ancient House was looking rather blue when Gulliver walked in. There were two hasty movements from the two occupants, and Gulliver grinned.

"It's all right!" he said. "Only me!"

"You silly idiot!" snapped Bell. "Why

couldn't you cough or something? I've chucked nearly a whole cigarette into the fire!"

"Sorry!" said Gulliver. "I was thinking about the new fellow—Castleton, of the West House. I've got some interestin' information."

"Oh?" said Bell. "We don't want to hear anythin' about Castleton, do we, Wallace?"

The third occupant of the study yawned and shook his head.

"I don't care a snap about the fellow," he drawled. "Dry up about him, Gulliver!"

Albert Gulliver frowned. He didn't quite like the tone of this newcomer. For the Remove had another new boy in the person of Gordon Wallace. And this young gentleman had already slipped into the position that Bernard Forrest had recently occupied. He was, in fact, the self-appointed leader of Study A, and Gulliver and Bell did not possess sufficient assertiveness to squash him.

Gordon Wallace was not a stranger to them, and that was one reason why they accepted him so meekly. In fact, they had known him for many months, and had played many games of bridge and nap with him. For until a week ago Gordon Wallace had been at the River House School, only a mile or two distant. And Wallace was on very friendly terms with all the local book-makers, and with all the shady "pub haunters" of the district.

At the River House, Wallace had not been entirely happy, owing to the fact that the Hon. Aubrey de Vere Wellborne was the recognised leader of the smart set, and Wallace rather fancied being a leader on his own account. So he had jumped at the opportunity of coming to St. Frank's. His parents had been agreeable, and a vacancy had occurred at the great college—and Gordon Wallace had arrived. And he had naturally chummed up with Gulliver and Bell, whom he had long known. The rest of the Remove had soon discovered Wallace's real character, and nobody had taken much notice of him.

Indeed, he was regarded as a second Bernard Forrest by the Remove in general. Gulliver and Bell had lost their original leader, and now they were on the same terms with Gordon Wallace. In many ways Wallace was the very counterpart of Forrest, the cad who had been drummed out of St. Frank's only a short time before. Wallace was of the same build as Forrest—he had the same supercilious manner—and he was just as great a rascal. Gulliver and Bell were feeling quite at home nowadays.

"We don't want to have anythin' to do with that fellow, Castleton," said Wallace gruffly. "He's not our sort!"

"Don't you be so sure of that," said Gulliver. "I believe he is."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I was round by the gym five minutes ago, and I happened to spot this new chap smokin'. He didn't know I was lookin', of course."

"Oh!" said Wallace slowly. "You saw him smokin', did you? Sure of it?"

"Positive," replied Gulliver. "But before I could go up to him Glenthorne butted in and ticked him off. He threw all his cigarettes away. But I've an idea that he was only doin' it to pull Glenthorne's leg."

Wallace looked thoughtful.

"It wouldn't be a bad idea to find that new chap and sound him," he said. "I hadn't given him a thought, because I believed him to be one of the goody-goody sort. I can't stick chaps of that type. But if he smokes that's a good sign. Supposin' we round him up and invite him into this study?"

"That's not a bad idea," said Bell, nodding.

"You won't have much difficulty," said Gulliver. "I think he's still out in the Triangle."

"Good!" said Wallace briskly. "We'll go now. No time like the present."

The cads of Study A went out, and, sure enough, they found Alan Castleton in the Triangle. He was on the point of going into the West House, and he was in a rather thoughtful mood.

He had discovered that it was considered to be "doggish" to smoke, and he knew that he would have to go warily.

"It's all very well to pose as a great footballer, and all those other things, but it seems to be rather difficult," he murmured. "I shall soon get fed-up with this sort of thing if it keeps on. Hang it, I don't want to be mixed up with the good fellows! I can't stick being good! Might just as well be dead!"

He walked out of the gloom into the brilliance of the West House lobby, and then he heard a hail from the rear.

"Just a minute, Castleton!"

He turned and found Wallace & Co. on the steps. They were in the full light from the open doorway, and Castleton looked at them rather curiously. Perhaps he recognised the fact that he was in the presence of kindred spirits. Birds of a feather flock together, and some sort of instinct told Alan that these three belonged to the same flock as himself. They were dandified, they possessed certain affectations, and they did not look at all "good." Alan took to them at once.

"Hallo!" he said. "Want me?"

"Yes, Castleton," said Wallace. "We always like to be polite to a new fellow. We're Ancient House chaps—Study A, Remove passage. Care to come in for a few minutes? My name's Wallace, and these two chaps are Gulliver and Bell."

"Oh!" said Alan, looking at them more curiously than ever.

He remembered Archie Glenthorne's words. Archie had warned him against Wallace and his pals! These were the fellows who smoked! Alan was quite certain that he would like them.

"That's very decent of you," he said genially. "Yes. I'll come along to your

study with pleasure. It's nice to get acquainted."

"Good enough," said Wallace. "Come right in."

And so they returned to the Ancient House and went back to Study A. As they entered, two juniors came round the angle of the passage, and stared at the vanishing figures. The pair were Nipper and Reggie Pitt.

"See that?" said Nipper quickly.

"Yes," growled Reggie. "Castleton has just gone into Study A with Wallace and those other cads. Confound the chap! What's his game?"

"Just making himself pleasant, I suppose," said Nipper.

"He'd better not be too pleasant with Wallace & Co., or I'll have a word with him," said Pitt grimly. "I'm not so jolly sure of this new man, Nipper. I don't like the way he's going on. In fact, between you and me, I've got an idea that he's a bit of a fraud. Still, I'll give him his chance. I'll see if his performances back up his reputation. If he's a good footballer, he'll have a place in the West House Eleven, and if he possesses any sense he'll soon find out the character of Wallace & Co., and drop them like hot bricks."

Nipper nodded.

"Yes, we'd better leave him alone for a bit," he said. "It isn't wise to interfere with new fellows. Let them find their own level—that's the best policy."

Within Study A, Wallace was taking out a cigarette-case.

"Of course, smoking is strictly forbidden, really," he grinned. "But we can do it now and again in the privacy of our studies. Not much fear of a prefect buzzin' along. Have one?"

"Thanks!" said Alan. "This is a piece of good news."

He was beginning to enjoy himself. He had found congenial company. And when Wallace proceeded to pull out a pack of cards, Alan was more pleased than ever. At the end of half an hour he had come to the conclusion that Wallace & Co. were just the friends he wanted. They were chaps of his own breed. Their tastes were his tastes.

"I say, what a darned shame I'm not in the Ancient House!" he said regretfully. "Are there any of your sort over in the West House?"

"Afraid not," replied Wallace coolly. "They're a mouldy lot over there. We hardly ever enter the place."

"Well, how about coming over to my study to-morrow evening?" invited Castleton. "We might have a jolly time, eh?"

"What about Pippinton?" asked Gulliver.

"Oh, he's all right," said Alan, with a grin. "The fact is, I thought we might have a little game, you know. Pippinton is rolling in money, by what I've seen. Wouldn't it be a good chance to relieve him of some of it?"

Wallace chuckled.

"Just what I was thinkin'!" he agreed. "The trouble is we've never had a chance

to get over into the West House, and Pippy is too darned lazy to come here."

"And if he did come Pitt would only interfere," said Bell. "It's a lot better for us to go over there."

"Won't Pitt butt in?" asked Gulliver dubiously.

"Let him try it!" growled Alan. "It's my study, and I'll do as I like in it, and if Pitt shoves his nose in I'll soon send him about his business. We might have a rubber of bridge."

"We'll see!" said Wallace smoothly. "Don't forget there'll be five of us. It might be better to have a real gamble—somethin' like banker, or pòntoon."

"Any old thing you like!" said Alan genially.

Wallace & Co. were gratified. This new man was a bit of a lad! Evidently he was a dark horse!



CHAPTER 9.

The Eyes of Mystery I

ALF - AN - HOUR later, Reggie Pitt opened the door of Study S and looked in.

"Thought so!" he muttered, frowning.

Alan Castleton had not returned. Lord Pippinton was quite alone, doing his prep. Prep. was a necessary evil, and even Old Pippy had to do it. He glanced up wearily at Pitt.

"It's too thick," he complained. "Absolutely, it's too thick."

"What is?" asked Reggie.

"This frightful prep. business," said Old Pippy. "I mean, all work and no play sort of thing. Makes a chap dull, what? Don't you think they ought to cut prep. right out?"

"You'll never be dull from the work you do, my lad," said Reggie, with a chuckle. "Sometimes I'm inclined to agree with you about prep. It's a beastly interference in the evening, isn't it? But still, what's the good of grumbling? It's got to be!"

"Couldn't we put it delicately to old Stokes?" suggested Lord Pippinton.

"We could!" agreed Reggie. "But old Stokes might put it to us with a cane—and I don't think he would be delicate, either. No, Pippy, we've got to accept these things with a stoical calmness. By the way, seen anything of Castleton since tea?"

"Castleton?" repeated Pippy vaguely.

"Your new study mate."

"Oh, ah!" said old Pippy. "Castleton—what! The chappie who came in here this afternoon? Haven't seen him. Shouldn't know him if I did see him, if it comes to that. I don't know the chappie."

"All right. It doesn't matter," said Pitt. "I expect you'll know him before long."

"Oh, rather!" agreed his lordship. "But I am afraid he'll be a beastly disturbance. I

mean, dashing in just when I'm peaceful and quiet. I expect he'll barge in during the next ten minutes—just when I'm having a rest. I always need a rest after prep. I feel absolutely washed out, you know—absolutely washed out!"

And Old Pippy tottered over to the lounge and sank down upon it, sighing deeply.

Pitt went out, frowning slightly. Castleton, no doubt, was still over in the Ancient House with Wallace & Co., and Pitt didn't like it a little bit. In ordinary circumstances, he wouldn't care a toss what the new fellow did. But he had already offered to play him in the House match on the following afternoon. And Pitt was always very strict with his footballers. Yet he didn't care for the idea of going over to the Ancient House and routing Castleton out. Perhaps it would be better to let things run on, and to see how Alan shaped in the match.

And while Reggie thought thus, Lord Pippinton went off into one of his trance-like conditions. He lay back on the lounge, neither asleep nor awake, but sort of midway between.

He didn't know how long he had been in this condition, but it suddenly struck him that there was a kind of sound at the window. He didn't know what the sound was, but he knew that it disturbed him. A kind of grating noise, as though somebody were attempting to open the window stealthily. Lord Pippinton gave a start and glanced round.

He had switched off the electric light, but there was plenty of glow from the merrily-blazing fire. And when Lord Pippinton looked round at the window he started again—this time with some violence.

For he could see a form outside—a queer, peculiar-looking figure. It was hunched on the window-sill, black and almost shapeless against the night sky.

For several moments Old Pippy sat there, staring, wondering what that shape could be. Then the scratching came again, and he saw a faint and indistinct movement.

"Rummy!" said Old Pippy. "Oh, rather! A bit of a nuisance when chaps come scratching at windows, I mean."

He got up from the lounge with some reluctance, and decided that he had better make an investigation. He was in no way alarmed. He was only annoyed because he was being disturbed.

He went across to the light switch and pressed it down, his gaze fixed on the window. For an instant he saw that black shape—saw it very distinctly. But the fact which impressed itself most upon his mind was in connection with the eyes.

Lord Pippinton shivered.

The eyes! Two baleful, evil-looking eyes! They stared at him from beyond the glass. Never had he seen such eyes, and for a moment he was too startled to act or to even think. He blinked, and when he opened his eyes again there was nothing.

Absolutely nothing!

The form had gone—the eyes had gone!

With a husky shout, Lord Pippinton went over to the window and flung it open. The night air came in and fanned his cheeks. He stared dazedly out into the square, and felt a curious sensation of unreality.

"I say!" he called. "I say, is anybody there, dash it?"

There was no reply. And Lord Pippinton, looking up and down and across at the lights of the Ancient House, could see no dim figure. That mysterious visitant had completely and absolutely disappeared. But how? Who had it been? Where had it gone to? There was something uncanny about it, something sinister and mystic. Pippy was not frightened, but he was thoroughly startled. The mental picture of those baleful eyes was still before him. He heard a sound beside him, and he spun round, with a jump.

"Hallo!" he gasped. "What the—— Oh!"

"It's only me, you ass," said Reggie Pitt. "I just looked in again to see if Castleton had come back. What's the matter with you, Pippy? I'm not a ghost! Why are you staring at me like this?"

"It's dashed rummy!" said Lord Pippinton, in a strange voice.

Reggie looked at him closely.

"What's rummy?" he asked. "Has anything happened, Pippy?"

"That's just it," said his lordship. "I can't understand it, Pitt. Those frightful eyes!"

"Eyes?" said Pitt. "Which eyes?"

"The eyes at the window!"

"What the dickens——"

"A minute ago!" said Lord Pippinton. "I was on the lounge, you know, doing nothing—resting, to be exact—and I heard a scratch at the window—a kind of rummy sort of noise."

"Well?"

"So I switched the light on, and there was a shape out there—a sort of kind of figure, if you know what I mean," went on Pippy vaguely. "And there were two eyes—you know, eyes! Big things that glared at you. Or, I should say, glared at me. Do you follow?"

"It's as clear as mud," said Pitt. "But go ahead!"

"And when I opened the window there was nothing!" went on Pippy. "Absolutely nothing! Not a chappie in sight! Somewhat rummy, and all that sort of business, isn't it?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Pitt, grinning. "It's not so rummy."

"I shall be frightfully glad if you'll explain it," said Old Pippy eagerly.

It was very seldom that Lord Pippinton was as rational as this. But the scare he had received—the way in which he had been startled out of his customary calmness—had shaken him. He looked at Reggie Pitt rather anxiously.

"My dear old chap, it's as simple as winking," said Reggie. "You've been dreaming!"

"Oh, no!" said Pippy. "Absolutely I haven't! The shape was there—and so were

the eyes! Big thing, Pitt—horrid-looking eyes!”

“Don’t be an ass, Pippy,” said Reggie. “You’ve admitted that you were lolling on the lounge, and that’s good enough for me. You heard funny, scratching sounds, you saw a peculiar shape, and then there were baleful eyes looking at you through the window. And yet, when you went to the window, there was nothing there! My dear old lad, the thing’s obvious!”

“Oh, but, really——”

“Yes, really!” smiled Pitt. “You must have eaten something for tea that didn’t agree with you. The simple truth is you’ve had a bit of a nightmare. Sheer imagination, Pippy—sheer imagination. Take my advice, and forget all about it!”

Reggie went out, completely convinced that he had hit upon the right solution, and he forgot the incident completely. But Lord Pippinton went back to the lounge, sat down, and stared in front of him in another of his trances. Had he imagined that figure? Had he imagined those eyes?

He shook his head. Deep within him he knew that the mysterious affair had been a reality.



CHAPTER 10.

Under False Colours!

NIPPER nodded approvingly. “I like his looks, anyhow,” he said. “Clean figure—springy limbs—and broad shoulders. I think he’ll do, Reggie.”

“I don’t quite know what to make of the chap,” said Reggie Pitt, scratching his head. “He seems all right—and yet——”

He paused uncertainly.

“You’re thinking about last night?” asked Nipper. “Castleton visiting Wallace & Co.?”

“Yes,” admitted Reggie. “If he’s a really decent sort, why did he do that?”

“Give him a chance,” smiled Nipper. “He’s new here, don’t forget—and Wallace & Co. were just the same to him as any of the other fellows. If he gets really friendly with them, after he knows what they are, we shall know what to think. But it’s not fair to judge him now.”

“I suppose you’re right,” said Reggie uncertainly.

They were standing on Little Side, and were watching Alan Castleton as he approached with one or two other members of the West House Eleven. It was afternoon, and most of the Remove fellows were in the class-rooms, at lessons. But the two Elevens had been released at break, so that they should have enough daylight to finish this match. It wasn’t a particularly important match, but the House games were always more or less interesting. The other fellows would be released soon after half-time, so they would be able to witness part of the game.

Alan was thoroughly enjoying himself.

He had always fancied himself as a footballer, although he generally expressed the utmost contempt for the game. Perhaps this was because he had never been given a place in his school team. But that was different at St. Frank’s. Reggie Pitt was playing him on Arthur’s reputation! Strictly speaking, Alan was sailing under false colours. But that didn’t worry him in the slightest degree. He had such a good opinion of himself, such a conceit of his capabilities, that he was convinced that he would give a first-class account of himself. He had always boasted to his previous pals that he could do just as well as Arthur, if he only put his mind to it.

He joined Nipper and Pitt and the others, and nodded cheerily.

“All ready to start?” he asked.

“Yes, in a minute—when Morrow turns up,” said Nipper. “He’s going to act as referee for us. Or it may be old Browne, of the Fifth. I’m not quite sure which. One of them will soon be here, anyhow. Eager to begin?”

“Yes, rather!” said Alan. “I’m as keen as mustard on football, you know.”

“That’s the spirit,” said Pitt with approval. “I’m relying on you for goals this afternoon, you know. A fellow with your reputation must give a good account of himself.”

Alan grinned.

“That’s all right,” he said. “I shall probably surprise you. I might even score two or three goals. You never know.”

“There’s nothing like modesty!” said Handforth with a glare. “You pitiful ass! Three goals, eh? Why, if you get one shot pass me, I’m a Hottentot!”

“You were a Zulu yesterday!” remarked Church.

“Rats!” said Edward Oswald. “This new chap makes me sick! Who the dickens does he think he is! I can’t stick people who boast and brag!”

“Ahem!” coughed Church.

“Eh?” said Handforth, staring. “Got a cold?”

“No!” said Church hastily. “Hallo! Oh, good! Here’s old Browne!”

Church was glad that the referee had arrived. He didn’t want to explain the precise meaning of that little cough of his. William Napoleon Browne, the skipper of the Fifth, came up with long strides.

“Well, brothers, I trust we are all ready for the battle?” he inquired benevolently. “I would remind you that my time is valuable.”

“Rats!” said Nipper, chuckling. “We’ve been waiting for you, you old ass!”

“Then wait no longer,” said Browne. “Carry on with the good work, brothers!”

And the teams lined up for the commencement of the game. Both the elevens were greatly interested in Alan Castleton. They were all expectant. This new chap had a wonderful record, and they were probably going to see some special play.

They were!



For five minutes Castleton had a rough time of it. He was frog-marched down the Junior passage and all round the Triangle; at intervals he was bumped upon the hard gravel. At the end of the ordeal he was an utterly exhausted wreck.



CHAPTER 11.

Accident—or Foul?

HANDFORTH stared. The game had been going for about three minutes, and most of the play had been in the other half of the field. But now the West House forwards were sweeping down towards the valiant Handforth. Dick Goodwin, the Lancashire lad, was playing centre-forward, and he had the ball at his feet, and was making a run towards goal. But he could see that the Ancient House backs were too strong for him, and he passed out beautifully to Reggie Pitt, on the right wing. And Handforth stared because Castleton intercepted the leather. It was a foolish thing to do, because McClure, of the Ancient House, was practically upon him—and Pitt was unmarked.

"This way, Castleton!" sang out Reggie. "Quick, man!"

But Alan saw no reason to part with the ball. His idea was to have a shot at goal himself. He attempted to dodge Mac, but he didn't know his man. In a twinkling,

McClure had the leather from Alan's feet, and had cleared it. The opportunity was lost.

"Ay, lad, that was silly of you!" said Dick Goodwin breathlessly. "Pitt had a champion chance there. Why didn't you let it go?"

Alan scowled, but said nothing.

He ran up towards the half-way line, and within a few moments he had another opportunity. The ball came swinging over from the other side of the field, and he pounced upon it, and ran forward with the intention of scoring. But he over-ran himself, tripped on the ball and sat down heavily.

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Church. "No real footballer would have made a blunder like that! The chap's awful!"

"Awful isn't the word!" sang out Handforth from the goal. "He can't play as good as any of the Third Form kids!"

And Reggie Pitt himself was coming to this conclusion. The game was only young so far, but already Pitt had seen many signs of Alan's weaknesses. How this fellow could be publicly proclaimed as the best footballer that Walsing Grammar School had ever turned out was a mystery. At least, it was a mystery to Pitt. Really, it wasn't a mys-

tery at all—for the simple reason that Alan had never turned out for Walsing at all!

Alan was gradually losing his temper—a bad habit of his. When he had started the game, he had thought that it was going to be very simple—very easy. He had always looked upon football with something like contempt. Any fathead could play it! What was there in it, anyhow? Just kicking a ball about and fooling around generally! That was Alan's conception of football.

But he was finding that the real thing was very different!

It was a lot harder than it looked! And when he found that he couldn't do as he imagined he would do, he began to get resentful.

Twice within the next three or four minutes, Alan deliberately hung on to the ball when he should have passed. And his movements were clumsy and his kicking erratic. What else could be expected, when he had hardly played football at all—and didn't even know the rules of the game? He was only playing now because of his vanity.

And everybody on the field noticed, too, that he was already puffing and blowing. While most of the others were still fresh, the new man was getting fatigued. Obviously, he wasn't in the best of condition.

A really fine chance came his way after the game was about twenty-three minutes old. Reggie Pitt made one of his famous runs down the touch-line, beating the Ancient House half-backs and backs completely. And then, at the precise moment, he sent over a glorious centre. By a mere fraction, Goodwin was just too late to stop it, and Alan, who was out of his right position, found the ball at his own feet.

"Shoot!" yelled the West House players.

If Alan had seized that opportunity then, he might easily have scored. There was only Handforth to beat, and even Handforth could be beaten, if the shot was only hot enough. But Alan dallied. It was, of course, a fatal thing to do—since dalliance on the football field is little less than a crime.

McClure arrived on the scene, and came straight at Alan, with the intention of getting the ball away from him and easing this dangerous situation. Alan, who was in the act of getting himself ready to shoot, gave a sideways glance at McClure, and gritted his teeth.

"Get out of the way!" he snapped in a low voice.

He charged suddenly, unexpectedly. It wasn't exactly a shoulder charge, but a kind of heave. Alan's elbow took McClure in the pit of the stomach—Mac running right on to it. He rolled over, groaning. And then Alan took the shot. It was a revelation. He sent the ball skywards, and it soared high into the air, and went careering over towards the corner flag.

"Foul!" yelled Handforth excitedly. "You rotter!"

He came running out in order to assist the writhing McClure. Other West House players, and Ancient House players, were

gathering round Mac, too. Alan found several hostile glances shot in his direction.

"It was an accident," he muttered. "He ran right on to me!"

Browne came up, looking grave.

"Brother Castleton, you must be careful!" he said quietly. "That was foul play, and I'm awarding a free kick. Don't let it happen again."

"Hang you!" shouted Alan hotly. "There was no foul about it at all! I tell you it was an accident——"

"Dry up!" muttered Reggie. "You can't question the referee's decision!"

The unhappy McClure was soon on his feet again, and the game recommenced. And by now Alan Castleton was in a boiling temper—and the other fellows were filled with wonder and disappointment. How on earth had this fellow earned such a wonderful reputation in his previous school?

It was very mysterious, and Reggie Pitt was much worried. He realised that he should have given this fellow a trial at practice first. That would have shown his bad form. But Reggie had taken Alan at the valuation of the statement in the illustrated weekly.

And it hadn't been Alan's valuation at all!

CHAPTER 12.

Surprising The School!



FORTUNATELY, there were no more untoward incidents before half-time, and when Browne blew his whistle for the change-

over, the rest of the school had come out of the class-rooms. There were many Removites and Fourth-Formers round the ropes.

The Fourth-Formers were in a minority, since this was purely a Remove game. But such enthusiasts as John Busterfield Boots, Bob Christine, and Len Clapson, were anxious to know how the new fellow was getting on.

As a matter of fact, Alan was very puffed. Also, he was very sullen and angry. He noted that none of the other players came near him. They all gave him curious looks, but they said nothing to him. He had put up a rotten performance, and nobody liked to tell him so bluntly. Therefore, it was better to say nothing. After his high talk, they had expected something very different.

"Well, how's the new man?" inquired Bob Christine cheerily, as he came up to a group of the players.

"Don't ask me!" said Reggie Pitt gruffly. Christine, of the Fourth, raised his eyebrows.

"Hallo!" he said. "What's the matter?"

"The chap knows no more about football than Tubbs, the page boy!" said Handforth, in his outspoken way. "As a matter of fact, I'd rather have Tubbs any day! The beast fouled old Mac, and——"

"Oh, dry up!" said McClure. "It may have been an accident."

"Browne awarded a free kick, didn't he?" demanded Handforth.

"Yes, but——"

"But rats!" said Handforth. "The man's no good! He can't kick for toffee, he's selfish, and I don't believe that he even knows the rules! How many times did he get off-side?"

"I believe Handy's right there!" remarked Nipper. "I'm quite sure that Castleton doesn't know the proper rules."

"But it's impossible!" said Bob Christine, staring. "Castleton is the best footballer that Walsing——"

"We've heard all that before, thanks!" interrupted Reggie Pitt gently. "I'm beginning to think that some enterprising journalist must have got wrong information. Either that, or he's been having a little joke. Castleton's no footballer. Wait until the second half begins—and then you'll see for yourself!"

"Well, we shan't have to wait long," said Buster Boots. "Here's old Browne—and he's blown the whistle, too."

As they lined up for the second half, Alan was grim and determined. The rest had done him good, and he was feeling fit for the remainder of the game. And he was now positive that he would score one or two goals. He was getting the hang of the thing now. They wouldn't have such an easy time with him this half! He resented the way the other players had avoided him, and he was bent upon showing them just exactly what he was worth! He knew well enough that they had been talking about him—that they had been criticising his earlier play. Well, he would give them something to look at now! He'd show them!

Alan's zeal was rather misplaced. For he was in an ugly mood, and after the play had been going on for a couple of minutes he acted in a very surprising way. A pass came out from one of the half-backs, and Dick Goodwin sped forward to take it. But Alan had decided to accept that pass—and to make a run for goal.

"This is mine!" he snapped, as Goodwin went for the leather.

And to everybody's amazement, Alan stuck his foot out, and caught Dick on the ankle. The West House centre-forward went down, badly tripped.

"Foul!"

"Oh, you dirty rotter!"

"Great Scott! He fouled one of his own men, too!"

"His own centre-forward!"

Browne ran up to Castleton, having blown the whistle and stopped the game.

"Brother Castleton, let me warn you!" said the lanky Fifth Former. "If anything like this happens again, you'll go off the field!"

"If anything like what happens again?" demanded Alan. "The silly idiot got in my way!"

"You deliberately tripped him—and it was foul play!" said Browne. "Much as I regret the necessity of a stern chat, brother, I must

uphold the traditions of the game, and my position as referee. Remember what I have said. Another act of this sort, and off you go!"

Alan stamped angrily, his eyes glittering. "Fool!" he muttered. "I'll play as I like!" He halted as he found himself confronted by Reggie Pitt.

"You're looking a bit puffed, Castleton," said Pitt quietly. "Don't you think you'd better retire from the game? We can get on with ten men all right."

"Want to get rid of me?" sneered Alan.

"To be quite frank, yes!" replied Pitt. "Your style of football isn't exactly what we require."

"You'll change your tone after I've scored a couple of goals!" said Alan contemptuously. "I'm a bit out of practice, that's all! Can't you give a man a chance?"

"You've had plenty of chances," replied Pitt.

There was no time for any further talk, for the whistle had gone, and the game was continuing. Pitt was not only astounded, but staggered, a minute later. For this new junior repeated his previous offence—without the slightest justification.

Instead of keeping to his position, he haunted Reggie, apparently under the impression that he was an outside man, and his bad play upset the whole forward line. Passes were sent to him which he muffed hopelessly, and he was constantly intercepting the ball when he shouldn't have been anywhere near it.

A splendid pass came from Dick Goodwin, and Reggie Pitt got the leather under control, and started off down the field. But before he could take half a dozen strides, Alan came running up, his eyes gleaming, his whole attitude one of determination. He wasn't going to let Pitt have the ball! He would trap it himself, and score! It was the maddest thing that any of the spectators had ever seen.

Crash!

Alan charged—blindly, brutally. Reggie Pitt went clean over, turned a somersault, and lay still. And Alan went careering on towards the goal, fondly believing that he was "dribbling" admirably. As a matter of fact, he could hardly control the ball—and he didn't even know that the whistle had gone. But he knew it soon afterwards, when several of the Ancient House players ran up to him, and pulled him abruptly to a standstill.

"You dirty cad!" shouted Tommy Watson hotly.

"What do you mean?" panted Alan. "Why did you stop me? I was just going to score!"

"Score!" shouted Jack Grey, amazed. "But didn't you hear the whistle?"

"Hang the whistle!"

"The fellow knows less about football than my Sunday topper!" said Watson. "He deserves scragging for that foul, too——"

"Brother Castleton, be good enough to leave the field!" interrupted William Napoleon Browne, striding up.

"Eh?" said Alan, swinging round.

He found Browne eyeing him sternly.

"I have already warned you," said Browne. "This time I must take drastic action. You will leave the field, Brother Castleton—and you will leave it at once!"

"Confound it!" shouted Alan. "You don't know what you're talking——"

"Let there be no arguments!" put in Browne. "You will either leave the field quietly, brother, or I shall take you by the scruff of the neck, and hurl you off!"

"Hear, hear!"

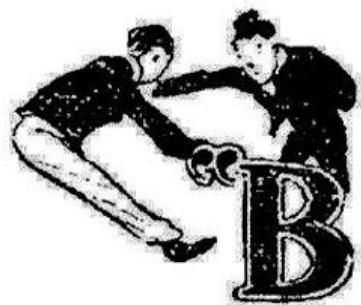
"We'll help you, Browne!"

"Rather!"

Alan Castleton took a deep breath. One glance at his companions was sufficient to convince him. Either he went willingly, or he would be thrown off. He set his lips in a thin line, turned on his heel, and strode off towards the pavilion. Outwardly he was calm, but inside he was a seething furnace of hatred!

CHAPTER 13.

A Piece of Handy's Mind!



"BETTER?" asked Jack Grey gently.

Reggie Pitt made a wry face.

"I'm all right, thanks,"

he replied. "Nothing much—only bruised a bit. Where's Castleton? He seemed to go mad for a minute. His one idea was to get hold of the ball—and he didn't care how he got it."

"Browne's sent him off the field," said Jack gruffly.

"I shall have something to say to him afterwards," said Nipper.

"Let me say it, if you don't mind," put in Reggie. "He was playing for my House, Nipper, and I'm responsible for putting him into the team."

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth hotly. "You'll be too soft with him, Reggie! Leave it to me! I'll give him a piece of my mind as soon as the game's over!"

"I think we're all rather anxious to have a little chat with him," said Nipper dryly.

"Well, thank goodness he's off the field. You West House chaps will have a chance now. While Castleton was here you were all at sixes and sevens."

And the game went on, the concluding play being very fast and interesting. When the final whistle went, the Ancient House had won by two goals to one. But nobody looked upon it as a real test—for without the encumbrance of Alan Castleton the West House fellows might easily have equalised, and it was highly possible that they might have won the game.

Handforth was one of the first fellows off

the field. He didn't wait a minute. As soon as the whistle blew, he ran off towards the Triangle, with Church and McClure at his heels. They could easily guess the objective of this sudden rush.

"Half a tick, Handy!" panted Church. "Don't be rash, you know!"

"That's all right!" said Handforth. "I'm not going to be rash. I'm only going to give Castleton a piece of my mind!"

"But you can't spare it, old man!" urged Mac.

"What?"

"I—I mean, it's up to Pitt!" said McClure hastily. "Castleton is in the West House, and it's none of our business——"

"Rats!" interrupted Handy. "Likewise piffle! Also fiddlesticks! We're all footballers, aren't we? Well, I'm going to tell Castleton what I think of him before any of the others get a chance!"

Church and McClure could not very well object. For they wanted to give Castleton a good jawing, too. They were only afraid that Handforth would go much further. It wasn't like the redoubtable Edward Oswald to stop at mere talking. It was quite likely that he would give Alan one of his famous uppercuts, and lay him out. Nothing less would satisfy the impulsive leader of Study D.

As it happened, they encountered Alan in the Triangle. The new fellow had just come down after changing, and he was looking resplendent in his well-creased suit. He paused as he observed Handforth & Co. bearing down upon him.

"Well, how did the game go?" he asked coolly. "I'll bet the West House lost!"

"Yes, it did!" roared Handforth. "All your fault, you dirty rotter!"

"My fault?" asked Alan, raising his eyebrows. "Well, I like that! The West House naturally lost because I left the field. I was going to get two or three goals——"

"Stop that!" interrupted Handforth, glaring. "Who told you that you could play football? Why, you idiot, you don't even know the rules! I'd like to tell you here and now that you're one of the mouldiest players I ever saw! I don't care what you were at Walsing Grammar School, or any other grammar school! This afternoon you played dirtily all the time you were on the field!"

"You'd better go easy——" began Alan, his gore rising.

"I'll go as I like!" thundered Handforth. "You made every possible mistake that you could make! You clung to the ball when you should have passed it, you intercepted the ball when you shouldn't have touched it at all, and you fouled your own players more than you fouled their position! In a nutshell, Castleton, you're every kind of a cad!"

Alan flushed deeply. He was still sullen, still resentful of that indignity. He had been ordered off the field of play, and he knew enough about football to realise that it was the greatest indignity that could have

befallen him. He did not feel inclined to stand Handforth's talk.

"Why can't you mind your own business?" he demanded harshly. "I don't belong to your House, anyhow! Clear off, Handforth, and don't stick your nose into things that don't concern you!"

Handforth gasped.

"Are you talking to me?" he demanded thickly.

"Yes, I am!"

"By George!" shouted Handforth. "Did you hear him, you chaps?"

"Yes, we did!" growled Church. "Slosh him!"

"Smash him up!" said McClure.

"That's just what I'm going to do!" yelled Handforth, whipping off his jacket. "Now then, Castleton, let's see what kind of a boxer you are! Three times champion at Walsing, eh? All right—I'm willing to take the risk! Hold my coat, Mac!"

Alan backed away.

"You fool!" he panted. "You can't fight here—in the open Triangle!"

"Can't I?" retorted Handforth. "Put up your hands! I can't fight, eh? All right—take that!"

Biff!

Alan took it—a heavy drive which struck him on the chest. He staggered back and sat down with a thud. Edward Oswald Handforth wasn't the kind of fellow to waste any time!

CHAPTER 14.

The Great Boxer!



REGGIE PITT frowned. "By Jove, look there!" he said, nodding his head. "Handy has started new chap flying!"

"We'd better hurry up and put a stop to it," said Nipper. "He'll only get himself into trouble if he fights Castleton in the open Triangle like this. If a prefect happens to see him, or a master, he'll be in trouble!"

All the footballers crowded round as Alan Castleton rose to his feet. He wasn't particularly hurt. That blow had struck him by surprise, for he hadn't really thought that Handforth was in earnest. He was rather relieved to see all the other fellows come round him like this, although their looks did not bode him any good.

"Clear off, you chaps!" said Handforth gruffly. "I don't want any interference——"

"Chuck it, old man!" said Reggie. "You can't fight Castleton here."

"Can't I?" retorted Handforth. "I'm doing it!"

"Well, you must stop, Handy," said Nipper. "You know as well as I do that fighting in the Triangle is against all the rules."

"Blow the rules!"

"That's all very well," said Reggie. "If anybody's going to fight Castleton, I'm the one. You can have a go at him some other time, Handy—after he's done some more dirty business!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Reggie's right!"

"Leave the new fellow to Pitt, Handy!"

Castleton was looking round with a sneer on his face.

"So this is the kind of treatment you give a new fellow, eh?" he said unpleasantly. "You completely surround him, and then threaten to——"

"Don't make things worse!" interrupted Reggie Pitt quietly. "You'll come behind the gym, Castleton, and I'll knock you down. You'll have perfectly fair treatment, and you can choose your seconds if you like. But I'm going to have the pleasure of taking a good slosh at you. You confounded cad! I put you into my Eleven, and all you did in return was to disgrace it!"

"You're mad!" shouted Castleton. "I only played the game!"

"Good gad!"

"He's either a fool or a fraud!"

"You'd better go easy, Pitt," advised Fullwood. "You may be taking on more than you can chew."

"I'll chance it," said Reggie.

"Don't forget that Castleton won the boxing championship of Walsing School for three years in succession," went on Ralph Leslie Fullwood dryly. "Unless you're careful you'll find yourself flattened out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

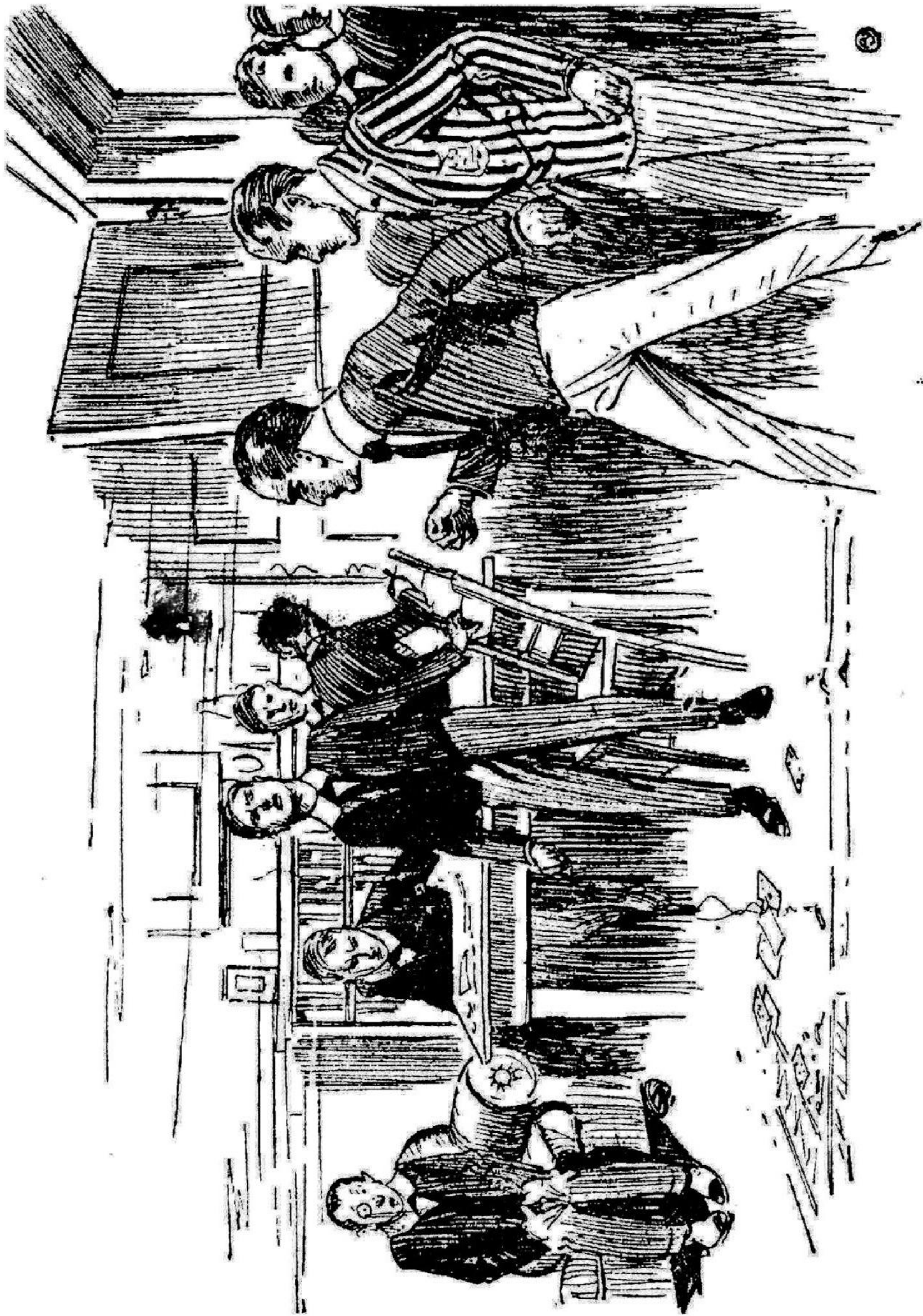
"Let's see if Castleton's boxing is of the same quality as his footer!"

Alan could see that there was no help for it. And he was beginning to realise that Arthur's photograph was liable to be very embarrassing. It was one thing to make capital out of it and get into the football team. But it was another thing to be attributed with boxing prowess which he certainly did not possess.

However, his natural vanity came to his aid again.

He had always held boxing in as much contempt as football. Any ass could use his fists. What was there in it, anyhow? And if this fool of a Pitt wanted to fight him—well, he was quite ready. He was convinced that he would be able to give a very good account of himself. It was quite likely that he would knock Pitt out! And he realised that such a thing would tell greatly in his favour. If he could only succeed in whacking his own junior skipper his prestige would be enormously increased. Alan's conceit of himself was truly colossal.

Before any prefects could come round the crowd had manoeuvred behind the gymnasium, and a circle was quickly formed. Handforth, much to his disgust, was held tightly, and was not allowed to take any part in the proceedings. This was purely a West



The angry West House juniors surged into the study. "It was as Reggie Pitt had feared. Castleton and his three guests had been smoking and playing cards—and, what was worse, they had forced the innocent Lord Pippinton to do the same!"

House affair, and all the Ancient House fellows were merely spectators.

"Well, are we going to start?" asked Alan sneeringly.

"Just as soon as you like," replied Reggie Pitt. "Would you like gloves or not? I leave it entirely to you."

"Why trouble about gloves?" asked Alan. "We can hit harder with bare fists!"

A rather evil idea had come into his head. On his right hand he was wearing a heavy signet-ring, and it occurred to him that if he could get in one heavy blow that ring would come in handy. It would act as a kind of miniature knuckle-duster, and would do great damage.

"Time!" sang out Nipper. "Might as well do the thing properly. We'll have one-minute rounds. Go ahead!"

More spectators had come round by this time, for it did not take long for the news of a fight to get about. It spread through the junior quarters like wildfire. Boots, Christine and a number of other Fourth-Formers were among the spectators. Even Willy Handforth and his valiants of the Third had come along. And a certain number of fellows were hovering about the outskirts keeping guard in order to give warning in case a prefect should make investigations.

Everybody was frankly curious. Castleton had the reputation of being a great boxer. The fellows had seen it in black and white. But they were much more curious to see a real demonstration.

They saw!

The fight as a fight was a sheer fiasco. It was over almost before it had started. Reggie Pitt had been expecting to battle with a fairly worthy opponent. Reggie was a fine boxer himself, and he believed that Alan knew quite a lot about the noble art. But within one minute Alan proved that he knew practically nothing.

He attacked blindly without any scientific knowledge. All his actions were crude, and his defence was utterly worthless. Pitt found that he could sweep through it with the greatest ease. The man knew less about boxing than the average fag.

His one idea seemed to be to get in a heavy right-handed blow. But Pitt avoided these thrusts with the greatest ease. Every one of Alan's movements revealed the fact that he had utterly no skill. And Reggie Pitt became frankly disgusted.

"Oh, what's the use?" he asked. "The fellow can't fight, and it's simply a farce!"

Crash!

And Reggie, in disgust, delivered an upper-cut which caught Alan on the point of the chin and sent him over backwards. The new boy sprawled on the grass, dazed and bewildered. And he was counted out amidst a roar of jeering.

So much for the great boxer!



The angry West House juniors surged into the room. The three guests had been smoking and playing cards.

Pipp

CHAPTER 15.

His True Level!



RAUD!"

"Spoof!"

"Get up and clear off, you cad!"

Alan rose to his feet amid a further storm of scorn. Once again his vanity had been rudely shattered. Boxing wasn't such an easy matter as he had always believed! From the first moment of that "fight" to the last, he had been bewildered. He had been all at sea. And the jeers of the crowd burned in his ears. Somehow, he didn't like this reception. It was somewhat different to the acclamations he had heard on the previous day!

"Go ahead!" he shouted savagely. "Sneer all you like! Do you think I care? The lot of you can go hang!"

Handforth pushed forward.

"I'm glad I didn't fight you, Castleton," he said sourly. "I made a mistake in the first instance. It's one of my principles not



Reggie Pitt had feared. Castleton and his s worse, they had forced the innocent Lord

to fight with worms. Why, my minor could make rings round you any hour of the day!"

"Leave him alone, Handy," said Pitt quietly. "He's obviously a fraud!"

"That's just what I want to talk about," said Handforth, glaring at Alan. "Look here, Castleton, what about that photograph in the illustrated weekly?"

"What about it?" snarled Alan.

"How the dickens did it get in there?" demanded Handforth. "I suppose you put it in yourself, eh? That's about the size of it! Champion of Walsing Grammar School for three years in succession! Huh! The best footballer that Walsing ever turned out! Huh! Do you think we believe all that tommy-rot?"

"You can believe it or not, just as you like!" retorted Alan. "Do you think I care what you believe? I made a mistake when I arrived yesterday. I mixed with you fellows, believing that you were the right sort! But now, thank goodness, I've found out that I was off the rails! I don't want anything more to do with you!"

"What!" gasped Handforth.

"I've done with you!" went on Alan

curtly. "I'm a bit particular, too, and I've come to the conclusion that all you fellows are a set of rotters. I'll pick my friends more carefully in future!"

And he walked off, amid a dazed silence.

"Did you hear that?" gasped Handforth at last. "Of all the beastly nerve! Let's run after him and chuck him in the fountain! Are we going to stand this sort of thing from a cheeky new kid?"

"Oh, let him go!" said Pitt wearily. "I can see that I shall have enough trouble with him in the West House! No need to make a scene in the Triangle, Handy!"

"Yes, let him go!" said Nipper. "You have my sympathy, Reggie, old man!"

Under ordinary conditions, this behaviour on the part of a new fellow would not have occasioned much surprise. But Alan had come to St. Frank's heralded by great advance notices, as it were. Everybody had believed him to be a wonderful footballer, a great boxer, and a fine all-round sportsman. But these illusions were now shattered. Alan had proved himself to be nothing but a commonplace rotter. And nobody thought it worth while to make any further inquiries regarding that paragraph in the illustrated weekly. What did it matter to them, anyhow? The proof of the pudding was in the eating, and Alan Castleton had proved himself to be a rank wash-out.

He proved it even more a minute later.

For when the crowd emerged from behind the gym, they saw that he had joined forces with Wallace & Co., and the four were talking together earnestly.

"I thought so!" said Pitt. "He's found his true level now! He's a fit companion for Wallace and his cads. We've got one of that breed in the West House at last!"

"And we're not proud of him, either!" added Jack Grey.

"Never mind!" said Singleton. "Birds of a feather flock together, you know. It's quite possible that Castleton will get a transfer into the Ancient House, so that he can be near Wallace and Gulliver and Bell. Let's hope so, anyway."

"Rats!" said Handforth, frowning. "Do you think we'd accept that rotter into the Ancient House? He's yours, and you're welcome to him!"

"I shall make it my business to keep an eye on the fellow," said Reggie Pitt grimly. "If he starts any of Wallace's tricks in the West House, he'll soon be sat on. I've got to think about poor old Pippy, too. I've put Castleton into Pippy's study, and I'm worrying now. Pippy is an innocent sort of chap, and Castleton is no fit sort of study mate for him. I shall have to see what I can do."

"Better have a word with old Barry," suggested Nipper. "And yet that might be difficult," he added thoughtfully. "You can't very well tell Barry that the new fellow is a cad and an outsider, can you? Can't tell tales out of school. And Mr. Stokes won't transfer Castleton into another study unless he has a good reason."

"Leave it to me," said Reggie. "I'll keep my eye on him, and see that he doesn't start any tricks. Or if he does start them, I'll bet he won't finish them, not while I'm active, anyhow!"

And the fellows dispersed, eager to change, and to get down to tea.

In the meantime Alan went off to Study A with Wallace & Co. They had invited him to tea with them, and he was glad to accept.

"I told you what they were, didn't I?" asked Wallace coolly, after they had got into the study and had closed the door. "You'd better stick to us, Castleton. You're one of our crowd."

"I'm jolly thankful that I can turn to somebody, anyhow," said Alan. "You fellows are just my stamp. You're sporty—you don't mind a smoke now and again. You enjoy a game of cards. That's me all over. This study of yours is a little haven of refuge."

"How about the invite you gave us yesterday?" asked Bell. "I thought we were goin' over to the West House this evenin' with you, Castleton?"

"So you are," said Alan. "After tea, you can all come over with me, and we'll have a nice little game. Old Pippy is rolling in money, and we'll see if we can't lift some of it."

And the new fellow at St. Frank's made himself very comfortable in Study A. He had certainly found his true level now. With Wallace & Co. as friends and companions, he was right in his element!



CHAPTER 16.

Handforth's Latest!

CWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH flushed excitedly. A keen, eager light came into his eyes, and he brought his fist down on

the study table with a resounding crash.

"Why not?" he asked eagerly.

Church mopped half a cupful of tea out of his lap, and McClure retrieved the Genoa cake from the floor.

"When you've done!" complained Church. "What's the idea of swamping me like that?"

"Why not?" repeated Handforth. "Isn't it about time?"

"High time!" replied Church bitterly. "If you must bang something, Handy, why don't you bang yourself? Or why don't you find Castleton, and bang him?"

Until that moment, tea in Study D had been very peaceful. Handforth was unusually thoughtful that evening, and he had sat for

some time, drinking his tea, and eating bread-and-butter and sardines in a mechanical kind of way. But now he was suddenly active.

"It's the idea of the term!" he declared firmly. "I think we ought to start the thing straight away! This very evening!"

"If you'll give us some idea what you're talking about, we might be able to disagree with you," said McClure. "You can't expect us to show much enthusiasm when you don't tell us what the dickens——"

"Dry up!" said Handforth, frowning. "Don't interrupt! Let me think!"

He scowled at the battered Genoa cake, and absently took a slice of it. He put it on to his sardine plate, and proceeded to eat it with the aid of his knife and fork. Church and McClure watched with much interest. In fact, Church passed Handforth the Worcester sauce.

"Thanks!" said Handy absent-mindedly.

He helped himself liberally to the sauce, pouring it over the cake with a rare abandon.

But Church and McClure were much disappointed. Handforth proceeded to eat the cake without a word. He apparently didn't notice that this diet was somewhat unusual. He was so busy with his thoughts that he would have eaten rope-ends without even knowing it.

"It's time for the big revival," he said sternly. "We've been slack for too long. Things have been getting from bad to worse, until now the school is more or less dead. What happens if we find two or three West House fellows in the Ancient House common-room? What happens if we come across a Modern House chap in the Junior corridor? Nothing! Absolutely nothing!"

"What do you expect to happen?" asked Church.

"Why, we ought to grab these intruders—these invaders—and throw them out on their necks!" replied Handforth grimly. "It's time that we revived the old House rivalry."

"Oh!" said Church. "So that's what you've been gassing about all this time?"

"Haven't you been listening?" demanded Handforth, staring.

"Yes; but you didn't explain yourself——"

"Well, I'm explaining myself now," said Handy. "I deplore the dying-out of the old House rivalry. Do you hear? I deplore it!"

"That's not a bad word," remarked Mac.

"I deplore it!" roared Handforth. "It's high time that the japes and the rags were revived. Each House ought to be exclusive to itself. Each House ought to strive to make itself paramount!"

"That's another good word," said McClure, grinning.

"Don't quibble about words!" thundered Handforth. "Are you chaps with me, or not? If you're with me, then everything is all right. But if you're not with me, I'll slaughter the pair of you!"

"Then we're with you!" said McClure promptly.

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Church chuckled.

"Joking aside, though, we certainly are with you, Handy," he remarked thoughtfully. "As you say, it's high time that the old House rivalry was revived. Except for the recent feud between the Remove and the Fourth—and one can hardly call that a jape!—things have been getting a bit dead lately. We haven't have a jape since goodness knows when. Of course, there's still a lot of keen rivalry in sport—in footer, and running, and all that sort of thing. But we haven't had any rags. We haven't had any japes."

"The Ancient House is naturally the top House at St. Frank's," added McClure. "But perhaps it is time that we made it perfectly clear to the other Houses. Supposing we jape one of them this evening?"

"Jolly good!" said Church.

Handforth stared at them.

"You fatheads!" he said. "What the dickens are you talking about? This is my

idea! I thought of this, and you're coolly claiming it as your own wheeze! I never heard of such nerve in all my life!"

"My dear chap, we're simply agreeing with you," said Church blandly.

"That's all," said McClure: "Nothing wrong in that, I suppose?"

Handforth was disarmed.

"No, that's all right," he growled. "But don't forget that it's my idea! As soon as we've finished tea we'll get hold of Nipper and Fullwood and Archie and the rest, and hold a meeting in the common-room. We'll thrash this matter out, and form a plan of campaign for this evening. And I suggest that we make a raid on the West House to begin with."

"Why the West House in particular?" asked Church. "Why not jape the Fourth Formers? Far better than going for Pitt's crowd. In fact, it might be a good idea for the Ancient House and the West House to stick together, and to declare a kind of

rag war on the Modern House and the East House. Remove against Fourth, see?"

"Not likely!" Handy retorted. "House against House—that's the only way. It doesn't matter whether Pitt and his crowd are in the Remove or not. They're in a different House, and therefore they are rivals."

"But wouldn't it be better to start against the Fourth?"

"No, it wouldn't!" replied Handforth grimly. "I've a particular reason for wanting to have a smack at the West House chaps. Castleton is there, don't forget, and we'll pick out Castleton for special treatment!"

"Well, I must say you've hit it on the nail this time, old man," said Church. "I'd forgotten about Castleton for the moment. Yes, we'll start on the West House—and include Castleton in the good work!"

And for once in a way Study D was completely in accord. Church and McClure hailed Handforth's latest with enthusiasm.

"How do you mean—carefully?" asked Church.

"Well, Nipper is the skipper of this House," replied Edward Oswald. "Skipper of the juniors, anyhow. Of course, it's all wrong! I ought to be skipper, strictly speaking. Everybody knows that."

"Yes, yes," murmured Church. "But why shall we have to go easily?"

"Because Nipper generally squashes my ideas!" replied Handforth, with a growl. "And as soon as he hears this he'll try to put his foot down. But we've got to get the majority of the fellows on our side. And then Nipper won't have a leg to stand on, see?"

"Yes, he's bound to agree to the decision of the majority," said Church. "But I don't think Nipper will be such a hard nut to crack as all that, Handy. Nipper's a sportsman. He won't throw cold water on a really sensible idea."

Handforth rose from the table.

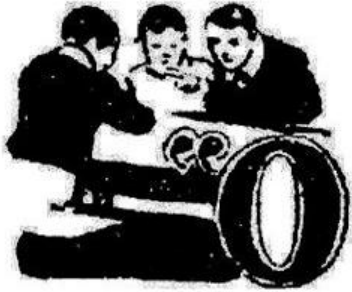
"Well, I'll go to the common-room," he announced. "You fellows go along the passage, and round up the chaps. Tell them to come to the common-room at once—because I want to make a speech."

"That'll be no good," said McClure. "If we tell them that, they'll all stay away!"

"If they stay away, then I'll come along and rout them all out!" threatened Handforth. "I'm not going to be flouted like that! But don't be an ass! You do as I

CHAPTER 17.

The Ancient House Plotters.



"Of course," said Handforth, "we shall have to go carefully."

Five minutes had passed, and a thoughtful

silence had been broken.

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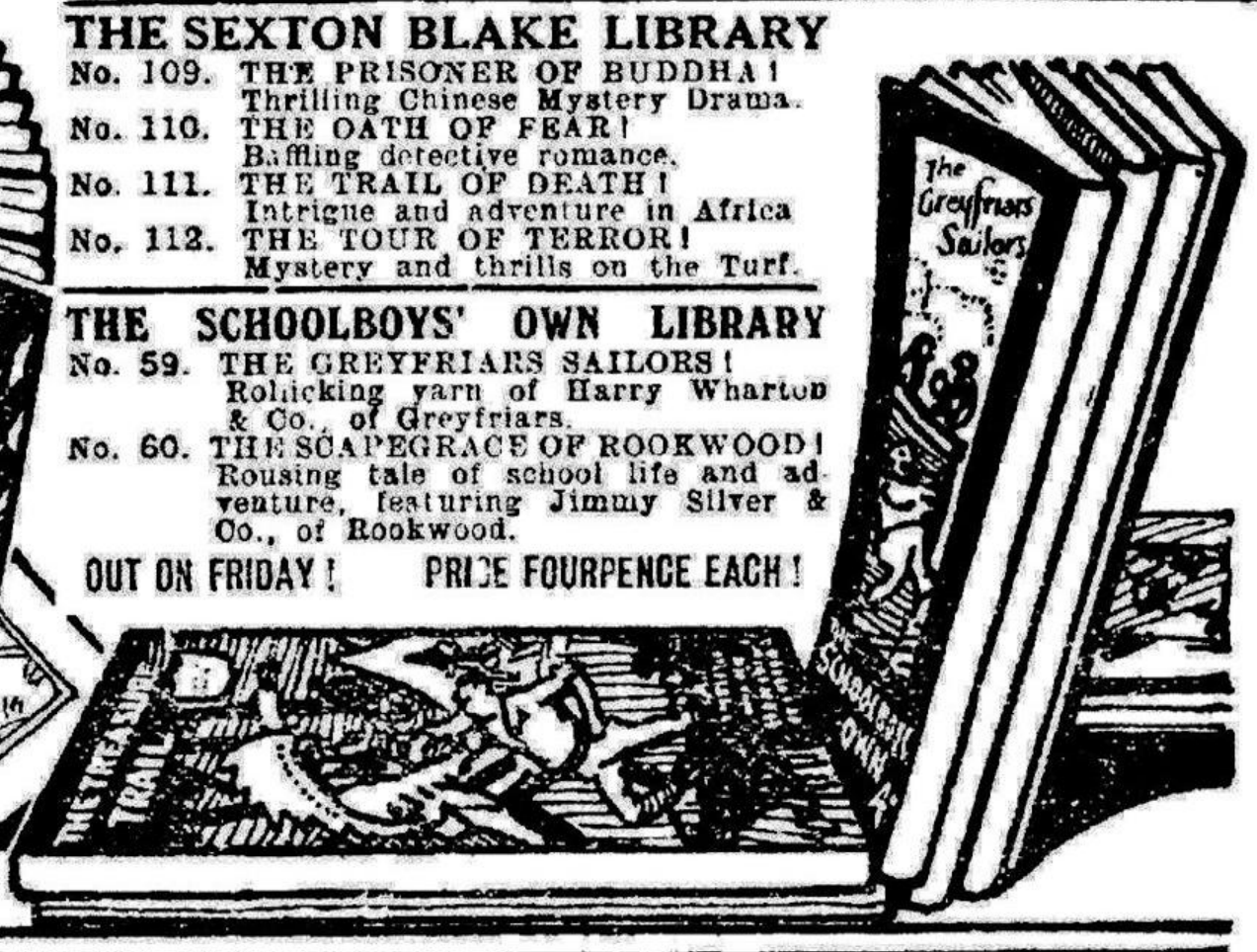
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say, and you'll find that they'll flock to the common-room in droves!"

As it happened, the matter was not put to the test. For when Handforth arrived at the common-room he found Nipper & Co. already there. Ralph Leslie Fullwood was present, also, with Clive Russell, De Valeric, and most of the other prominent Ancient House Removites.

"Good egg!" said Handforth, as he strode briskly in. "I want you, Nipper! I want all you other fellows, too! I've a suggestion to make!"

"Let it stew for a bit, old man," said Tommy Watson. "We're talking about football."

"Castleton's brand of football, in particular," said Fullwood.

"Never mind about football now," said Handforth. "I thought of a brilliant idea during tea, and I want all you fellows to support me. In fact, if you don't support me, there'll be trouble!"

"Well, it's just as well to know these things in advance," said Nipper, smiling. "What's the idea, Handy? We're always ready to hear anything brilliant."

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne. "At the same time, old chunks of fruit, I'm rather inclined to believe that Handforth's brilliance is apt to be over-ripe."

"Rats!" said Edward Oswald. "I'll tell you the whole thing in a nutshell. I'll explain the wheeze in half a dozen words. Well, for a long time past we've been practically at a standstill. We've done nothing. How many japes have there been during this term, for instance? There was that feud between the Remove and the Fourth just recently, of course, but that doesn't come into this category. How many japes were there last term? How many glorious rags did we have? I tell you, St. Frank's is half-dead! Unless things are livened up pretty soon, we shall all go off into a state of semi-consciousness!"

"Just a minute, old man," said Nipper gently. "Is this what you call telling us the idea in a nutshell?"

"It all depends upon the size of the nut!" said Fullwood. "Handy must be thinking about a coco-nut!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" frowned Handforth. "This is no time for cheap humour! My idea is to recommence the House japes. Revive the old House rivalry! Do you remember how it used to be in the old days—before the school was altered?"

"Yes; at that time there were only two Houses," replied Nipper. "And there was a good deal of rivalry."

"There was!" agreed Handforth. "The Ancient House chaps were known as the Fossils, and the Modern chaps were called Monks. All that's dead nowadays. But why should it be? With four Houses, there ought to be more fun than ever! I vote that we start everything again in earnest,

and that we begin with the West House this evening. Why not rag that beast, Castleton, in particular? Let's get up a terrific jape, and show the West House chaps that we're the cock House at St. Frank's!"

"Yes, but——" began Nipper.

"I don't want to hear any objections!" frowned Handforth. "I was expecting something of this kind from you, Nipper! You always squash my ideas, but this time you're not going to!"

"My dear chap——"

"The scheme is sound, and we've got to get busy on it!" continued Handforth. "How many of you fellows are with me?" he added, looking round the room. "Are you game for a good old jape on the West House this evening?"

"Yes, rather!" said Fullwood promptly.

"Odds lifesavers!" ejaculated Archie. "I mean to say, it strikes me as being a pretty sound sort of scheme, laddies!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Handy!"

"He's got the right idea for once!"

Handforth flushed with pleasure at the combined shout of approval.

"There you are!" he said. "What about it now, Nipper?"

"It's just what I expected," said Nipper. "But——"

"I don't want any of these 'buts,' my lad," interrupted Handforth, glaring. "I know what you're going to say, but don't say it! You've heard the others, haven't you? So you needn't try to throw cold water on the business!"

"You hopeless duffer!" roared Nipper. "Can't you let me speak?"

"Not if you are going to call my idea a rotten one!"

"I'm not!" said Nipper. "You hopeless ass, I was only going to ask you why you expected me to run it down. As a matter of fact, this idea of yours is so jolly good that I can't quite believe that you thought of it. I'll bet Church and McClure put the thing into your head to begin with!"

"Rot!" said Handforth. "I thought of it entirely myself!"

"Then the age of miracles isn't over!" said Nipper. "My dear old chap, it's the idea of the season! Most decidedly, we'll jape the West House this evening! You bet we'll jape it! And we'll give Castleton some very particular attention!"

And there was much plotting in the Ancient House common-room!

CHAPTER 18.

Alan's Little Party!



LORD PIPPINTON looked up dreamily as the door of Study S opened, and four figures strode in.

"Here we are!" said Alan Castleton briskly. "Old Pippy's on the

spot, ready for us. Come in, you chaps—all welcome!”

Wallace & Co. were ushered into the luxurious study. As soon as they were in, Alan turned to the door, closed it, and turned the key in the lock.

“We shall be safe here,” he said genially. “Clear those things off the table, Pippy!”

Lord Pippinton looked mildly inquiring.

“Eh?” he asked. “Clear them off? But, I mean, prep.! The fact is, I’m just in the middle——”

“Never mind your prep. now!” interrupted Alan. “We’re going to have a little game.”

“Oh, rather!” said Pippy. “You mean a game?”

“Yes, you ass!” said Alan. “I suppose you’ll join us, won’t you?”

“As a matter of absolute fact, no,” said Lord Pippinton. “As you want the table, I’ll trot off. Yes, that’s the idea. I’ll trot off to the good old common-room, and——”

“But you can’t go, Pippy,” said Wallace. “The door’s locked.”

“Oh, locked!” said Lord Pippinton. “That’s rather awkward, what?”

He was such a mild sort of junior that he hardly knew what else to say. Since the door was locked, what was the good of protesting? He was there, and evidently there he had to stay. After all, Lord Pippinton was a very simple, easy-going youth. It wasn’t in him to exert any will-power—always providing that he possessed any will-power. There were four fellows in here, and they were all opposed to him leaving the study. Therefore, the only possible alternative was to stay in the study. That was the way Old Pippy looked at it.

His books were swept off the table, and Wallace produced a pack of cards. Then the young rascals sat down at the table, and cigarettes were lighted up. Alan passed his case to Lord Pippinton.

“I suppose you’ll smoke with us?” he asked casually.

“Smoke?” said Old Pippy. “Oh, you mean have a cigarette? Thanks awfully! I mean, if you don’t mind, not at all! The fact is, smoking isn’t quite in my line.”

“That’s all right!” said Alan. “Have a shot!”

“Oh, well, if you insist!” said his lordship uncomfortably. “That is to say, if you positively and absolutely insist. But, I mean, smoking—— Isn’t it somewhat against the good old rules?”

“What do we care about rules?” laughed Alan. “If it comes to that, playing cards is against the rules. But what’s the harm in a little friendly game, Pippy? Be a pal, and join.”

“Join?”

“Draw your chair up to the table, and we’ll let you play!”

“Oh, rather!” said Pippy. “You mean play? But the fact is, I don’t! Awfully sorry, but I don’t know any of these games. Never did. Couldn’t learn ’em. Too brainy for me.”

“Rot!” said Alan. “It doesn’t need any brains to play banker. I was going to suggest pontoon at first, but I think banker will be more in your line.”

“I assure you it’s quite imposs.!” said Lord Pippinton, in some distress. “I don’t even know the good old cards! Never did!”

“The chap hasn’t lived!” said Wallace, in wonder. “Do you mean to say, Pippinton, that you don’t know an ace from a deuce?”

“A deuce?” repeated Pippy, groping. “What the deuce—— I mean, what?”

“Don’t you know a king from a queen?”

“Oh, rather!” said his lordship. “The queen, so to speak, is—well, I mean, the queen is a queen. The good old feminine gender, as it were. And the king, of course, being masculine, is masculine gender.”

“I’m talkin’ about the cards, you duffer!” said Wallace. “There are kings and queens in these cards!”

“Really?” said Old Pippy, in mild surprise.

“My only hat!” ejaculated Alan, staring at Lord Pippinton in dull wonder. “Is it possible?”

He was beginning to realise that this sheep was much easier game than he had first imagined. It would be a very simple task to clip Lord Pippinton’s wool! The fellow not only knew no games, but he didn’t even know the values of the cards!

“That’s all right!” went on Alan, with a grin. “Draw your chair up, Pippy, and we’ll teach you. It won’t take us more than ten minutes. You’ll want some money, of course.”

“Money?”

“Yes, rather!” said Wallace. “You’ve got some money, haven’t you?”

“A little,” said Pippy. “Just a little. Not much, of course——”

“A little!” echoed Bell, with a glance at Alan. “But you said——”

“We only need a little!” interrupted Alan, with a meaning look across the table. “Don’t worry about money, Pippy. Anything will do—the smallest amount you’ve got. It’s only a friendly game, remember. One or two fivers will be quite sufficient—say, twenty pounds altogether!”

“Oh, rather!” said Lord Pippinton. “If that’s all you want, I mean, nothing easier!”

He produced his wallet, and placed four five-pound notes on the table. The innocence of this rich junior was absolutely staggering. Wallace & Co. could hardly believe it. It was too good to be true. They had never been able to get anywhere near Lord Pippinton, and they hadn’t even realised that he was such a “mug.” But Alan Castleton knew it well enough, and Alan was Lord Pippinton’s study mate. And that gave him plenty of scope.

Old Pippy himself was altogether too mild to utter any protest, although he seemed to realise, in his trance-like way, that he was doing the wrong thing. However, he joined the game, and was soon in the thick of it.

As for Wallace & Co., they were highly delighted with their new friend. Castleton was the limit! He seemed to know more shady tricks than anybody they had ever met. He was decidedly an acquisition to St. Frank's—according to the lights of Wallace & Co.!

CHAPTER 19.

Reggie Isn't Sure!

“**A**NYTHING wrong, old man?” Jack Grey asked the question with some concern. For some moments he had been watching Reggie Pitt closely. Reggie was sitting next to the fire in Study K, and he was wearing a troubled, thoughtful expression. He started, and glanced up.

“Sorry!” he said. “What was that, Jack?”

“Something's on your mind, Reggie!” said Jack Grey accusingly.

“Well, I'm not denying it,” replied Pitt. “Castleton is on my mind, if you want to know the truth.”

“Oh, bother the fellow!”

“I agree with you heartily, old chap,” said Pitt. “Bother the fellow! Dash him! Blow him! And likewise jigger him! At the same time, he is just as much a problem as ever. I begin to believe that he isn't genuine at all.”

“Begin!” said Jack. “The fellow is an absolute outsider! After that game this afternoon, I don't want any more to do with him! He's mixing with Wallace & Co., and that's good enough for me.”

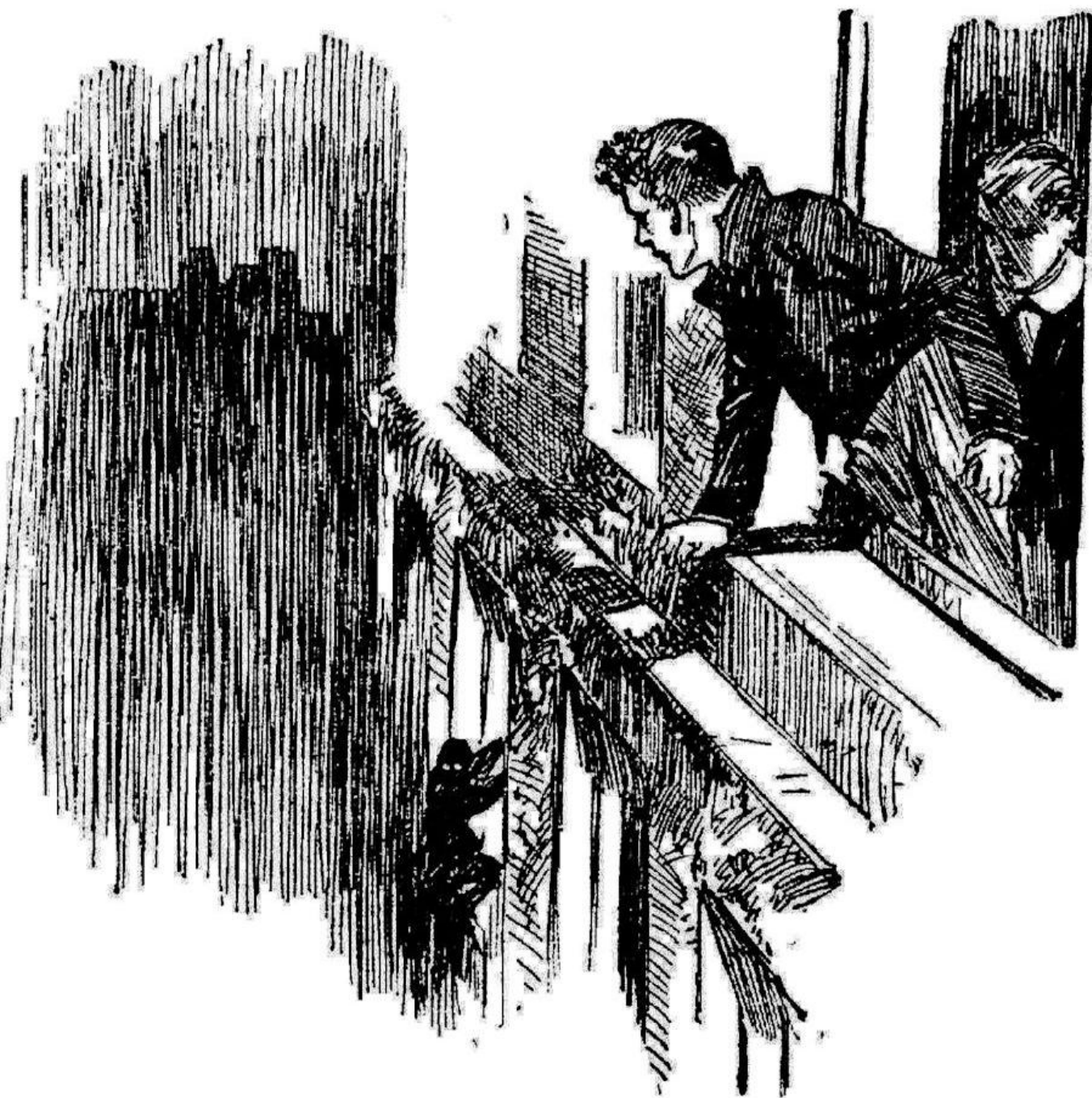
“Well, I'm worried!” said Reggie frowning. “You seem to forget that I've put Castleton into Study S with Old Pippy. And now I'm in a quandary. I can't go to Barry Stokes, and complain of Castleton's conduct, because that would be sneaking. And yet, as skipper of the juniors in this House, I've got to take action of some kind.”

“Why must you take action?”

“Because there's no telling what Castleton will get up to,” replied Reggie. “Even at this minute he may be trying to get Old Pippy to have a cigarette, or something idiotic like that. I've a good mind to go along to Study S and have a look in. Just to satisfy myself, you see?”

“All right—if you like!” said Jack good-naturedly. “We'll both go!”

They got up, and left the study. Jack Grey didn't take the matter quite so seriously



“Look!” exclaimed Handforth. “There it is—going down the ivy—No, I can't see it now!” Fullwood strained his eyes through the darkness but he couldn't see the strange, black shape. And Handforth, after a moment's reflection, wasn't quite sure if he'd seen it himself!

as Pitt did. But, then, Reggie Pitt was the junior skipper of the House, and he felt that he had responsibilities.

Out in the passage they ran into the Hon. Douglas Singleton, Solomon Levi, and Dick Goodwin.

“Hallo!” said Singleton. “There seems to be high revels in Study S.”

“What?” said Pitt sharply.

“They're having a little game, I shouldn't wonder,” said Levi, nodding. “By my life! If that lozer of a Castleton is trying to swindle Old Pippy—”

“Come along with us, and we'll soon see,” interrupted Reggie gruffly. “We'll put a stop to Castleton's games if he's started that stunt! By Jove! I didn't really think there was anything in my fears!”

Reggie was alarmed—and angry.

Was it possible that Alan Castleton had started some disreputable games in the West House already? He hadn't taken long, anyhow!

They reached Study S, and paused outside. “Shush!” murmured Pitt. “I don't like eavesdropping under any conditions, but we're justified in listening for a moment now.”

“Rather!” said Singleton.

They made no attempt to actually listen at the keyhole, to hear what was going on

inside in the way of conversation. It was quite sufficient for them to hear the murmur of voices. And there came the significant clink of money. There were several voices within that study, and one of them was clearly recognisable.

"Wallace!" muttered Reggie Pitt, his face becoming very grim. "So Castleton has invited those rotten cads into this House, has he? He's asking for trouble, and he'll get it!"

Levi sniffed the air.

"Cigarette smoke!" he murmured. "Didn't we say they were having some high old revels in there, Pitt? It's about time we butted in."

Reggie Pitt seized the door handle, and shook it. Instantly there was a complete cessation of the sounds from within.

"Pippy!" shouted Reggie.

There was a silence, and then a little scuffle.

"Eh?" came Lord Pippinton's voice. "I mean, what?"

"Is anybody in there with you, Pippy?" asked Pitt.

"Oh, rather!" replied Lord Pippinton. "One or two fellows. Eh? I mean, nobody! No, I don't mean that! Certainly not! I'm not going to tell lies, you know!"

"It's all right, you fellows in there!" called out Reggie. "You needn't try to fool me! I know that you're inside, Castleton!"

"Speaking to me?" came Alan's cool voice.

"Yes, I am!" snapped Reggie. "Unlock this door!"

"Why should I unlock it?"

"Because I tell you to!"

"And who the dickens are you to give me orders?" asked Alan insolently. "You can go and fry your face!"

"You'd better realise, Castleton, that I'm the Junior skipper of this House——"

"And you'd better realise, Pitt, that this is my study!" interrupted Alan. "I don't want any interference from you, or from anybody else! Clear off! It's like your infernal nerve to come here!"

Pitt took a deep breath.

"You've brought Wallace & Co. into this House——" he began.

"What if I have?" shouted Alan. "Can't I bring my friends into my own study if I like? Great Scott! Who are you? Lord and master of the West House, by any chance? I don't have to ask you before I bring a few visitors in with me!"

Pitt caught his breath in.

"Look here, Castleton, you'd better open this door!" he said grimly. "There are certain times when a fellow needs to interfere. I'm not alone in this, either. There are five or six other fellows out here——"

"They can all go and eat coke with you!" shouted Alan.

"All right!" said Pitt as the other juniors began to look war-like. "I'll give you just one second to open this door, Castleton!"

"You can give me as many seconds as you like, but I'm not going to open it!"

"Then I'll break it in!" shouted Pitt angrily.

He wasted no further time. Retreating a pace, he turned his shoulder, and then charged at the door with all his strength. There was a devastating crash, the lock gave way, and Pitt and the other West House juniors surged into the little room.



CHAPTER 20.

Putting the Stopper On!

"HAT the——"

"Confound it! Of all the——"

Alan Castleton and his guests stared up from the table, with many exclamations. They certainly had not expected Reggie Pitt to burst in like this. They were taken completely by surprise.

All of them were smoking, and the air was blue with smoke. Cards lay on the table, and little heaps of money were dotted about. Lord Pippinton, looking extremely uncomfortable, was sitting on the edge of the lounge. He hadn't taken part in the game yet—at least, he thought he hadn't. He had only been learning—and had parted with a couple of his fivers just in the way of practice.

"You confounded rotters!" said Reggie Pitt hotly. "Grab them, you chaps!"

"Look here!" roared Castleton. "Of all the infernal impudence——"

"That's enough!" shouted Pitt. "Another word from you, Castleton, and I'll knock you down!"

And there was such a world of meaning in his voice that Alan backed away, and did not say anything further for the moment. Wallace & Co. were seized and held. They were not looking particularly comfortable now.

"I say, stop it!" complained Wallace, in alarm. "We're here at Castleton's invitation. You can't do anything to us, Pitt!"

"Can't we?" asked Pitt, in a quivering voice. "You'll see about that soon, Wallace!"

"But we're guests!"

"Which only makes your offence worse!" said Reggie curtly. "Fine kind of guests, aren't you, to come into this House and to break the rules? You know jolly well that smoking is prohibited—and card-playing for money, too! What you do in your own House is your concern. But what you do in this House is mine!"

"Hear, hear!" sang out a lot of the other West House juniors.

"Chuck them out of the House!"

"Yes, rather!"

Doyle, Johnny Onions, and many other of the Remove fellows, had come along.

NEXT WEDNESDAY!

"THE SPOOFERS OF ST. FRANK'S!"

It's jolly hard luck!

The Remove means well. The juniors want to do Mr. Stockdale a good turn, but—

It's Alan Castleton who upsets things. He deliberately gives the game away.

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ORDER IN ADVANCE!

attracted by the general noise. And they were all eager to throw Wallace & Co. out on their necks. But Pitt was not quite so drastic. Another idea was beginning to take shape in his mind.

"We'll deal with Castleton first of all," he said. "Anybody got any handkerchiefs? We'll tie up these Ancient House rotters, and then a couple of you can guard them. We'll give Castleton the frog-march, just to show him how much he can defy us."

"Confound it!" protested Castleton. "I didn't know—"

"Didn't know what?" interrupted Pitt sharply.

"I didn't know I was breaking any rules."

"Don't try to kid me with that nonsense," said Pitt. "You're not a child—you're not a kid! We're going to frog-march you! And the next time you bring these cads into this House to play cards—well, you'll be sorry for yourself!"

Reggie turned to the startled Pippy.

"Before we go any further, Pippinton," he went on, "I want to ask you a question. Have you been playing cards?"

"No," replied Old Pippy uncomfortably. "Absolutely no! These chappies were trying to teach me. Of course, I didn't want—"

"That's all right!" said Pitt. "I know

you well enough, Pippy. But with four against you, you were pretty well helpless. Have you lost any money?"

"Well, not actually," said Pippy. "There were a couple of fivers of mine. But they were only practising with them, I understand. Castleton put them in his pocket—"

"Then Castleton will take them out—and quickly, too!" said Pitt. "Come on, Castleton—shell out!"

"I won't!" roared Alan hotly. "Pippinton was playing with us, and I won the money fairly!"

"Turn him upside down!" ordered Pitt. "He won the money fairly, did he? We'll soon see—"

"All right—all right!" said Alan hastily. "I'll hand it over!"

He took out the two fivers, and Pitt handed them back to Lord Pippinton. Alan was looking absolutely fierce and sullen. He had invited Wallace & Co. to his study, and this was the result! He not only looked ridiculous, but he had lost the chance of the easiest money he had ever had within his grasp.

For the next five minutes Alan was not able to think of anything in particular. He was frog-marched not only down the Junior passage, but all the way round the Triangle,

Occasionally he was bumped upon the hard gravel, and when the ordeal was over there was scarcely any wind left in him. He was very much of a wreck. Utterly exhausted, he was allowed to crawl away.

"It's not everything he deserves, but it'll do to begin with," said Reggie Pitt breathlessly. "He's a new fellow, for one thing, and we'd better go easy. Now we'll deal with those Ancient House rotters!"

"Going to frog-march them, too?" asked Goodwin. "I'll admit it's a champion idea, lad, but it's rather exhausting work, isn't it?"

Reggie Pitt grinned.

"As a matter of fact, I've got another idea," he said slowly. "Well, it's not exactly my idea—it's Handy's!"

"Handy's?"

"Yes," grinned Pitt. "One of our chaps heard that he's been talking about reviving the old House rivalry. You know what Handy is for letting his little secrets out. Well, why shouldn't we take a leaf out of his book and start the ball rolling?"

"By Jove, that's a great wheeze!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's be the first to start the new order of things!"

"Let's begin on Wallace & Co."

"Hurrah! A jape—a jape!"

There was plenty of enthusiasm in a moment. The majority of the West House fellows were only too pleased to comply with Reggie Pitt's suggestion. The scheme had the added attraction of being originated by the Ancient House fellows. It would be rather rich if Pitt & Co. could take a leaf out of the book of their rivals, and draw first blood! And Wallace and his companions were here, waiting to be ragged! They were on the spot, all ready to practise upon! It was a chance that simply could not be ignored.

And Reggie Pitt and his valiant men went back to Study S, and thereafter Wallace, Gulliver and Bell went through a somewhat trying experience—an experience which they had certainly not bargained for!



CHAPTER 21.

Without Thanks!

WE ARE NOT WANT EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH strode out of the Ancient House lobby with a purposeful expression on his face. With him was Nipper, and behind came Church, McClure, Tommy Watson, Tregellis-West, and many other members of the Ancient House elite. Most of them were grinning. They didn't take the serious view of this affair that Handforth did.

The raid on the West House, in fact, was just about to start.

"What you've got to do is to follow my lead!" Handforth was saying. "This is my idea, and I insist upon leading the party."

"That's all right, Handy," said Tommy Watson. "You can insist all you like. You can imagine yourself to be the leader, if it pleases you. But Nipper is the chap we're following."

"Begad, rather!" nodded Sir Montie.

"Peace, peace!" murmured Nipper. "Don't let's have any arguments now, just when we're starting on—Hullo, what the——"

He paused, and stared across the Triangle. Not exactly across the Triangle, but down it, towards the West House. Three figures had just emerged from the West House doorway, and were hobbling curiously down the steps. They were plainly visible in the flood of light which came from the West House doorway.

"What are they?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Goodness knows," said Nipper. "But they seem to be coming in this direction."

A series of yells came from the West House, but none of the rival Remove fellows were in evidence. Only these three grotesque figures. They had evidently been ejected, and nobody had taken the trouble to follow them.

The three progressed in a very strange and startling manner.

They came along with little tiny footsteps—half hopping and half jumping.

"Hold on!" said Nipper. "Let's stay here and wait for them. We can see them better in the light."

"Yes, but who are they?" asked Handforth.

"We shall soon see," replied Nipper. "They're coming straight towards us."

And in a very few moments the mystery was solved.

The three figures came jumping along, one of them a little in advance of the other two. They made no sounds, except for grunts and gasps. And as they came nearer it was noticed that they were in an extraordinary condition. Their hands were tied behind them, and their ankles were hobbled so closely that it was only possible for them to progress with little footsteps—or by jumping. They were almost unrecognisable as human beings.

For, instead of faces, they possessed blobs of soot, mud, flour, and other like abominations. Out of this conglomeration of mixture, their eyes gleamed. Their mouths were open, too, making the general effect all the more grotesque.

Their hair was standing up on end, and fixed into sticky spirals.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie Glen-thorne, with a shudder. "I mean to say, isn't this somewhat murky, laddies? How frightfully frightful! Imagine the feelings of these poor coves! My heart weeps for them—absolutely!"

"Don't weep unnecessarily, Archie," said Nipper grimly. "In spite of their make-up, I rather fancy I recognise them. I shall be very much mistaken if this first chap isn't Gordon Wallace himself."

"What!"

"They've got placards on them, too!" shouted Tommy Watson.

The three figures were now very close, and the placards could be read with the greatest ease. They were just pieces of cardboard, with some words daubed on them. The words were as follows:

"WE ARE NOT WANTED IN THE WEST HOUSE!"

The next moment the trio were surrounded, and the air was full of shouts. Wallace & Co.—for, of course, these unhappy figures were none other than the cads of Study A—glared at their Form fellows with baleful eyes.

"Well?" snarled Wallace. "Haven't you seen enough of us yet?"

"Thought so!" said Nipper. "It's Wallace all right! Can't you recognise his chirrup?"

"Don't be funny!" said Wallace hoarsely. "We've been assaulted."

"Look at us!" wailed Gulliver. "Our suits are ruined!"

"And they've put liquid glue on our hair!" howled Bell. "Oh, the cads, the rotters!"

Handforth found his voice.

"But—but what the dickens does it mean?" he demanded. "Why have they done this?"

"Oh, they're startin' some silly, idiotic House rivalry again!" snapped Wallace. "I thought all that rot was dead. But Pitt and his crowd are bringing it to life again, and they've picked on us as the first victims."

Handforth jumped a foot into the air.

"What!" he thundered. "Great gorgonzola! Do you mean to say that the West House bounders have——"

He paused, too utterly thunderstruck for words. His great scheme had been forestalled! While he and his companions were actually on the way to the West House to start this great campaign, Pitt & Co. had got busy! They had stolen a leaf out of their book! It was such a staggerer that Handforth almost lost his voice again.

"Never mind, Handy!" said Nipper, with a chuckle. "It doesn't matter much if the West House chaps have drawn first blood. This will make our rag all the more interesting."

"But, you ass, they've beaten us!" roared Handforth.

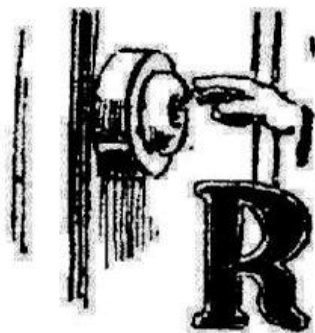
"Rats!" said Nipper. "They've only japed Wallace and his pals. And, if I know anything of them, they thoroughly deserved it. I'll bet a penny to a pound that Wallace and his pals went over to the West House to play cards with that new chap Castleton. Pitt discovered them at it, and chucked them out!"

"And serve them right, too!" said Watson hotly.

"I know that, but you can't get away from the fact that the West House chaps

have forestalled us," said Handforth angrily. "That's what I don't like! Where's Pitt? Where the dickens is Pitt? I'm going to have this out with him!"

"Well, you won't have to wait long," said Nipper, with a smile. "For here comes Reggie now, and, by the look of it, he's bringing every other West House junior with him!"



CHAPTER 22.

After Lights-out!

REGGIE PITT & CO. came up, with blithely smiling faces.

"Hallo, you Ancient House chaps!" sang out Pitt. "Pax, you know!"

"Pax be blowed!" shouted Handforth. "We're not going to let you off——"

"Can't touch me, Handy!" said Reggie. "I've got my fingers crossed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, cheese it, Handy!" said Nipper. "Pitt has called 'pax,' and we must respect it. Besides, I want to hear the truth about Wallace & Co."

"Confound you!" snapped Wallace. "Can't you let us go?"

"All right, hobble along, my son," said Nipper. "I'm not detaining you, am I?"

"Cut these ropes for us!" urged Wallace frantically. "Hasn't anybody got a pocket-knife?"

"Don't you do it!" said Reggie Pitt. "Let them hobble all the way indoors—and all the way upstairs, too! They haven't had half they deserve!"

"But what have they done?" demanded Handforth.

Pitt briefly explained.

"So we thought we'd start this House rivalry business in a good way," he concluded. "These cads had invaded our House, and were smoking and card-playing there. We don't want that sort of thing on our side!"

"The cads, the rotters, the miserable worms!" said Handforth furiously. "So that's what they were doing, is it? Didn't you black their eyes first? Didn't you give them thick ears? Daubing them with soot and flour wasn't half bad enough."

"I think they'll do for once," said Pitt. "They're not likely to forget this little affair in a hurry, anyhow! Besides, it wasn't entirely their fault. They were over on our side at the invitation of that precious new chap, Castleton."

"Was he playing, too?" asked Nipper.

"Playing?" said Jack Grey. "I believe the chap is worse than Wallace himself! He's an utter cad—a despicable rotter! It was a bad day for the West House when he came into it!"

"Well, it's jolly rummy!" said Nipper, frowning. "Castleton came to St. Frank's with a fine reputation. We thought he was going to be a thorough sportsman, and

instead of that he's turning out to be an out-and-out young blackguard. You'll have to keep your eye on him in future, Reggie."

"Trust me for that!" said Reggie Pitt, nodding. "He won't be able to get at Old Pippy's cash a second time. Once is enough for me! I can't very well sneak on him, and have him transferred into another study, but I can watch him closely."

By this time Wallace & Co. had gone in. It was only by the purest luck that they avoided a prefect or a master. Somehow, they managed to reach their bed-rooms, and there they remained, until Nipper and one or two others came up to release them. Afterwards there was a conference in Study C.

"Well, that rather spoilt our little rag, didn't it?" asked Nipper. "We couldn't very well go over and jape the West House fellows when they were in such force. Still, we needn't give up hope."

"What do you mean?" asked Handforth.

"Well, why not make it a real jape, a regular scorcher?" asked Nipper, his eyes gleaming. "Why not make it a jape with full risks?"

"Full risks, dear old boy?" asked Sir Montie, in a mild voice.

"Exactly!" said Nipper. "We'll do it after lights-out!"

"Phew!"

"By George, that's the wheeze!" said Handforth. "After lights-out! It isn't a proper jape unless we do it then."

"Just what I was thinking," said Nipper. "It's a lot more attractive if we have to creep about, and steal into the enemy's quarters, and do things on the quiet. I've got one or two little ideas, too. I rather think we'll give the West House better than they gave us!"

"But how?" asked Church. "What do you propose doing, Nipper?"

"If you'll gather round, comrades, and lend me your ears, I'll proceed to fill them right up to the brim!" replied Nipper cheerily. "Remember, this is going to be a jape that'll make the West House chaps admit they're whacked. Nothing malicious, of course—all open and above-board. But, by Jove, we'll have the laugh of them to-morrow!"

And Nipper proceeded to outline his plan to those about him. And by the time he had finished they were all grinning widely. Even Handforth handsomely confessed that the ideas were much better than any that he had thought of.

"Of course, I've got plenty of schemes stewing," he amended. "But this wheeze of yours, Nipper, is a corker. All right, then. We meet again after lights-out—at half-past eleven, eh?"

"At half-past eleven exactly!" replied Nipper. "Is that understood by everybody?"

"Rather!" chorused the others.

And the meeting dispersed.

The Ancient House juniors were very keen on this new rivalry stunt. It was high time

that a little spirit of adventure and excitement was introduced into the various Houses of St. Frank's. It was all right to be rivals in sport, but why not be rivals in fun, too? It would add a zest to life—a spice to things in general. The various Houses would be constantly vying with one another to provide the latest laughter-raiser. Each House would do its best to get the better of its neighbour.

And so, when the Remove went up to bed at the usual time, not many of the fellows went to sleep. A few did, since Nipper had given his word that he would come round and give everybody a call at eleven-thirty.

In Handforth's dormitory Church and McClure proceeded to get into bed, but Handforth wouldn't even think of undressing. He stated it as his intention to wait up until the clock struck half-past eleven just in case Nipper forgot all about it.

"And you're a couple of fatheads to get undressed like this!" he said disparagingly. "What's the idea of it?"

"It's a jolly good idea!" said Church. "We might as well have two hours' sleep, mightn't we? And as long as you're going to keep awake, Handy, there's nothing the matter with the wheeze. You'll give us a jab at half-past eleven, won't you?"

"I'll not only give you a jab, but I'll tip you off those beds!" promised Handforth generously.

He sprawled back on his own bed in order to think deeply—to plan out some clever japes. Surprisingly enough, however, within five minutes he was snoring gently, and Church and McClure, who hadn't yet got to sleep, grinned to one another and settled themselves down.



CHAPTER 23.

The Cry in the Night!

ROUSE up, Handy! Rouse up!"

Edward Oswald Handforth sat up blinking as he felt a hand on his shoulder. The bright gleam from an electric torch was blazing in his eyes. He blinked more than ever.

"Hallo!" he mumbled. "Who's that?"

"Only me!" said Nipper cheerily. "Time to get up!"

"Don't be an ass!" said Handforth. "How can it be time to get up? We've only just come to bed. Wasn't the arrangement that we should get up at half-past eleven?"

"It's exactly twenty-seven minutes to twelve," murmured Nipper. "I think you must have been having a little dream, Handy, or is this your idea of keeping awake?"

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Handforth, looking round him. "I must have dozed off!"

Church and McClure were soon awake, and it only took them a few moments to get into their clothing. Somehow this idea of a jape

on the West House after lights-out didn't quite appeal to them so much now. They yawned copiously as they got into their clothing.

"Ugh!" shivered Church. "It looks pretty cold outside!"

"Yes, there's a stiff wind!" said Nipper. "But why worry? It's not far across to the West House."

He went out, and shortly afterwards all the raiders gathered out in the corridor. There were about a dozen of them altogether, and they were wearing rubber-soled tennis shoes. Some of them were carrying implements, too. They looked a very business-like crowd.

"Everything all ready?" murmured Nipper.

"Got the screwdrivers and the screws?"

"Yes!" grinned Fullwood. "We've each got a screwdriver and a gimlet, and we've got plenty of screws, too. I understand that De Valerie is in charge of the chemical department."

"That's right!" nodded Val. "Leave the chemicals to me. I'm in charge of the stinks."

Like shadows they crept downstairs, and were undisturbed as they left the Ancient House by one of the lower windows. It was a very simple task for them to creep across the West Square and to make for a window which Nipper had given some attention to earlier—before bed-time. In fact, Nipper had loosened some of the fastenings, so that the slightest pull brought the window open. The way into the West House was now clear.

"Now, remember," murmured Nipper, "not a sound from any of you! Each fellow knows his business—we've got it all planned out. Every man must go to his job and do it quickly, effectively and without any waste of time. There must be no talking, and the sooner we're back in our own House the better. We shall enjoy this jape in the morning more than now."

"By jingo!" grinned Fullwood. "Won't we have the laugh of them in the morning?"

"Yes, rather!"

And once inside the raiders separated. Cecil de Valerie and two other juniors gave their full attention to the junior bath-rooms. There they proceeded to do some rather remarkable work.

Taking some bottles from their pockets, they proceeded to smear the wash-basins with some invisible substance which had a curious glycerine-like tenacity. It was quite impossible to see it on the white porcelain of the basins.

"Won't they get a surprise when they start washing in the morning?" murmured De Valerie with an inward chuckle. "This chemical of mine is guaranteed to do the trick. As soon as they fill the basins the water will turn as black as your hat."

"This is rich!" murmured Jerry Dodd.

"Messmates, it's one of the best things I've heard of for many a voyage!" breathed Tom Burton. "When those West House lubbers

get anchored to these basins they'll get some big surprises."

"Why not test it?" asked Jerry Dodd.

"That's all right—I've tested the stuff already," replied Val. "There's enough on each basin to turn the water black for five or six times. Pitt and his crowd will go dotty wondering what the dickens is the matter."

They chuckled again, and in the meantime the other raiders were very busy in a different direction.

Working with extreme caution, they were proceeding to put screws into every Remove dormitory door. The idea was simple but very effective.

Every Remove dormitory was being screwed up!

There would be no outward sign that anything was the matter. But when the juniors tried to get out they would find themselves hopelessly bottled up. And then later, when they finally came out into the Triangle, they would meet with all sorts of bland inquiries from the Ancient House juniors regarding their lateness. And after that Nipper & Co. would simply yell at their West House rivals for the remainder of the day. Pitt & Co. would be chipped unmercifully from morning until night.

At last the work was over and there had been no disturbances.

According to prearrangement they all met at the end of the upper corridor, each fellow going to this rendezvous as soon as he had finished his own particular task. The idea was to creep quietly out without giving any of the West House fellows the slightest inkling that they had been raided.

"All here?" murmured Nipper as he came up with Tommy Watson. "Good egg! We've done everything splendidly, and there hasn't been any alarm."

"And—oh, what a surprise in the morning!" breathed Handforth. "By George, I'd love to be here!"

"Don't worry, we shall hear all about it," said Nipper. "Those chaps will go blue in the face when they hear us yelling at them. It's not a particularly elaborate jape, but it'll do to start with—"

"Hallo!" interrupted Watson. "What was that? Listen, you chaps! Listen!"

They all held their breath. From somewhere along the junior passage came a sound of frantic, muffled cries. Nipper started off in that direction, and the others were close behind him.

"It's old Pippy!" said Nipper in a startled tone. "That's Pippy's voice. And, by Jove, he seems to be in pretty dire trouble by the sound of his voice."

This was perfectly true. Those cries from Lord Pippinton's bed-room were alarming in their utter extremity. What could be happening there behind that screwed-up door?

CHAPTER 24.

The Mystery of Old Pippy!



HE screwed up door! Nipper suddenly gave a start. There was something rather sinister in the thought. The youthful Lord Pippinton was apparently in grave danger, and nobody could get to him quickly for the simple reason that the door was screwed up. The Ancient House japers had made it impossible for any quick rescue.

Thoroughly excited, they reached Lord Pippinton's bed-room and came to a halt outside.

Every breath was held, and from behind that sealed door came curious muffled sounds. The cries had completely died down, but these present sounds were even more significant.

"Where's Castleton?" asked Nipper quickly. "Doesn't Castleton sleep with old Pippy?"

"Not to-night," replied Tommy Watson. "They haven't quite got the bed-room ready yet. I heard Pitt saying so this morning. Castleton's sleeping further down the passage with two other chaps. He's not in here. Pippy's all alone."

Thud—thud!

"Sounds like a struggle in there," continued Watson.

"I'll tell you what!" shouted Fullwood. "What about the window upstairs? There are some rooms above these, aren't there? And there's ivy all up the West House wall! Why shouldn't we go upstairs and slither down the ivy? Then we can get in the window! I'm game for it, anyhow!"

"Same here!" said Handforth eagerly.

And, without waiting for any of the others, Handforth and Fullwood rushed off. Nipper remained at the door with a screwdriver, and he was frantically at work, removing those screws.

Further along the passage, thumps were sounding on some of the bed-room doors. The West House fellows were awakening—and they were finding themselves bottled up.

"Go along, and tell these chaps that it's a jape!" said Nipper quickly. "Tell them not to make a noise, or there'll be a master on us—and that'll mean a flogging all round!"

The others obeyed with alacrity.

In the meantime, Handforth and Fullwood were leaning out of the window on the floor above. Suddenly Handforth pointed.

"What was that?" he whispered tensely.

"What was what?" asked Fullwood. "I didn't see anything."

"Yes!" said Handforth, in a strange voice. "Didn't you see a black shadow come out of Pippy's window? Didn't you see it climb down the ivy? There! It's going down—No! I can't see it now!"

Ralph Leslie Fullwood strained his eyes.

"I didn't see anything!" he said. "I think it must have been your imagination, Handy."

"It wasn't!" muttered Handforth. "I distinctly saw a black shape come out—a kind of shadow. But it's too dark to see much here. And I don't think this ivy is strong enough to hold us—"

"No, it's no good," said Fullwood. "It's strong enough lower down, but it's all weak up here. We'd better go down again."

They got downstairs just as the door of Lord Pippinton's bed-room was unscrewed, and Nipper & Co. broke in. Nipper switched on the light, and was greatly relieved to see Lord Pippinton sitting up in bed, looking dazed. He was gasping considerably, and the bed-clothes were lying in a disordered heap at the bottom of the bed.

"Pippinton!" said Nipper. "Why did you shout out like that?"

"Frightfully sorry!" gasped Old Pippy, feeling his throat. "But, you know, something attacked me, then the dashed thing went through the window!"

"But the window is closed!"

"Eh?" said his lordship. "Closed? Oh, ah! So it is! That's deucedly funny, isn't it?"

Nipper went to the window, flung it open, and leaned out. There was not the slightest indication that any intruder had come into this bed-room by means of the window.

"You've been having a nightmare, old man," Nipper said. "That was all that was wrong. There was nothing in this bed-room."

"Oh, but there was," insisted Pippy, still looking very scared. "A beastly black thing, you know. It came at me, and woke me up. I was half-smothered. I wondered—"

"A black thing?" repeated Handforth, pushing forward. "I believe he's right, you know! I saw a black sort of shape coming out of his window!"

"What!"

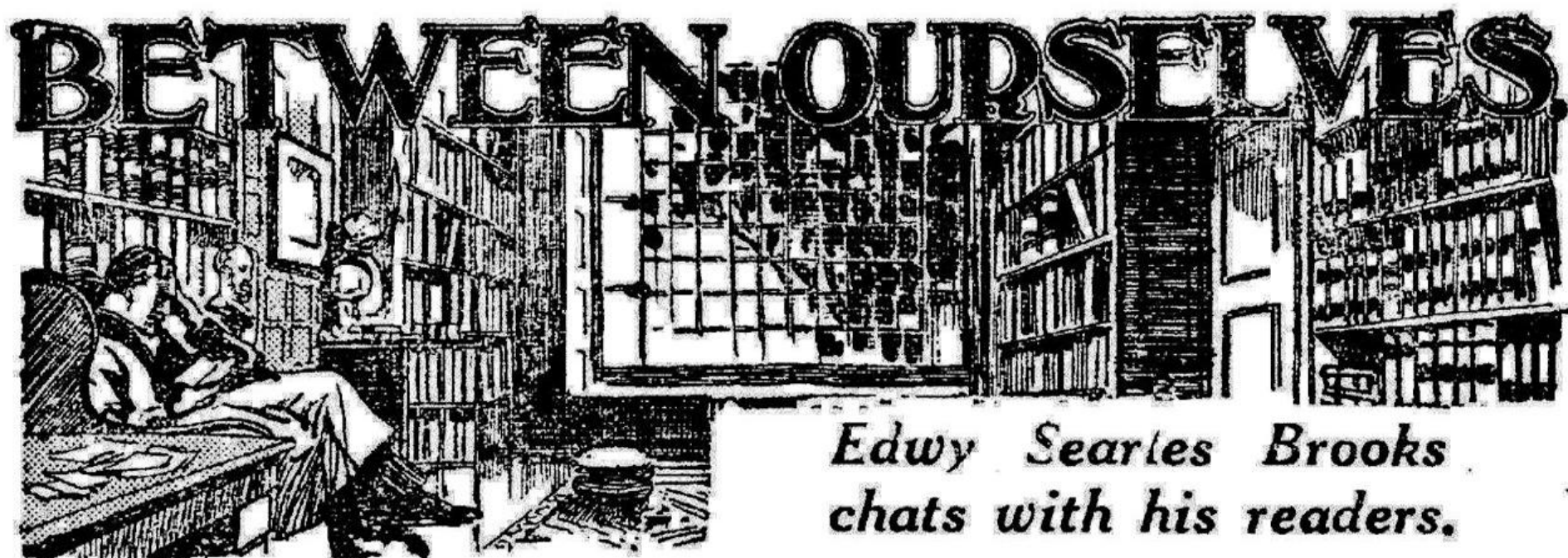
"Don't take any notice of him!" said Fullwood. "I saw nothing. You know what Handy is for imagining things! I don't believe there was any shape at all. He naturally thinks there was now, after what Pippy has said."

And so they dispersed. The jape, on the whole, was considered to be a fiasco. The West House fellows would still, of course, have the benefit of that chemical in the wash-basins. But the Ancient House fellows returned to their own quarters with the feeling that Old Pippy had spoilt everything. Naturally, he had just had a nightmare.

But Edward Oswald Handforth wondered. Had he really seen a shadow? Had there been some sinister object in Lord Pippinton's bed-room? If Handforth had known anything about those baleful eyes which had looked into Lord Pippinton's study the other day, he would certainly have said that his imagination had not played him false!

THE END.

(Look out for next week's thrilling long complete yarn, entitled: "THE SPOOFER OF ST. FRANK'S!" Make sure of your copy of the "N. L. L." by ordering NOW!)



*Edwy Searles Brooks
chats with 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. All letters should be addressed: EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, LONDON, E.C.4. Every letter will have my personal attention. Letters of very special merit will be distinguished by a star (*) against the sender's name. My photo exchange offer is still open: my autographed photo for yours—but yours first, please.—E.S.B.

HAVE you got your extra copy of this issue? If not, make a bee-line for the nearest newsagent's and collar one! If he's sold out, try the others—if there are any others near you. And if you can't get your second copy then, order one from the newsagent nearest to you, and you'll have it before the week's out, unless your newsagent's jolly slow. But I'm hoping that most of you will have read my remarks in the last three numbers, and that you will already have your second copy all ready to shove under the nose of a non-reader.

Well, now, just give away that second copy (or sell it, if you like) to someone who isn't a reader at present. I have abundant proof that many thousands of readers are thankful that Our Paper was introduced to them. So it's jolly certain that whoever you introduce it to will be more than likely to bless you for "putting them wise" to what they've been missing. That's if they read it, and find it as much to their liking as you do. Anyhow, give them the chance, and you've done your bit.

If you don't already belong to the St. Frank's League, and you want to join, this will be a fine opportunity for you to do so. Just get the Application Form signed by whoever you give the extra copy to, and send it up to the Chief Officer with the Application Form out of your own copy. That's all. The Membership Certificate and Badge will then come along to you. You can go in for the Medals afterwards, if you want to.

Then, again, if you don't keep your copy of the Old Paper after you've read it, you can give that away also—to another non-reader. In that way you'll give double help in this special effort which I'm asking all our readers to make this particular week. Of course, there are bound to be a few shirkers, and so double help of this kind

will square matters a bit. And I should like to keep a strict record of all who make a double effort like that. And I will, if you'll only put your modesty in your pockets and write and tell me what you have done.

If you can't afford to buy an extra copy, and are not keeping your regular copy for binding, or anything like that, you can make a special point of giving this week's copy away to a non-reader after you have read it. And you can do the same every week, if it comes to that. The more new readers who are roped in every week, the better for all concerned. But, anyhow, do take your part in this introduction business this week. Don't be left out in the cold. I want you ALL to co-operate, and make a "grand slam" of it.

Well, that's all I'm going to say about it. Now it's up to you—to all of you. And you've shown such enthusiasm in the past that I haven't a scrap of fear about the result. In fact, I shouldn't be a bit surprised if you catch the Publisher napping, and demand more copies than he's able to supply. But I think he's well prepared for the Great Rush. So I'll rest easy in mind, and get on with a few acknowledgements.

Samuel Jeffrey* (Hoylake), Douglas P. Calder (Cults), "Surfer"* (Sydney), "Troubled" (Colwyn Bay), W. Newman (Port Sunlight), Arthur J. S. Hand* (Shrewsbury), Miss G. E. Bircher (Braintree), Geoff Johnson (Market Harboro'), A Cobbett (Camberley), Geoff. Dayman (Wellington, N.Z.), Ray. Clauson* (Cottonvale, Queensland), "Blot" (Sheffield), G. M. Gill* (Farnborough), Stanley Goodworth (Goole), R. Stead (Leeds), Thos. G. Mercer (Liverpool), Wm. Eric Bryan (Bradford), S. A. W. Harvey (Sydenham), R. A. J. A. Gleeson (Limerick), R. Ball (Lewes).

Here is a portion of a letter which I feel I must quote. It is from a reader who signs himself "Leslie," and who hails from Golders Green. "The headmaster of a big London school banned the reading of all school stories. So I resolved to point out to him the silly mistake he had made. He granted me an interview, and after a long talk he said he would get the opinion of the other masters before he gave me a definite decision. Three days later he called for me, and told me that it would be impossible to comply with my wish. I then asked him when he last read a school story, and what he thought of it now. His answer was to the effect that he had never read one! I then came up with the argument, why hang a man before you have tried him—and at the same time I produced a bound series of the 'Nelson Lee Library.' After a long talk, I persuaded him to read it over. Two weeks later, the school was called together in the large hall where an announcement was made to the effect that we may read the 'Nelson Lee Library' if we like. So I felt that I had done some good in my youth. My argument all the time had been that your stories were clean and wholesome, and showed how to lead a straight life." Thanks very much, "Leslie," and thanks too, for your well-meant criticisms. I think you must have missed the acknowledgment of your last letter, because I am quite certain it was printed in the Old Paper.

Thanks in chunks, Alan B. Bresnahan, for sending me the "Canberra Commemoration Number" of the "Melbourne Weekly Times." I am reading it with very great interest—particularly as I am contemplating an Australian Series for Our Paper. It was very thoughtful of you—and very generous—to think of me in this way. I wish I could express my real appreciation of this genuine friendship.

A. Thomas Ryland (Stourbridge), "Zingrave" (Norwich), Norah Murtough (Perth, W. Aus.), E. T. Bryan (S. Chingford), "Billy" (Camberwell Green), Stanley F. Bainbridge (Chelmsford), G. Hitchcock (Epsom), F. Sharples (Blackburn), George F. Hodgson (Scarborough), Ella Rowlands (Ballarat East, Vic., Aus.), Fred W. Boyce (Bristol), Norman Green (Leeds), Michael McCarthy (Dublin), J. S. Ricketts (Hayle), Fred Madge (Birmingham), A. J. S. Hand (Wroxeter), P. A. Wallbridge (Newcastle, N.S.W.), H. C. Dance (S.W.11), Kenneth Smith (Hornsey), "Jonathan" (Liverpool).

Yes, "Zingrave" (I think you really should have signed yourself "Miss Zingrave," a photograph of my frontispiece was published in the Old Paper a year or two ago. And I can assure you that it was really an "authentic edition." At the same time, any photograph is liable to suffer when it is reproduced on anything but art paper. And I am very much afraid that your humble was considerably altered in appearance. In fact, when the photo was reproduced in that particular issue, I wondered who the dickens the queer-looking chap could be. Then I realised, with a start, that it was myself! Of course, if you want a real photograph of me—and one that shows me in stark reality—you have only to send me a snapshot of yourself, and I'll let you have my autographed photo in return.

Talking about this photo of mine, and all the photos I receive from readers, I have a special word to say to you, E. T. Bryan. Or, to be exact, it is to your sister. You tell me that she believes that I put all readers' photographs into the waste-paper basket. Well, will you kindly tell your sister that my albums really *do* exist? Every photograph that I have ever received is

numbered and dated, and is carefully stored away. You say that you want the names of six chaps in the Third. All right, here they are—Willy Handforth, Chubby Heath, Juicy Lemon, Owen minor, Bobby Dexter, Eric Gates. The Housemasters at St. Frank's are as follows. Ancient House, Mr. Nelson Lee; West House, Mr. Beverley Stokes; Modern House, Mr. Arthur Stockdale; East House, Mr. Barnaby Goole.

You needn't excuse yourself for "being familiar," Michael McCarthy. You started your letter, "Dear Edwy," and I don't regard this as a familiarity at all. It is simply chummy—and just what I like.

"No. 5566" (Tregeagle, N.S.W.), Jas. Malcolm McKillop (Waverley, N.S.W.), Ralph Dean (Melbourne), Richard Dunn (Clapton), Harry McMahon (West Broken Hill, N.S.W.), B. Crown (W. I.), Stanley James Green (Sutton, Cambs.), "Leagette" (Aston), "Boy Scout Admirer" (Wolverth), Thomas H. Littlejohn (Wolverton), C. E. Miller (Fulham), "A Reader" (Stockport), "Handy's Admirer" (Shepherds Bush), Eric Miller (Ashton-under-Lyne), "Harry Gresham" (Hollinwood), J. C. Hill (Birmingham), J. M. Packer (Reading), Leslie D. Hillier* (Tatsfield), Winnie Hamilton (Hull), Ralph Sewell** (St. Ives, Hunts)

There is one point about your letter, "A Reader," that I feel disposed to comment upon. That thought of yours was quite a good one. You say that you decided to send your copy of the "Nelson Lee" to a friend, and to ask him to read it, and, if he didn't like it, to pass it on. Well, here's the point that I mean. Why didn't you tell him to pass it on if he *did* like it?

Your brother is quite right, Eric Miller. Nelson Lee and Nipper first went to St. Frank's on a defective case, and since then they have been permanent fixtures at the old school.

"One Who Knows" (Edinburgh), A. Henderson (Southampton), A. G. Crosbie (Melbourne), T. Weston (Birmingham), Frank Palmer (East Grinstead), Terence Sullivan* (Tufnell Park), John B. Ashe (Cardiff), Henry Charles Brown (Stoke Newington), Ted Schroder* (Hamburg), Dicky Wright (Hackney Downs), James A. Innes (Port Elizabeth), Jean Hill* (Christchurch), R. Fitzpatrick (Strabane), Cecil Riecken* (Belfast), F. Smith (Newthorpe), Alfred Bates (Old Windsor), Alfred Kemp (Staines), David Benjamin (Waverley, Aus.), Patrick Joseph Roche (Melbourne).

I'm not sure whether that suggestion of yours, James A. Innes, would be popular with the majority of readers. You say that I haven't any Spaniards, or Italians, or Egyptians, or Greeks, in the school. Well, no. And do we really need them? I find it quite difficult enough to deal with all my British characters—and with such fellows as Vandyke, Jerry Dodd, Duncan, and the other stalwarts from the Dominions. I really don't think foreign juniors at St. Frank's would be popular.

Sydney Henry Robinson* (Clapham), Muriel Tremayne (Rochdale), Gordon H. Harrison (Douglas, I.O.M.), "R.E."* (Abergavenny), Geoffrey Brain* (Havant), "A Boys' Brigade Reader" (Brighton), Gordon Henry Sewell* (Southampton), Jack Campbell* (Wellington, N.Z.), Hubert Kelk (Worksop), Reginald G. Elliott** (Berkhamsted), W. G. Poulton (London, N.I.), W. H. May (Richmond, Vic., Aus.), W. Bedford (Southend-on-Sea), "Australian Reader" (Adelaide, South Aus.),

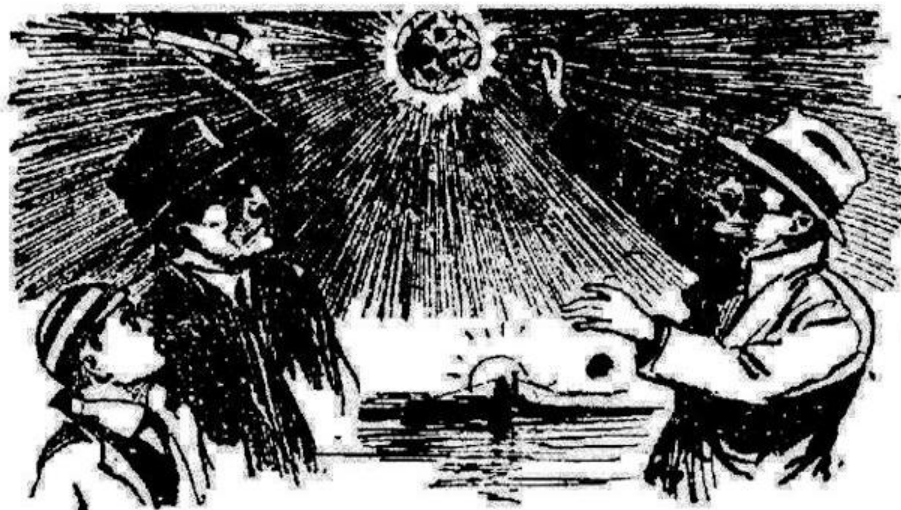
(Continued on page 41.)

Trackett Grim's Triumph! Thrilling Concluding Chapters!

TRACKETT GRIM'S GREATEST CASE!

NOTE.—

Handforth flatly refused Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks' offer of assistance in the writing of this story. It now appears as it came from his pen, with the exception that certain errors in spelling and punctuation have been corrected by the Editor.



By
**EDWARD
OSWALD
HANDFORTH**

WHAT'S HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS:

Having recovered the Blue Ruby from Armand Rocke, the master crook, Trackett Grim, the world's greatest detective, and his assistant, Splinter, find themselves in the Klondike. They take part in a gold rush, and following an avalanche, make one of the richest "strikes" in history. The detective stakes the claim, and then he and Splinter start off for Dawson City, to get machinery to work their mine. When they have gone some distance, Splinter happens to look back, and, to his horror, sees Armand Rocke and his gang of criminals about to jump their claim!

NOW READ THIS STUPENDOUS INSTALMENT.

The Claim Jumpers!

RUNNING like mad, Trackett Grim and Splinter went back along the trail. They were hoping against hope that they would arrive at the spot before Armand Rocke and his gang jumped, and so fleet were they that they actually did arrive.

Before the fatal leap could be taken, Trackett Grim and Splinter charged into battle, and then commenced a terrific fight.

"You rotters!" shouted Splinter. "You leave our claims alone!"

"Rats!" said Armand Rocke, the words hissing out between his clenched teeth. "These claims are full of gold, and we're going to have them!"

"You bet we are!" shouted the other rotters.

"You fools!" said Trackett Grim contemptuously. "Do you think that you can beat me? Me! Do you think you can beat the man who has never been beaten?"

And the villains recoiled at those words—for there was something in Trackett Grim's tone, something in his manner, which boded them ill.

And there was something in Trackett Grim's punch which boded them a lot more ill.

Biff! Crash! Thud! Biff!

Like battering-rams, Trackett Grim's fists

shot out, and Armand Rocke's men were felled like pole-axed oxen.

But they came up again and again, for they were tough brutes. Armand Rocke himself was as strong as Dempsey and Sharkey and Tunney all rolled into one. Not that he frightened Trackett Grim, for Trackett Grim was stronger.

And yet the numbers were too great.

In spite of the valiant struggle that went on, Trackett Grim and Splinter found themselves being gradually beaten. Again and again they rushed into the attack, but Armand Rocke and his men stood firm. A good many of the scoundrels were laid out flat—knocked out by Trackett Grim's terrific punches. But all the others were still coming on—still fighting like demons.

And the end was inevitable. At last the great Trackett Grim was to be beaten! It was an awful thought—a terrible idea. The more Trackett Grim thought about it the harder he battled. And Splinter, faithful to his great master, stood side by side with him, and fought gamely.

Back to back, our pair did wonders. They were fighting not only for their record—which they wanted to keep unbroken—but they were also fighting for that gold. They wanted to prevent Armand Rocke and his gang from jumping on the claims.

Suddenly shouts came from the distance, and Splinter let out a wild whoop of de-

light. For a great gang of miners were coming. They had heard sounds of the battle from afar, and were coming along to see what it was all about.

"Help!" shouted Splinter. "Quick, you chaps! Rescue!"

"Hurrah!" roared the miners.

They swept onwards like an avalanche, and surged in to the attack. It was a glorious relief, for Trackett Grim and Splinter. A moment before all hope had seemed dead, but now they fought with redoubled vigour.

"We're here!" shouted the miners, as they rushed up.

"Curses!" snarled Armand Roche, as he twirled round. "Foiled at the finish!"

He made a last attempt to get free, but those miners were on him like a pack of hounds. They grabbed him, shoved his face into the snow, and sat on him. He was done—beaten.

"Well done, boys!" said Trackett Grim. "You came along in the nick of time—and I'd like you to accept these nuggets as a token of my——"

"No!" said the leader of the miners. "We don't want any nuggets, sir! We're only too glad to be of help——"

He broke off, and stared at Trackett Grim in wonder. The other miners were staring, too.

"Look!" said one of them, in an awed voice. "It's Trackett Grim!"

Even in the Klondike, thousands of miles from civilisation, Trackett Grim had been recognised. In every part of the civilised world he was known and respected.

"It's all right, you chaps," said Trackett Grim, with a wave of his hand. "I've been tracking this rotter for hundreds and thousands of miles, and at last I've got him!"

"We'll lynch him!" said one of the miners fiercely. "He must be a villain, or you wouldn't be after him, Mr. Grim!"

"He is Armand Roche—the greatest of all villains!" said Trackett Grim.

"We'll lynch him!" roared the miners. "Come on! Where's a rope? We'll take the law into our own hands, and——"

"No!" interrupted Trackett Grim, with a tender look in his eyes. "Armand Roche is beaten, and I do not believe in kicking a man when he is down."

And with that fine speech, Trackett Grim yanked Armand Roche to his feet, and planted his boot in Armand Roche's rear.

"Now clear off!" said Trackett Grim contemptuously. "You're whacked, Armand Roche—and I am satisfied!"

And Armand Roche, his humiliation and degradation complete, slunk off, never to be heard of again.

Trackett Grim's Triumph!

DOWN Baker's Inn Road, London, came a great Rolls-Royce limousine. Lounging at the wheel was the famous Trackett Grim, the most wonderful detective in the world.

And just in the rear of this Rolls-Royce came an Austin Seven saloon, with Splinter proudly at the wheel. Everybody turned and stared, and everybody recognised the great pair.

The two cars rolled along, and it looked as though the Rolls-Royce was taking out its young for an airing.

The truth was, Trackett Grim and Splinter had got home.

They were millionaires now—for their claims in the Klondike had proved to be of tremendous value. Little remains to be told of our heroes' activities in the gold-fields. They had gone to Dawson City, and everything had been fixed up. For a time, Trackett Grim had been tempted to remain on the spot and to work his claim.

But then the great call had come. He remembered that he was a detective, and he put all his other thoughts aside. Much as he wanted to stay in the Klondike, and gather the nuggets from his claim, he knew that he was wanted at home. Indeed, Trackett Grim had received thousands of frantic cables from all sorts of anxious clients.

It seemed that the criminals of London had been getting the upper hand of the police. For Trackett Grim's absence had been noised abroad, and all the crooks were as busy as bees.

But Trackett Grim was back now, and from every port in the United Kingdom the criminals were trying to escape. For they knew that they were now in deadly danger. Trackett Grim was back!

And so, although our hero was a millionaire, he was determined to carry on with his life work.

They went up to their chambers, and who should they find sitting in the consulting-room but Sir Esau Starrs, the great astronomer.

"Ah, Mr. Grim!" he exclaimed delightedly. "So you have got back!"

"Yes!" said Trackett Grim. "Here I am, Sir Esau—and here is the great Blue Ruby! My mission has been successful—as all my missions are successful—and I have triumphed."

"I knew you would, Mr. Grim!" said the great astronomer. "Well done, sir! And now I should like to know your fee?"

Sir Esau Starrs gazed longingly and lovingly at the great Blue Ruby. It had been in the possession of his family for generations, and the thought of losing it had given him a pain. It was one of the unwritten laws of his family that the great Blue Ruby should always remain in possession of the Head of the House. Indeed, if it was parted with for any length of time, the Starrs were doomed to all sorts of awful trouble.

"My fee?" said Trackett Grim. "In the circumstances, Sir Esau, I can accept no fee. Owing to my investigation of your case, I have found gold in the Klondike, and

that will be enough for me. Be good enough to accept my services for nothing."

Sir Esau was staggered.

"But this is too generous of you, Mr. Grim!" he cried. "I cannot allow it!"

"Enough!" said Trackett Grim simply.

"My gratitude is overwhelming!" said the great astronomer, his voice breaking slightly. "It has been well said, Mr. Grim, that you are a public benefactor. You are no ordinary detective—no grasping investigator who works only for his fee. And, in the circumstances, I must ask you to accept a little token of my esteem."

"If you insist, Sir Esau!" murmured Trackett Grim.

"I do insist!" said Sir Esau Starrs. "You will not accept money, and you will not name your fee—but you cannot prevent me from making you a present. Here—take the great Blue Ruby!"

"This is too much, Sir Esau!" said Trackett Grim, aghast.

"No!" insisted the client. "You have succeeded in recovering the great Blue Ruby for me, and I am eternally grateful, as I have just said. If the great Blue Ruby leaves our family, it will bring disaster upon us. But even so, Mr. Grim, you must accept it. You must look upon it as a token of my great gratitude."

And Sir Esau Starrs, after a few more moments of conversation, took his hat, and departed. He went back to his great observatory, to continue his study of the heavens. To tell the truth, he was rather glad to be rid of the Blue Ruby, for it had always been a bother to him. He wanted to confine his attentions solely to astronomy.

"Well, Splinter, we haven't done so badly, have we?" said Trackett Grim, as he sank back into his easiest chair and put his feet on the table. "In fact, I think we can now take a little rest."

"A rest, sir?" said Splinter, looking at the names of the clients who were waiting to be seen. "But lots of people have important cases——"

"Yes!" interrupted Trackett Grim, with a start. "What am I thinking of, Splinter? My services are needed! Duty calls—and I must answer!"

And so the great criminologist went into harness again, for his services were always in tremendous demand. Never was this famous detective allowed to rest.

And one of these days, perhaps, another of his celebrated cases will be recorded.

THE END.

(Poor old Ted! He kids himself that this raffle of his is a serial story! I expect all of you are jolly glad that it has come to an end. How did you manage to wade through it? Well, anyway, next week MY serial starts. I'm not going to say anything about it at all—but I'll leave you to judge for yourselves.—WILLY.)

BETWEEN OURSELVES

(Continued from page 38.)

A. G. Barlow (E. Malvern, Aus), Alison Ackroyd (Brighton) Geo. Wm. Forrest* (Liverpool), Leslie H. A. Rickson* (London, S E.17), A. Kemp (Staines), Albert Ferguson (Dumfries).

Thanks for the nice way you refer to the Old Paper, "R.E." You ask me why I don't call it "The Happiness Distributor." I was awfully bucked to get your letter—because I like to feel that if I am helping to distribute a little happiness in this old world, I am at least doing something worth while.

I don't know how that idea of yours, Hubert Kelk, would catch on. You suggest a Joke Corner—not an ordinary one, but a Joke Corner contributed by Handy, Archie, etc. Well, we're having serials by Handy and Archie and Willy, and the others, so perhaps this will please you even better.

The St. Frank's colours, Leslie H. A. Rickson, are as follows: Ancient House, Red and Blue; Modern House, Green and Gold; West House, Mauve and Yellow; East House, Black and Orange.

I'm afraid I can't help you regarding those very old NELSON LEES that you require, A. Kemp. You particularly want No. 112, containing the first St. Frank's story—"Nipper at St. Frank's"—and I wish you luck. Of course, the best thing you can do, now that you have joined the League, is to put an advertisement in the Old Paper. It'll cost you nothing, and I'm sure there must be many brother or sister members who will aid you in satisfying your requirements.

Chas. Francis de Stafford Ongley** (Maritzburg), Archie Peterson Riversdale (Cape Province), Jacob Whitboy* (Beaconsfield, S.A.), E. A. West* (Omokoroa, N.Z.), P. Young** (Liverpool), Peter Hughes (Glasgow), Wm. Wroath (Penzance), C. Burgess (Coventry), Conrad Emptage Gower (Framlingham), "New Zealanderite" (Napier, N.Z.), D. McKillop (Isle of Arran), F. W. Williams (Hereford), John Keane (Dobbs Ferry, New York), Muriel Lindeman (Devizes), Harry H. Scholes (Warrington), "Ding Dong"* (Nottingham), Wm. Conn (Millwall), Annie May (Richmond, Vic., Aus.), Phyllis Wood* (Macclesfield), Harry McMahon (West Broken Hill, N.S.W.).

This is what Jacob Whitboy tells me. He says that he has been sending a copy of the Old Paper through the post to a friend of his in another town, and he goes on to say: "He was so taken up with that story—the first about Harry Gresham—that he immediately wrote to me to forward him one copy each week. When he had finished reading that copy, he passed it on to some other friends, with the result that I received several letters asking me to forward each of them—the writers—a copy every week. I am very pleased indeed that that first copy has so marvellously helped to increase and spread the popularity of Our Paper." Thanks, Jacob Whitboy, for your excellent services—and thanks, too, for all the complimentary things you say about my yarns. I have quoted those words out of your letter because it is an illustration of what I have been recently saying. If all

(Continued on page 44.)

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 80.

SECTION

A

READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.

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 that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE 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 the Membership Number assigned to me, and Membership Badge.

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."

(FULL NAME).....

(ADDRESS).....

INSTRUCTIONS.

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. 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, bearing the same number, are needed. 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 that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. 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., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

You can write to fellow members living at home or in the most distant outposts of the Empire.

You are offered free advice on choosing a trade or calling, and on emigration to the colonies and dependencies.

If you want to form a sports or social club, you can do so amongst local members of the League.

You are offered free hints on holidays, whether walking, biking or camping.

You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.



THE CHIEF OFFICER'S CHAT.

All **LETTERS** in reference to the League should be addressed to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.O.4. Enquiries which need an immediate answer should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

A New Life in Canada.

B. L. (Leicester) asks me if there is a chance of getting out to Canada free, and starting afresh out there. He is 16½ years of age, and physically fit. I should advise him to write to the Colonisation Department, Canadian National Railways, 17-19, Cockspur Street, London, S.W.1. There is a special Government-approved scheme, under which lads 15-17 are given free passages to Canada.

For Mr. Brooks' Ear.

J. J. Hoser-Cook, 21, Rook Street, Poplar, is good enough to congratulate the "N.L.L." on its all-round efficiency. He goes on to say: "I have a suggestion to make. Why not a visit from Mr. Brooks to some of the clubs? He could pop in whilst he is dodging about. They would be honoured." Well, you never know, y'know—Edwy may give some of you a surprise some day.

The South Seas!

"Aberdonian" is getting on like a house afire as a motor engineer, but he wants to chuck this work and sail for the South Seas. He is fond of travelling. What sort of a job would he have in the South Seas? I give it up. He had much better make his money in Aberdeen, and then have a holiday trip in the Sunny South.

A Football Club.

F. Hooper, 5, Lonsdale Cottages, East Finchley, N.2, is starting a football club in his district, and wants to hear from readers who are keen. Ages 12-15. Now then, Finchleyites!

Joining the S.F.L.

A Cardiff chum sends me a 1½d stamp, and asks to be enrolled a member of the League! I hope this correspondent will just turn to the opposite page and read up the information about joining. It is quite simple.

A Social Club.

Chas. T. Browne, 74, Victoria Road, Lower Edmonton, N.9, wishes to get a club going as early as possible.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

Patrick Joseph Roche, "Dublin," 14, Nary Street, Coburg, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to hear from readers in England and America who are interested in all-round sport; also from V. West, of Luton, and from readers in Dublin.

S. Orr, 22, Morden Hill, Lewisham, London, S.E.13, wishes to hear from members in his district.

V. Broe, White Rock Cafe, St. Peter's Port, Guernsey, Channel Islands, wishes to hear from an O.O., also from readers.

Kevin McMahon, 24, Murphy Street, Richmond, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to hear from readers anywhere.

J. J. Hoser-Cook, 21, Rook Street, Poplar, London, E.14, has written a two-thousand-word short story suitable for publication in an amateur magazine. Will editors of same write? He also

writes shorter stories. He would like to hear from readers in Winnipeg and elsewhere. All letters answered.

C. Cruickshank, 17, Wallfield Place, Aberdeen, wishes to correspond with a reader somewhere in the South Seas.

B. Goodwin, 85, Highbury New Park, London, N.5, wishes to hear from readers in North London keen on tennis and French.

Erik Ormerod, Tregenna, Ashbourne Avenue, Blundellsands, nr. Liverpool, wishes to correspond with readers in Cyprus, Gibraltar, Palestine, Brazil, and Mexico—preferably stamp collectors.

Arthur Forster, 11, Russell's Yard, High Row, Darlington, wishes to hear from G. Hodgson, of Scalby Road, Scarborough.

Leslie Strachan, 27, Colfe Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23, wishes to hear from readers who have back numbers of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY; also from readers in his district who are keen on boxing and swimming, as he intends to form a sports club.

Albert Ridley, 8, Ash Street, Edge Hill, Liverpool, wishes to correspond with readers.

C. Cooksey, 50, Sidney Road, Stockwell, London, S.W.9, wishes to hear from readers in Spain and Egypt.

Joe Behan, 6, Chapel Hill, Athy, Co. Kildare, Ireland, wishes to hear from readers who are willing to exchange books. He has stories by famous writers.

J. J. Byatt, 39, Ordnance Road, Canning Town, London, E.16, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere. All letters answered.

W. Wardle, 44, King Street, Maidenhead, Berks, has "N.L.L." Nos. 459 to 515, for sale.

Alfred Taylor, 52, Arden Street, Gillingham, Kent, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere on any subject. All letters answered.

Ellis Gregg, Glantawe Chambers, 41, Wind Street, Swansea, wishes to hear from the nearest O.O.

N. Cochrane, 44, Walbrook Terrace, St. Peter's, Newcastle-on-Tyne, wishes to hear from the nearest O.O.

Thomas A. Patterson, 8, Victoria Street, Ayr, N.B., wishes to hear from the O.O., and other Leagueites in his district.

Member No. 1884, 125, Emmett Road, Inchicore, Dublin, wishes to hear from members in his district, also from an O.O.

Douglas Doig, 48, Cam Road, Chesterton, Cambridge, wishes to hear from members who would help form a cycling club.

J. F. Smith, 90, Penrose Street, Walworth, London, S.E.17, wishes to correspond with stamp collectors who are interested in British Colonial stamps, especially those in Seychelles, Australia, Straits Settlements, South-West Africa, Bermuda, and Tanganyika.

Richard Dunn, 228, Daubeney Road, Clapton, London, E., wants Nos. 485 to 492 (old series) "N.L.L."

BETWEEN OURSELVES

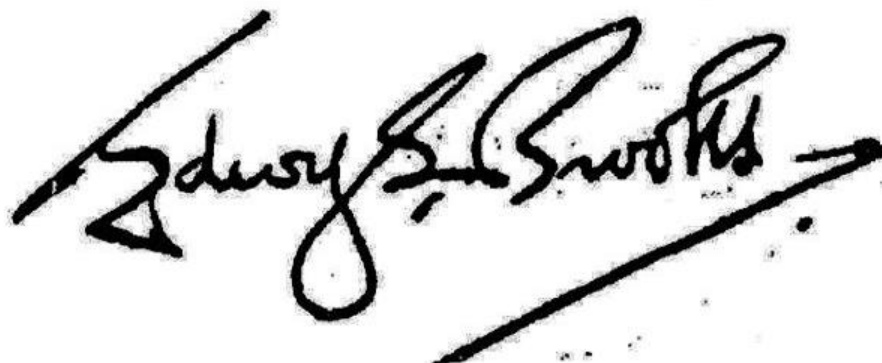
(Continued from page 41.)

readers will buy an extra copy of No. 72—the issue of the Old Paper on sale this week—and give these extra copies away, we might get lots of new readers, eh?

This is what P. Young writes to me, in the course of a long and interesting letter: "I would like every series to be in six issues—for the following reason. If you wrote a series that I liked, the six copies would be a nice length, although I may wish they were a little longer. But if they are a series that I wasn't quite struck on, I could say, 'Well, there are only half a dozen in the series, and then we will have a new one.' In my opinion, a series of six copies ought to suit everybody, as it is neither too long nor too short." I wonder how all you other readers will take this suggestion? How would you like six-stories-a-series as the average?

No, F. W. Williams, Irene Manners is no relation whatever of Harry Manners, of St. Jim's. Their surnames being the same is just a coincidence.

The subscription for the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, John Keane, in dollars and cents, works out something like this: One Year, 2.64; Six Months, 1.32; Three Months, 66 cents. Yes, there has already been a series describing the adventures of the St. Frank's boys in the United States. They went right across America, and had some adventures in Hollywood, after a lot of sight-seeing in New York, etc.



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