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THE **SPLIT IN THE REMOVE!**

A stunning long complete school yarn featuring the cheery Chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 116.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

July 21st, 1928.



Handforth was seized by the Removites and, although he struggled frantically, he could not get free. Meanwhile Chambers had donned boxing gloves, and now he advanced upon the helpless Handforth. In his anger Chambers did not seem to realise the cowardliness of his actions. Crash! His fist thudded into Handforth's left eye, staggering him.

A Rousing, Quick-Action, Full-of-Vim School Story!

THE SPLIT IN THE REMOVE !



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

(Author of the St. Frank's yarns now appearing every Tuesday in "The Popular.")

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There's precious little harmony in the Remove at St. Frank's for the Form is divided. Some want Chambers as captain, some want Nipper, whilst others want no skipper at all!—Ed.

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CHAPTER 1.

Trouble in the Remove!

"THE fellow's no good!" said Handforth firmly.

"Yes, but give him a chance——"

"I tell you he's no good!" roared Handforth. "To-day is Saturday, and he was elected on Wednesday evening. What's he done? Nothing! Absolutely nothing!"

"Well, that may be a good sign," argued Church. "If Chambers goes on at this rate, there won't be much to grumble at."

Edward Oswald Handforth snorted.

"You're both dotty!" he said scathingly.

The air was rather stormy in Study D in the Ancient House at St. Frank's. Handforth was standing in front of the window, glaring ferociously across the West Square. He took no notice of the bright morning sunshine. The weather meant nothing to him, although to-day was a half-holiday.

Church and McClure were standing about, uneasy and impatient. They wanted to be outside. There was a good half-hour before breakfast, and it seemed a pity to waste it in the study.

"Well, dotty or not, we're fed up with talking about Chambers," said Church. "Hadn't we better get outside, Handy? There's half an hour before the bell——"

"Rats! We've got to decide this point about Chambers!" interrupted Handforth. "Besides, it's raining!"

"Raining?" said McClure, staring at the sunshine.

"Well, it was raining five minutes ago!" replied Handforth, looking at the wet gravel outside. "The sun's only shining for a minute. Look at those clouds coming up!"

It was perfectly true that the morning was unsettled. When the juniors had been dressing, the rain had poured down in sheets, and there had been a good deal of gnashing of teeth, for everybody feared that the Junior House match, fixed for that afternoon, would be off.

However, the weather is never really certain in the month of July. It is generally a wet month, on and off. And although it was raining now, before breakfast, there was every chance that the skies would be clear during the afternoon.

"Besides," said Handforth, "what about all his promises?"

"Eh?"

"What about all his promises?"

"All whose promises?"

"Chambers', of course!" said Handforth impatiently. "Don't be so dense!"

"Well, I like that!" snapped Church. "You stand there, thinking, and you finish the last of your thoughts aloud, and then expect us to understand!"

"Can't be done!" said McClure.

"Not with you chaps, I know!" agreed Handforth heavily. "I'd forgotten for the moment! I'd forgotten that you've no more brains than an average snail!"

"Look here——"

"You know jolly well that we're talking about Chambers!" snorted Handforth. "What's he doing about to-day's game? We've pestered him ever since he was elected, and he won't tell us a thing! He ought to have posted up the list of names yesterday, at the latest!"

"So he ought!" said Church. "But what does it matter? I don't suppose there'll be any game."

"No game!" shouted Handforth. "On a glorious, beautiful day like this!"

"You just said it was pouring with rain."

"It's going to clear up!" said Handforth promptly. "I'm getting sick of Chambers! Every time I meet him, I ask him if he's got me down for the House match, and he tells me to mind my own business!"

"Awful!"

"Me!" snorted Handforth indignantly. "He tells *me* to mind my own business! That ugly-faced, slab-sided son of a steam-roller! I never heard such nerve in my life!"

Church and McClure remained discreetly silent. They were inclined to regard the election of Cuthbert Chambers as a mere incident in the affairs of the term. But Handforth had talked of **nothing else**, thought of nothing else, ever since he had been defeated at the polls.

True, his defeat had been more or less of a rout.

There had been three candidates in the Remove election. Nipper, the late captain, had only obtained 20 votes, against Chambers' 23, and Handforth, as anybody could have told him in advance, had got 2. Church and McClure, ever faithful, had not let him down.

But the rest of the Remove knew from past experience that Edward Oswald Handforth had not the makings of a skipper. He was a good fellow—one of the most popular juniors in the school, in spite of his faults—but he was decidedly and emphatically no good for the captaincy.

But Handforth couldn't see this. He wasn't a bragger, and he wasn't exactly conceited, but he certainly had a strange way of looking at things.

The election had been rather sensational. Cuthbert Chambers, late of the Fifth, had conducted a whirlwind campaign, and had actually succeeded in hoodwinking the bulk of the Removites. The figure of straw had been mistaken for a figure of substance.

But it was really Vivian Travers, the schemer, who had pitchforked Chambers into the captaincy. And Travers had done this for no definite reason. It amused him in some kind of way; he thought it would be a good joke to see what kind of a mess Chambers made of the position.

"It's all wrong!" went on Handforth, pacing up and down. "In the first place, Chambers isn't a Remove fellow at all."

"But he's in the Remove," murmured Church.

"Why?" snorted Handforth. "Because he's too jolly lazy to stick in the Fifth! He's too much of a dunce—too much of a slacker! So the Head sent him down to us, instead of forming a special infant class for him!"

"He's old enough to be in the Sixth, really," remarked McClure.

"And big enough to be a navy!" said Handforth tartly. "Not that I'd insult any self-respecting navy by comparing him with Chambers! And this—this hulking great ass, because of his size and bluster, thinks that he can become skipper of the Remove!"

"It wouldn't matter if he only thought it!" growled Church.

"The fellows were influenced by that rotten Yexford match on Wednesday!" said Handforth, breathing hard. "Nipper was unlucky enough to give a poor show, and Chambers, by some miracle, scored twenty runs. And because of that the Remove elects him!"

"It wasn't only that," said McClure. "Chambers promised all sorts of novelties if he gained the captaincy."

"All sorts?"

"Well, most of them were a bit hazy, I'll admit," said Mac. "But there was one scheme that he explained——"

"That idiotic income tax stunt, eh?"

"Yes."

"Piffle!" said Handforth disparagingly. "If Chambers thinks that I'm going to pay his rotten income tax he'll have to think again! Not that there's any chance of him ever thinking. Before a chap can think, he's got to have something to think with! I believe Chambers has got a sponge instead of a brain!"

There was no doubt about it. In no circumstances could it be said that Handforth had a great affection for Chambers. Church and McClure were like the average Removite; they were willing to let things run their course, and to take action if necessity demanded.

"It's all very well to run the chap down, but you ought to be reasonable, Handy,"

said Church. "He hasn't had time to show us——"

"Hasn't had time!" broke in Handforth hotly. "He's had half the week!"

"Two days!" said Church. "He wasn't elected until Wednesday evening, and there's only been Thursday and yesterday. You couldn't expect him to do much in that time. And what do you want him to do? The quieter he is, the better!"

Before Handforth could answer this poser, the door burst violently open, and Hubbard marched in.

And Hubbard looked very important!



CHAPTER 2.

The Tax Collector!

HUBBARD'S abrupt entry was a piece of sheer nerve.

Handforth & Co thought so, anyway.

In the first place, it was always considered the correct thing to knock before entering. Not that Handforth ever knocked. But he was a law unto himself.

Arthur Hubbard, on the other hand, was an utter nonentity. For weeks on end nobody ever noticed him. He was no good at cricket, football, or any other sports. He had about as much brain as an earthworm, and he had more than a tendency towards siding with the cads.

"By George!" ejaculated Handforth blankly.

He was staring at Hubbard in amazement. Church and McClure were staring, too, mingled expressions of wonder and annoyance on their faces.

"Like your cheek, Hubbard, isn't it?" asked Church gruffly.

"Cheek?" repeated Hubbard. "Rot! I'm an official!"

"What the dickens——"

"Look at this!" said Hubbard triumphantly.

But Handforth & Co. were already looking; they had been looking ever since Hubbard had entered. Diagonally across Hubbard's chest was a band of stiff, blue paper, and daubed upon it, probably in black enamel, were the words: "Official Tax Collector."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth.

He advanced slowly and grimly towards Hubbard—who now began to exhibit some signs of uneasiness.

"Here chuck it!" he said hastily. "You can't touch me, you know!"

"Can't touch you? Why not?"

"I'm an official!"

"Oh, you're an official, are you?" demanded Handforth. "You don't happen to be an ugly, idiotic, fatheaded chump, do you?"

"Look here——"

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Handforth. "What the dickens do you mean by barging into our study like this? Who do you think you are?"

"I'm an offic——"

"We heard that before!" broke in Handforth wrathfully. "But you needn't think I take any notice of this rot!" he added, grasping the band of blue paper, and tearing it off.

"Hi!" howled Hubbard. "That's my official authority——"

"And this is mine!" said Handforth, placing his fist under Hubbard's nose. "It's like your confounded nerve! I suppose Chambers sent you, eh?"

"Yes, he did!"

"Well, Chambers can boil himself!" snorted Handforth. "Just because you're one of his fatheaded officials you seem to think you can shove your way into any study you please! Well, you can't!"

"But—but I'm here on business!" stammered Hubbard, crumpling up under Handforth's aggressive manner. "I'm the tax-collector."

Handforth suddenly became cold. It occurred to him that it might be a good idea to discover the full extent of this inquisition. So he changed his mind about dotting Hubbard in the eye, and chucking him out on his neck. Instead, he sat down on a corner of the table, and looked at Hubbard with frank curiosity.

"Oh, so you're the tax collector, are you?" he said, with ominous smoothness. "That's fine! That's wonderful! The tax collector! And did you expect to collect any taxes here?"

Hubbard recovered his composure. Handforth's manner was now much more reasonable. But Church and McClure, who knew their leader as a dog knows its master, were prepared for ructions. From bitter experience, they knew that this was only the calm before the storm.

"Of course I expected to collect taxes from here!" said Hubbard.

"Oh, you did!" said Handforth. "You didn't think, by any chance, that you might collect a couple of black eyes instead?"

"Cheese it, Handforth!" protested Hubbard. "It's no good threatening me with black eyes, you know! I'm an official, and I can't be touched! I've been appointed by the Finance Committee of the Remove Treasury——"

"My only sainted aunt!"

"And, as such, I'm immune!" said Hubbard, with increasing confidence.

"This is getting interesting?" said Handforth, more ominously than ever. "Did you hear it, you chaps? He's an official—appointed by the Fatheaded Committee of the Remove Trashery!"

Church and McClure grinned, and Hubbard turned red.

"I said, the Finance Committee of the Remove Treasury!" he snapped.

"I heard what you said!" retorted Handforth. "But I prefer to call it by a more

appropriate name! Anyhow, I never heard of such trash! And trash generally comes from a trashery!"

"I've got to make inquiries," protested Hubbard. "I've been told off to investigate Studies A, B, C, D and E. That's my section."

"Good!" said Handforth, nodding. "You've been told off to the right place. I'm an expert at telling people off! What do you want to know, anyway?"

"First of all, I've got to inquire into your—your financial status."

"My which?"

"That's what Chambers said!" insisted Hubbard. "I've got to take you all in turn, so I'd better get busy. I'll start with you, Handforth."

"Fine!" said Handforth, breathing hard. "Go ahead!"

"How much money have you got?"

"Two million, seven hundred and forty-five thousand, three hundred and twenty-eight pounds, sixteen shillings, and fourpence-halfpenny," replied Handforth promptly.

Hubbard turned red again.

"Here, I say!" he protested. "Don't rot, Handy! This is Saturday, you know."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Well, you had your pocket-money this morning—"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Handforth, with a start. "So that's the wheeze, is it? Chambers is sending his officials round to collect the tax from the Saturday halfpennies!"



CHAPTER 3.

Not Quite Successful!

BOTH Church and McClure were highly amused.

They could have told Handforth the

truth ages ago, only they had assumed that he knew it. This was the first fruit of Cuthbert Chambers' election to the Remove captaincy.

The ex-Fifth-Former had promised the Remove that upon his election he would lose no time in putting his brilliant scheme of Income Tax into operation, and the Remove, at the time, had thought the wheeze rather good. Since then, the Remove had had time to think it over.

It had certainly sounded good.

Everybody was to be taxed a penny in the shilling. Thus, if a fellow received five shillings pocket-money for the week, fivepence of it would go into the Treasury. This money, according to Chambers, was to be held as a Reserve Fund. Any unfortunate who happened upon lean times in mid-week would thus be permitted to approach the Treasury, and obtain a loan.

True, he would have to pay interest on this loan. If he borrowed a couple of bob, he would have two and twopence deducted from

his weekly pocket-money on the following Saturday.

All the surplus money would go on accumulating throughout the term, and would be used on the last day of each term to provide a big feed for the whole Form. Chambers had made it quite clear that not a single penny would go into his own pocket.

As an electioneering stunt, the thing had worked. The rank and file of the Remove thought it a pretty good thing. It would be rather nice to come to the Treasury in mid-week and collect a shilling or two to carry on with.

But that was only one side of the picture.

There was another side. It was now Saturday morning, and not many juniors thought much of the idea of whacking out fivepence from their five shillings—or twopence halfpenny from their half-crowns, as the case might be.

"It's quite simple!" said Hubbard. "All you have to do, Handforth, is to answer my questions."

Handforth started.

"Eh? Answer your questions?" he repeated.

"Yes. And as soon as I've done with you, I'll deal with these other chaps," said Hubbard. "But we'll take you one at a time. Now, Handforth," he added, with an officious air. "How much pocket-money did you get this morning?"

"I've already told you!"

"No; you were only joking then. I want to know how much you really got."

"That's my business!" said Handforth wrathfully. "Do you think I'm going to knuckle under to this rotten inquisition? You can whistle for your Income Tax!"

"But Chambers said—"

"Blow Chambers!"

"He said I've got to collect the tax from everybody!" protested Hubbard. "And how can I collect it if you won't tell me the amount?"

Handforth turned to Church and McClure.

"That's a good one!" he said. "How can he collect it?"

"I give it up!" said Church.

"What's the answer?" asked McClure.

Handforth rolled up his sleeves.

"I'll tell you the answer!" he replied grimly. "We're going to pay our taxes in a novel way. Hubbard, my son, would you like your eyes blacked both at once, or one at a time?"

"You—you silly idiot—"

"You can tell Chambers to go and eat coke!" roared Handforth. "Tell him that I don't recognise him as my skipper! Tell him that I'm not going to pay any fatheaded tax! Tell him that he's a lopsided hippopotamus!"

Hubbard backed towards the door, mentally deciding that he would refrain from carrying out these instructions. It wouldn't do him any good, and it would certainly put Chambers into an irritable mood.

"All right—I'll go!" said Hubbard hastily. "But it's a rotten shame, Handforth! I'm only doing my duty——"

"This is one of those cases where the innocent suffer for the guilty!" said Handforth with relish. "My poor fish, you're going to get it in the neck now! Grab him, you chaps! Don't let him escape!"

With a wild howl, Hubbard dashed at the door, but before he could reach it he was seized and held; and there was something about Handforth's expression which filled Hubbard with dread.

He had told Chambers that Handforth would be a difficult customer to deal with, but Chambers had laughed at him. In the new captain's opinion, everybody was keen to pay the tax, and he anticipated that there would be no difficulties in the collection of it. Besides, it was his order—and he was skipper. Nobody would dare to defy him. The very idea!

"Hi, pax!" gasped Hubbard "I—I'll go, you chaps!"

"You certainly will!" bellowed Handforth. "You'll go on your neck!"

Hubbard had become himself. Gone was the newly-discovered arrogance and confidence. He was the old Hubbard—a mere nonentity; and to be painfully frank, he was shivering with fright.

"I—I didn't mean it!" he babbled. "I mean, I was only carrying out Chambers' orders. He's the boss now——"

"The what?"

"Well, he says he is——"

"Let him try to boss me!" stormed Handforth. "By George! We thought it was about time that Chambers got busy, didn't we? My sons, there's going to be trouble to-day—and we might as well begin it this minute!"

Handforth was looking positively happy. But, for some reason or other, Hubbard wasn't!



CHAPTER 4.

No Taxes!

C

UTHBERT CHAMBERS was looking very pleased with himself as he emerged from Study H.

He had decided to stroll round on a tour of inspection. He just wanted to see how his official tax-collectors were getting on. There were several of them on the job. Gore-Pearce, Gulliver, Bell, Hubbard and De Valerie had charge of the Ancient House. In the West House another little band of collectors was going the rounds.

"By glory!" muttered Chambers. "I shall soon see something now!"

He was quite right.

He saw something within the next second or two, but it was hardly the kind of thing

he had expected. To be exact, the door of Study D opened, and a wild, yelling figure came hurtling out.

Crash!

With arms and legs flying, the figure hit the wall on the opposite side of the doorway. Then it sagged down to the floor, rolled over, and finally sat up.

"Help!" screamed the figure.

Slam!

The door of Study D closed with much violence. And Chambers, after the first start of surprise, hurried forward and stared down dazedly at the wreckage.

"Hubbard!" he ejaculated blankly.

Hubbard made no reply. He felt too exhausted. True, Handforth had not carried out his threat to the letter. Hubbard's eyes were not blacked, neither was he bruised or battered in any way. But his collar was missing, his tie was conspicuous by its absence, and his waistcoat had lost nearly all its buttons.

"What's happened?" shouted Chambers furiously. "Where's your official badge? And why did those chaps chuck you out like that?"

Still Hubbard made no reply. He was capable of doing so, but he did not feel inclined to explain matters to Chambers. For it was quite on the cards that Chambers would add to the destruction.

Besides, an explanation was superfluous. If Chambers had any brains at all he should have known what had happened to his official collector.

With a snort of rage, the newly-elected captain grabbed the handle of Study D, and burst into the apartment. At least, that was what he intended doing. But he had overlooked the possibility of the door being locked. He put all his weight into that charge, and he pushed his face into the upper panel of the door with such violence that his nose was nearly driven into his head.

"Oh!" howled Chambers wildly. "What the—— I've broken my nose! Oh! Oh!"

He staggered back, holding his face, and Hubbard, who was just getting to his feet, derived a certain amount of satisfaction from Chambers' agony. Hubbard was glad to know that he was not the only one who was suffering. Besides, in all probability, Chambers would soon suffer more. He was asking for trouble by attempting to enter Study D.

"Open this door!" roared Chambers, partially recovering himself, and rattling the handle of the door. "Hi, in there! Do you hear me? Open this door!"

The key turned in the lock, and the door was flung open.

"What's all the row out here?" asked Handforth impatiently. "Oh, it's you Chambers! What do you want? Who told you to come bothering here?"

Chambers shoved Handforth aside, and strode into the study.

"Why did you chuck Hubbard out of here?" he asked magisterially.

"Why?" said Handforth. "Because we don't like him!"

"He's one of my official tax collectors——"

"I don't care if he's one of your official highway robbers!" retorted Handforth. "He hasn't collected any tax from this study, and he *won't* collect any tax from this study! We're not paying taxes!"

"Oh, aren't you?" roared Chambers. "I've given orders——"

"Give as many orders as you please, but they won't be obeyed here!"

"Are you defying me?" thundered Chambers.

"In about two seconds, I'll do more than defy you!" said Handforth darkly. "I didn't vote for you, and Church and McClure didn't vote for you, either! And we're not paying any taxes. Understand? We don't recognise you as skipper!"

"Why, you confounded——"

"And you can take your rotten income tax scheme to Jericho!" added Handforth. "Or you can take it to Timbuctoo! In fact, I don't care where you take it, as long as you don't bring it here!"

Chambers quivered with anger.

"But—but this is insubordination!" he stammered. "It's—it's rank defiance!"

"Exactly!"

"And I'm not going to put up with it!" shouted Chambers furiously. "You needn't think you can act like this, Handforth, because you can't!"

"That's funny!" said Handforth. "I *am* acting like it."

"You'll hear more of this!" raved Chambers, as he clenched his fists. "You'd better understand, Handforth, once and for all, that I'm the boss of the Remove! And any fellow who sets his will against mine will find himself in trouble!"

"Har, har, har!" laughed Handforth mockingly.

"Why, you—you——"

"Hear me laughing!" said Handforth, repeating the weird and wonderful sounds. "It's very funny, Chambers! I'm screaming!"

Chambers took one look at Handforth, and then he moved back towards the door. Somehow, he didn't relish a scrap with this aggressive junior. Chambers was a big fellow, bigger than Handforth, but he instinctively knew that he would get the worst of it in a scrap.

"Wait!" he panted. "By glory! Just you wait until I decide upon your punishment! I'll show you whether you can defy the rule of the Form captain!"

But Handforth only grinned mockingly.

Cuthbert Chambers swallowed hard, and then he walked out of the study. In the passage he turned, and he shook his fist at the triumphant leader of Study D.

"Wait!" he repeated. "You'll pay for this, Handforth—and you'll pay dearly!"

Judging by the roar of laughter that came from Handforth & Co. they were not particularly afraid of Chambers' threats!



CHAPTER 5.

Advice Not Wanted!

WELL, well!" said Vivian Travers amusedly.

These were the first words that Chambers heard as he opened the door of Study H. He had gone back to tell Travers about Handforth's insubordination—and, incidentally, to ask Travers what should be done. For Cuthbert Chambers was only a kind of figurehead; he had no controlling mind of his own. Travers' was the brain behind the brawn.

"What the—— How the—— Great Scott!" ejaculated Chambers blankly.

He had entered the study, and had closed the door. He had found Travers inspecting, with some interest, the other official tax collectors. They had gathered in Study H, and Travers seemed to be highly amused.

"What's happened?" gasped Chambers.

Gore-Pearce & Co. had apparently met with the same kind of reception as Hubbard. So Handforth was not the only fellow who objected forcibly to paying the tax!

Claude Gore-Pearce was dusty and hot and untidy; his collar was crumpled, his jacket was torn, and his hair was ruffled. Gulliver had a black eye, his necktie was missing, and he was nearly sobbing with rage and pain. Bell was in a worse condition than either of them. His jacket was slit from top to bottom, and he was smothered all over with something that looked suspiciously like condensed milk.

"You can go tax collecting yourself next time, Chambers!" said Gore-Pearce savagely. "I'm fed up with it!"

"But—but what's happened?"

"Everything's happened!" snarled Gore-Pearce. "You told us that the fellows would pay up with a smile. You said that they would cheerfully give us the tax. Look at us! We've been chucked out! Every study we went into was the same."

"And haven't you collected any money?" demanded Chambers wrathfully.

"No, we haven't!"

"Not a penny!"

They all spoke in one voice, and Chambers became angrier and angrier. A chuckle came from Travers.

"The fact is, dear old fellow, the scheme doesn't seem to be working well," he murmured. "I rather think the method is wrong."

"Oh, do you?" snapped Chambers. "This Income Tax scheme was your suggestion——"

"No need to blame me!" complained Travers. "You mustn't forget, dear old fellow, that you claimed it as your own during all your election speeches. So you can have it. With a little diplomacy, the idea might



“Great Scott!” ejaculated Chambers blankly. He had just entered his study and found Vivian Travers amusedly gazing at three battered wrecks—Gore-Pearce, Gulliver and Bell.

be workable, but you’re going to work in the wrong way.”

“Well, we’re not going to work again!” said Gore-Pearce, as he opened the door. “We’re fed up! We’ve finished with tax-collecting!”

And the human wreckage went out of the study and slammed the door. Chambers raged up and down, helpless. He had thought that it was going to be so easy, too! And now that he had hit the first snag, he did not know what to do. His brain refused to function.

“You’ll have to change your methods,” said Travers, as he sat down in the easy-chair. “I told you what would happen, didn’t I? You wouldn’t listen——”

“And I won’t listen now!”

“Then the loss will be yours,” said Travers complacently. “The system is wrong, dear old fellow. In the first place, the Remove won’t stand any autocracy. It won’t put up with this inquisition. If the thing is done in a friendly way, all well and good. But you won’t get the chaps to knuckle under to this high-handed——”

“I’m captain, and they’ll do as I order!” broke in Chambers harshly. “By glory! Why was I elected?”

“Goodness only knows!” murmured Travers.

“Well, I *was* elected!” bellowed Chambers. “I’m the biggest fellow in the Remove—

and I’m the captain! When I give orders, they’ve got to be obeyed!”

Travers shrugged his shoulders.

“As long as you keep up that attitude, you’ll find yourself in the middle of trouble,” he remarked. “If you ask the fellows to pay their tax, all well and good. You’ll find that the majority of them will be only too willing to fall in with your wishes. But if you order them they’ll jib. There’s a right way of doing a thing, and a wrong way. I’m afraid you’ve chosen the wrong way, Chambers.”

“It’s my way!” retorted Chambers. “I’ll do things as I like!”

“Then, again, you sent the wrong fellows round,” continued Travers, unmoved. “Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell and Hubbard are thoroughly unpopular, and it’s only natural that the fellows resent the officious behaviour of these nonentities. If you’ll take my advice——”

“I won’t! I don’t want your advice!”

“No?” murmured Travers, rising. “All right, dear old fellow. You don’t need to tell me twice.”

“I’m running the Remove now, and you can keep your rotten advice to yourself!” said Chambers sourly. “The trouble is, I’ve taken too much notice of you!”

“For the love of Samson!” ejaculated Travers mildly.

He stared at Chambers in a kind of wonder. It was solely owing to his—Travers'—efforts that Chambers had been elected as captain. Travers knew perfectly well that this boaster and bragger would not last long. Travers only gave him a week, at the most. But he believed that the week would be rather an amusing one. Anything to liven things up during this hot, summer term!

But even Travers was taken by surprise now.

He had hardly thought it possible that his protégé would turn on him like this. But Chambers' head was greatly swelled. It had always been more or less swollen; but now that he had been elected as captain of the Remove he thought that he was a very great man, indeed. And he certainly did not need the advice of Vivian Travers.

But that was where Chambers was wrong! He needed it now more than he had ever needed it before!

CHAPTER 6.

The Gathering Excitement!



"ROT!" said Chambers. "Absolute rot!"

He suddenly stared at Travers, and his expression was one of

contempt.

"Talking to me, dear old fellow?" asked Travers.

"Yes, I am!" retorted Chambers. "What you've been saying is arrant nonsense."

"Thanks most frightfully."

"What's the good of diplomacy with these silly kids of Removites?" demanded Chambers. "Force is the only way to deal with them! If they don't obey, they've got to be punished. I'm not going to have any defiance while I'm skipper!"

Travers shrugged his shoulders again.

"Well, let's say no more about it," he remarked. "You don't want my advice, and I'm quite sure that I won't press it on you. Go your own way, dear old fellow. Good luck to you! But, by Samson, if you come a cropper, don't expect any sympathy from me!"

And he strolled casually out of the study, leaving Chambers more irritated than ever.

Chambers had deliberately allowed a couple of days to go by—so that the Remove could settle down. Now, at the very first application of his authority, the whole Remove was ignoring him!

Travers, as he walked down the passage, was inwardly angry. He did not show it, for he was smiling with all his usual complacency. He had made up his mind to help Chambers, to stand behind him, and to put him right when he went wrong.

But that was all different now.

Chambers had scorned his advice, and had

told him to mind his own business. Very well, then! In future, Travers would leave Chambers severely alone. This new situation rather amused the schemer of the Remove. Chambers' progress as captain would be most interesting to watch!

In Study H, Chambers seized a piece of paper, took out his fountain-pen, and he started writing. Two minutes later, he hurried out to the lobby, and found a big gathering of fellows there.

"Hallo, here's the feudal lord!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's the King of Castle!"

"Poor old Chambers!"

There were many chuckles, but Chambers took no notice. He strode to the board, and pinned his notice up. There was an immediate rush, everybody gathering round in a crowd.

"Now, then! Go easy!" roared Chambers. "Stand back, there! Don't you know who I am?"

Apparently they didn't, for Chambers was elbowed aside as though he were of no importance whatsoever. He was pitchforked out of the crowd, and he found himself, hot and flustered, shoulder to shoulder with Nipper, the late skipper.

"It's not such an easy road, is it, Chambers?" asked Nipper dryly. "Being captain is a responsibility."

"I'll make them come to heel!" snapped Chambers savagely.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie Glen-thorne, adjusting his monocle. "Did you hear that, laddies? I mean to say, does he think we're a pack of dogs, or what? Odds slurs and insults!"

"I rather think that Chambers has unconsciously expressed his true point of view," said Fullwood. "He'll make the Remove come to heel. In other words, he's the master, and all the rest of us are his slaves! But he'll find that that game won't work!"

Chambers stalked off, in no way impressed. He had made up his mind to take this course, and he was determined that nothing should shift him. Many shouts were coming from the notice-board.

"Hi, look at this, you chaps!" sang out Duncan indignantly. "Chambers has called a Remove meeting for directly after breakfast!"

"What!"

"We won't go!"

"Not likely!"

"He says in this notice that it's important, and that every fellow must turn up!" said Gresham. "I suppose we really ought to go. It's an unwritten law. If anybody misses a Form meeting he's defying all the school traditions."

"Yes, we shall have to go!" said Nipper, nodding. "We can defy Chambers, but we can't defy conventions!"

Travers chuckled.

"But it's outrageous!" protested Tommy Watson. "Other captains have only called a

Form meeting in the evening. There's not much time between breakfast and lessons!"

"Never mind!" smiled Travers. "Think of the fun we shall have!"

"Fun?"

"Why not?" said Travers. "Chambers is going to speak to us!"

"Yes, it ought to be interesting," said Nipper dryly. "It'll be his first real speech since he has been elected. Perhaps he'll tell us something about his selection for the House match this afternoon."

"By Jove, yes!" said Fullwood. "The ass hasn't posted up his list yet. Nobody knows who's going to play. Not that he can mess about with the eleven. He'll have to play most of the usual chaps."

"Will he?" said Travers musingly. "Dear old fellows, I wonder?"



CHAPTER 7.

Climbing Down!

WIVIAN TRAVERS looked round the lecture hall in a thoughtful kind of way, and then his gaze rested on the clock at the end of the long, stately apartment.

"It might work!" he murmured softly. "Anyhow, it's worth trying. Can't do any harm."

There was a short balcony at the end of the hall, and the clock was fixed to the side of this. Running lightly up the stairs, Travers reached the clock. He deftly opened the glass and put the minute-hand back a quarter of an hour.

Then, with a chuckle, he descended again, and reached the main doors just as a big crowd of Removites arrived. Breakfast was over, and it was time for the meeting.

Nobody took any notice of the clock. The juniors were too full of their own concerns. They were crowding up now in twos and threes, and a good many of them had come over from the West House.

For Reggie Pitt and his men were obliged to attend. A Form meeting, as Reggie truthfully remarked, was a Form meeting. Even when a silly ass like Chambers called it, the only thing to do was to attend. But it would be just as well to tell Chambers quite bluntly that he mustn't abuse this privilege too much, or the Remove would probably begin to ignore such summons.

There were no strict rules and regulations about Form meetings, but it was a recognised fact that an official meeting was not called unless the matter was one of absolutely vital importance. A captain could request the fellows to attend a speech, and he would be generally satisfied if fifty or sixty per cent of the Form turned up.

But this present affair was different.

And so Chambers found, when he arrived, that everybody was on hand. There was not

a single absentee. Even Archie Glenthorne had sacrificed his usual after-breakfast "forty winks" in order to be present.

"I'm not going to say much—" began Chambers, as he mounted the platform.

"Hear, hear!"

"That's a relief, anyhow!"

"But what I do say will be to the point," added Chambers grimly. "I want to know why you've all defied me this morning?"

"He's asking riddles now!" said Reggie Pitt wonderingly.

"It's not a riddle!" roared Chambers. "You all know jolly well that this Income Tax scheme has got to be tried out! How can I put it into operation if you won't pay your taxes?"

"We're not going to give you our money!" shouted somebody. "It's a rotten idea, Chambers!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We don't want it!"

"But you all agreed to it, didn't you?" shouted Chambers. "Hang it, give the thing a chance! Besides, what about my authority? I've given orders, and they've got to be obeyed. I'm captain, don't forget!"

"Just a minute!" said Nipper, who had been talking with Reggie Pitt. "You've asked us why we haven't paid our taxes, Chambers. Well, I think I can give you an answer."

"I don't want one—from you!" said Chambers sourly.

Nipper coloured.

"What's wrong with me?" he asked.

"You're prejudiced against me—that's what's wrong!" said Chambers. "You're angry because I diddled you out of the captaincy!"

"All right—let him have these fantastic ideas if he wants them!" said Reggie Pitt, with a grin at Nipper. "I'll put the point, shall I?"

"Yes, perhaps you'd better," said Nipper gruffly.

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Reggie!"

"I'm making this speech!" thundered Chambers. "I'm not going to be dictated to! I'm captain, and my word is law! You'll wait until I've finished—"

He was interrupted by a storm of cat-calls and hootings. Nobody wanted to hear him. Reggie Pitt was grabbed and thrust on to the platform. Chambers could do nothing. He fumed and he shouted. But all to no purpose.

"Reggie—Reggie!"

"Speech, old man!"

Reggie Pitt held up his hand.

"It's like this!" he said bluntly. "The fellows are totally opposed to your methods, Chambers. They don't like your Income Tax collectors coming round."

"I don't care what they like—" began Chambers.

"But you'll have to care!" said Pitt. "If you don't, you'll be biffed out of the captaincy within half an hour! You can't ride

roughshod over the Remove, you know!"

"No fear!"

"We're not going to put up with your rot, Chambers!"

"The only thing to do is to ask the fellows to pay the tax voluntarily," said Pitt. "You can drive a horse to water, but you can't make him drink! And if you drive the Remove, you'll find that it'll jib!"

Cuthbert Chambers became uneasy. He did not like the look of the angry expressions; he did not like the sound of the cat-calls and hootings. In fact, he realised that he would have to draw in his horns. For if he didn't, he would precipitate a crisis.

And Chambers was rather staggered.

He had believed himself safe and secure in the captaincy. He had been elected, and, naturally, the fellows would obey him. He had forgotten, for the moment, that at least twenty-two members of the Remove—practically half—had been against him all the time. And now a good many of the fellows who had voted for him were joining in with the others. As Nipper had said, being skipper was not all honey.

"All right!" shouted Chambers. "If the fellows want to pay their taxes voluntarily, all well and good. I agree!"

"Well, well!" murmured Travers, with a sigh.

Chambers had climbed down completely. He had agreed to adopt the very methods that he—Travers—had advised.

And, then and there, a vote was taken.

It was agreed by the Remove that they should give the Income Tax scheme a trial. It was further agreed that directly after lessons everybody would go to the offices of the Remove treasury—in other words, Study H—and pay the penny in the shilling tax on their week's pocket-money.

So Cuthbert Chambers had his way—but it was a hollow sort of victory.



CHAPTER 8.

Late for Lessons!

MR. CROWELL entered the Remove Form-room, in the School House, in rather a hurry.

It was a minute after nine, and Mr Crowell, who demanded punctuality in others, hated being unpunctual himself. As a general rule, he strode into his Form-room exactly as the clock was striking—and woe-betide any junior who was not in his place!

Mr. Crowell came to an abrupt halt, just after he had entered the doorway.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated in amazement.

The Form-room was empty!

Just for a moment Mr. Crowell stood stock still, unable to believe the evidence of his own eyes. He adjusted his glasses, and stared round the room in a bewildered way. There wasn't a soul there. The windows

were half-open, and the morning sunshine was streaming through; the silence of the place was almost uncanny. A kind of drone sounded from next door, where the Fourth was preparing for work, and from further away a regular din could be heard. No doubt the Third was enjoying itself. Mr. Suncliffe had failed to turn up, and the Third was making hay while the sun shone.

"This—this is extraordinary!" said Mr. Crowell, frowning.

He glanced at the clock. Two minutes after nine. There could be no mistake about it. The Remove should be here. But the Remove wasn't here!

How was Mr. Crowell to know that the Remove was still in the small lecture hall in the Ancient House? How was Mr. Crowell to know that Vivian Travers, in a spirit of mischief, had altered the clock?

The Remove was perfectly happy. It was still twelve minutes to nine, according to their reckoning, and so there was plenty of time before lessons. Nobody ever dreamed of wandering towards the School House until five to nine, anyhow. And there had been so much din at the Remove meeting that nobody had heard the bell; and certainly nobody had taken any notice of the school clock, when it chimed out the hour.

Mr. Crowell went out into the big corridor again, and looked up and down. Everything was quiet. He went to the main door and stared out across the Triangle. There wasn't a soul in sight. Then a prefect came out of the East House and went diagonally across to the Ancient House, whistling cheerily.

But there was no sign of any Removite.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mr. Crowell blankly. "What on earth can it mean? Where are they? What has become of the Form?"

He was more bewildered than ever. Was it possible that the Remove had gone off somewhere, ignoring lessons altogether? What other explanation could there be?

Just then a crowd of juniors came out of the Ancient House, laughing and shouting. To all appearances they had no idea of the time. They weren't hurrying, and they were not in any way flurried.

"Boys!" thundered Mr. Crowell, from the top of the School House steps.

Several faces were turned in his direction. And at the same time some of the juniors no doubt caught sight of the school clock, far above Mr. Crowell's head.

"Hi!" gasped Harry Gresham. "Look at the time, you chaps! It's nearly ten past nine!"

"What!"

"Good gad!"

"We're late!" said Nipper in alarm. "I say, you chaps! Come on—Mr. Crowell will be in a fine old stew!"

"But—but the clock in the lecture hall—"

"It's slow!" interrupted Nipper briskly. "It's a wonder we didn't hear the bell! We shall probably get extra-lesson for this—and it's a half-holiday, too!"

There were many shouts of alarm, and the rest of the Remove, as it came out, caught the fever. In less than ten seconds, everybody was rushing towards the School House, pell-mell.

In the meantime, Mr. Crowell had gone into the Form-room, and he was standing at his desk, his face grim and stern. Helter-skelter, the Remove piled into the class-room, and all the fellows went to their places. Not until the last one was in, and the door closed, did Mr. Crowell speak.

"Well, and what is the meaning of this?" he demanded, his voice cold and stern.

"We didn't know the time, sir!" said Handforth, who was always ready to give a reply. "We've been in the lecture hall, holding a meeting, and the clock must have been wrong."

"Who called this meeting?" asked Mr. Crowell.

"Chambers!" answered the Remove in one solid voice.

"Chambers, stand up!" said Mr. Crowell curtly.

Chambers stood up.

"Did you call this meeting, Chambers?" demanded the Form-master.

"Yes, sir."

"I am aware that you are the new captain of the Form, Chambers, but I must express great surprise that you should have been so rash as to call a meeting between breakfast and lessons!" said Mr. Crowell tartly. "You know very well that the time is limited."

"But—but—"

"Form meetings should not be called at such an unreasonable period of the day!" snapped Mr. Crowell. "You are captain, Chambers, and therefore you are responsible for this fiasco."

"But—but we didn't hear the bell, sir—"

"That is no excuse!" rapped out Mr. Crowell. "Chambers, you will write me two hundred lines. Now we will get to work, please!"

The Remove was very relieved.

The punishment had fallen upon Chambers, and nobody else cared. They had all been afraid that they would share in the punishment.

"Here, I say!" protested Chambers indignantly. "Why drop on me, sir?"

"Sit down, Chambers!"

"Yes, but it's not fair, sir!" protested the ex-Fifth-Former. "I'm no more to blame than any of the others. They made the same mistake as I did!"

"I do not intend to argue with you, Chambers!" said Mr. Crowell sternly. "You called this meeting, and therefore you are responsible for the Form's lateness. You will write me two hundred lines."

"Well, I don't see why I should!" said Chambers truculently.

Mr. Crowell's glance became steely.

"Chambers! How dare you question my authority?" he demanded. "You need not think that because you are older and bigger

than the other boys that you can address me with such insolence."

"You seem to forget that I'm Form captain, sir!" retorted Chambers pompously.

"That will do!"

"It may do for you, but it won't do for me, sir!" said Chambers. "I can't write those lines, because there's a match on this afternoon—"

"Silence!" thundered the Form-master. "I shall increase your imposition to three hundred lines, Chambers!"

"Here, I say!" gasped the startled Chambers. "But—but—"

"And if you say another word I will increase your imposition to five hundred!" snapped Mr. Crowell. "Sit down, sir!"

And Cuthbert Chambers, shrinking rather like a pricked bladder, sat down in his seat. He considered himself to be a fellow of tremendous importance—but, unhappily, Mr. Crowell did not share this opinion.



CHAPTER 9.

Travers "Packs Up"!

FOR the rest of the morning Chambers was in a fine old stew, and it was rather lucky for him that he did not receive further punishment. More than once Mr. Crowell was on the point of increasing that impot.

When lessons were over, Chambers was still looking black and truculent.

"I'm hanged if I'll write those rotten lines!" he said, as he went into the Ancient House. "Who does Crowell think he is, anyway? And what does he mean by giving lines to me! Me—the Form captain!"

"Being Form captain, dear old fellow, does not make you a rajah or a king," said Travers dryly. "And you must always remember that a Form captain, in the eyes of a master, is very much the same as any other fellow."

Chambers only grunted, but he turned fiercely on Travers when the latter followed him right up to Study H, in the Remove passage.

"Well, what's the idea?" demanded Chambers coldly. "What are you shadowing me about for?"

"Sorry, but I didn't know that I was doing anything like that," replied Travers mildly. "This is my study as well as yours, Chambers. Have I your official sanction to walk in?"

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

They went into the study, and Chambers slammed the door. For a moment or two, Vivian Travers stood looking at him, the contempt obvious in his gaze.

"I had nearly made up my mind to have nothing more to do with you, Chambers," he said at length. "But, by Samson, you're

making such an unholy hash of things that I feel compelled to give you a tip or two."

"I don't want your confounded tips!" roared Chambers.

"I don't suppose you do—a lesson in manners would be more to your mark," nodded Travers. "But, the fact is, I want to ask you about the eleven for the House match this afternoon."

"Oh, you needn't worry—I'm putting you in the team!" said Chambers.

"Thanks most frightfully, but what about the others?"

"I've got the list ready!" said Chambers, taking a piece of paper out of his pocket. "I made it out during lessons. We're playing the Fourth this afternoon, and everybody knows that the Fourth is a wash-out. They can't put a team on the field for love or money."

"Yes, I rather think we shall give them a good drubbing," agreed Travers, as he took the paper. "With fellows like Gresham and Nipper—Eh? Why, what—For the love of Samson!" he added, looking up. "This is a joke, I suppose?"

"It's not a joke!"

"But this isn't the team, is it?"

"Yes, it is!"

"Then, dear old fellow, I retract what I just said!" replied Travers. "It is the Fourth who will give us a good drubbing!"

"How do you make that out?"

"It doesn't need any making out!" retorted Travers. "With a team like this, you couldn't beat the fags, Chambers!"

"You silly fool—"

"Look at it!" went on Travers scathingly. "Just listen to this choice selection of names: Chambers, Travers, Gore-Pearce, Gulliver, Bell, Hubbard, Long, Owen major, Doyle, Canham, De Valerie. Hang it, man, there's only one player in the team!"

"Myself, eh?" nodded Chambers.

"No, confound your swank!" roared Travers, exasperated out of his usual calmness. "I'm talking about a fellow named Vivian Travers. No, don't stare! I'm not boasting. I'm not blowing my own trumpet. But, whatever else I can't do, I know that I can play a decent game of cricket. But the others! Ye gods and little fishes! There aren't any others!"

"What about me?" shouted Chambers.

"You!" repeated Travers with derision.

"You're no cricketer, Chambers. And as for Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Hubbard and Doyle and that lot—why, it's impossible! De Valerie isn't bad, perhaps, but he's been very much off form this term. You can't seriously mean to tell me that you're going to play this team?"

"It's my selection, and I'm not going to alter it!" said Chambers hotly. "It's like your beastly nerve to tell me that I can't play cricket! Didn't I save the Yexford match on Wednesday?"

Travers sighed.

"You're about the only fellow in the whole school, Chambers, who doesn't know that your performance was a fluke!" he said, with

cruel candour. "I tell you you can't play this team! Where are your bowlers? What about Gresham? Why isn't Gresham's name down?"

"Because I don't want him!"

"You don't want him!" echoed Travers in amazement. "What about the school? The school wants him, doesn't it? Who do you think you are, Chambers? A Form captain must select his team in the best interests of the school. He can't pander to his own likes and dislikes! Or at least, if he does, he soon finds himself in trouble."

"Look here, I'm fed up with your rotten criticisms!" roared Chambers. "For two pins I'll cut you out of the team!"

"Do so, by all means!" retorted Travers. "I wouldn't play in that collection of freaks! You ought to have Gresham down; he's the son of a famous England cricketer—a man who has played in the Test Matches against Australia! And you leave Gresham out because of your infernal prejudices!"

"I'm just about tired of hearing—"

"Then you'll get more tired!" snorted Travers. "What about Nipper? And Fullwood? And Handforth? They're all good players—all strong men in the Junior Eleven. Why on earth have you dropped them all?"

"Because I choose to!"

"Because they all belong to Nipper's crowd!" said Travers coldly. "It's just maliciousness on your part, Chambers. Every cricketer of any good in the Remove belongs to Nipper's set, and so you're keeping them all out of the team. You're favouring your own rotten pals. You're not a skipper at all—you're an arrant fool!"

"Get out of this study!" hooted Chambers.

"I'll get out when I like!" said Travers quietly. "As I told you before, it's my study as well as yours, Chambers. As for your captaincy, I wash my hands of it."

"Your hands need washing!" sneered Chambers.

"That's a cheap kind of joke—and just about your mark!" said Travers, nodding. "You can do as you like from this minute onwards. I won't interfere. But don't come to me asking for advice!"

And Vivian Travers, thoroughly fed up, opened the door, and walked out of the study.



CHAPTER 10.

Trouble With the Taxes!

IN the passage, Travers found a large number of Removites. They were standing about in groups, talking excitedly, and from various quarters came the chink of money.

"What's it all about?" inquired Travers.

"Getting ready to pay the tax, of course," said Handforth, glancing round at him. "But there's going to be trouble, unless I'm mistaken!"

Travers nodded. During the last three or four seconds he had completely recovered himself. Once out of Chambers' presence, his usual coolness and composure had returned. In a way, Travers was feeling relieved. He was glad to be disassociated with the conceited, swell-headed ex-senior.

"It doesn't seem fair to me!" Duncan was saying. "Why should I pay sevenpence-halfpenny tax, and Hubbard only twopence-halfpenny?"

"It's easy enough," smiled Nipper. "You get seven-and-six a week pocket-money, don't you, Duncan?"

"Yes."

"Well, Hubbard only gets half a crown. The tax is a penny in the shilling!"

"There's no need for you to grumble, Duncan," said Cecil De Valerie. "I'm paying one-and-eightpence tax."

"Lucky beggar!" put in Tommy Watson. "You must get a quid pocket-money!"

"What about Archie?" said De Valerie. "What about Gore-Pearce and Fullwood? Archie is generally going round with fivers. He'll have to pay three or four shillings tax, I expect."

"And never get a penny benefit out of it!" said Brent bluntly. "If you ask me, the whole scheme is a rotten one. It's an imposition. The rich fellows are contributing towards all the others!"

"That was my argument from the very first!" said Handforth gruffly. "But we've promised to give it a trial, so we'd better go ahead."

But Brent wasn't satisfied. He shared Study E with Archie Grenthorne, and, in a way, he felt that it was his duty to look after Archie.

"Let's take our study, for example," he said. "I get ten bob a week pocket-money. Very well. I contribute tenpence to the Treasury. But Archie, according to this arrangement, will contribute four or five bob. Do you think he'll ever go to the Treasury and borrow money?"

"But he'll have the right to do so——"

"That's nothing!" argued Brent. "You know jolly well that he'll never go. And so he'll pay up, week after week, throughout the term."

"Why worry?" said Nipper. "You can take it from me, my sons, that this income tax business won't go on for long. There'll only be an unholy fuss if there's any alteration now. Let's carry on with it."

And most of the others agreed.

For the next half hour Chambers was kept so busy that he had no time to give any thought to Travers' criticism of the team. The finance committee was on duty, too, accepting the taxes.

There was a good deal of evasion. A good many of the fellows declared that they only received half a crown a week pocket-money, and they paid over their twopence-halfpennies; yet the rest knew that some of these fellows received as much as ten shillings. But it couldn't be helped. Even Chambers was beginning to realise that this

tax business was all very well in theory, but very difficult in practice.

Just before the bell rang for the midday meal, all thoughts of the tax were cast to the winds. Chambers had come along, and had posted up the list of players for the match against the Fourth.

Everybody had been waiting impatiently for it, and there had been lots of grumbles. It was like Chambers' nerve to leave it until the last minute like this. And now that the list was on view, a wave of indignation swept through the Remove.

"My only sainted aunt!" gasped Harry Gresham, as he cast his eye over the notice. "What's this? Chambers is having a joke, isn't he?"

"So it seems!" said Nipper, with a grim smile. "This is a team of rank duffers!"

Even Travers was cut out of the eleven now. Scott, of the West House, had been put in his place.

"What are we going to do about it?" asked Fullwood angrily. "We can't let this stand, Nipper! You're not in the team—I'm not in it—Handforth isn't in it! And what about Gresham? And Reggie Pitt? Chambers must be absolutely off his rocker! Reggie is the leader of the West House juniors, and he isn't even given a place!"

"Favouritism, old man," said Russell. "Chambers is playing all his own pals. A fat lot he cares about the good name of the House—or of the Form!"

There was a proper row going on all round.

This game was really more than a House match, for it was two Houses playing against the other two. Both the Remove and the Fourth were divided up, so to speak. The Remove lived in the Ancient House and the West House, and the Fourth boarded in the Modern House and the East House.

It was well known that the Fourth was rather weak in sports. Such fellows as Buster Boots, Bob Christine, Lawrence, Oldfield and Clapson were pretty good, but there was a great shortage of brilliance amongst the others.

However, if Chambers put this farcical side into the field, the Fourth-Formers would literally wipe him up. And yet Chambers couldn't see it! In his insufferable egotism, he really believed that he and his special friends would be able to give a good show.

And the Remove, in general, went off the deep end!



CHAPTER 11.

In the Neck!

HANDFORTH wanted to fight Chambers then and there. "We're not going to stand this, are we?" he demanded fiercely. "By George! I never saw such a list of duffers in all my life! Chambers can't be serious—he can't

mean it! It's—it's simply outrageous!"

"Don't get excited, Handy!" said Nipper, with a chuckle.

"I'll get as excited as I like!" roared Handforth.

"All right, then—go ahead!"

"And you ought to get excited, too!" went on Handforth accusingly. "What's become of your spirit, Nipper? Why don't you go to Chambers and tell him that he's mad!"

"Because Chambers is captain, and it is the Form captain's duty to select his own team, and to stick to his decisions," replied Nipper. "Chambers has got out this list, and he'll be responsible if the Remove come a cropper. I don't see any reason why I should interfere. When I was skipper, I got it in the neck pretty often if things didn't go quite right. Now it's Chambers' turn."

Nipper spoke with a certain amount of relish. Certainly he saw no reason to interfere. Privately he was of the opinion that if Chambers was given enough rope he would ultimately hang himself, so to speak, and at the rate he was going now, he would not last very long.

"Well, if you're not going to speak to him, I am!" said Handforth fiercely. "The man must be mad! This isn't a team at all—it's a joke!"

"Yes, but Nipper's right!" said Fullwood, after he had considered the matter. "Why not look at the humorous side of the affair? This match ought to be pretty funny!"

"It *will* be funny!" said Travers confidently.

"And what about the Remove?" demanded Handforth sternly. "What about the honour of the Form? Are you fellows going to stand by and see Chambers drag the Form's honour in the dust?"

"Chambers was elected by the Form, and now the Form will have to stick him!" said Fullwood. "Personally, I've got no sympathy with the Remove. They asked for trouble in electing Chambers instead of Nipper, and when they get it they don't like it."

"It's just the same in Parliament, dear old boy," remarked Tregellis-West. "A man is elected, and when he gets to Westminster he forgets all his promises, and lets the constituency down. I rather think that Chambers is letting the Remove down."

"But why?" demanded Handforth. "Where's the need of it? I call upon you fellows to take action! That's the word—action! Let's depose Chambers, and elect another skipper!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Handy!"

"We've had enough of Chambers!"

There were a numbers of excited shouts, but most of the Remove fellows shook their heads, and remained calm.

"We'll give him a week, anyhow," said Gresham.

"And, in the meantime, he's doing his best to ruin the sports!" snorted Handforth.

"This is the result of electing a fool!"

"What's that?"

Cuthbert Chambers himself came striding into the lobby, and a number of his supporters gave him a hearty cheer, although that cheer was drowned, to an extent, by the groans that arose from the rest.

"Were you talking about me, Handforth?" demanded Chambers harshly.

"Yes, I was!" thundered Handforth. "What do you mean by posting up a selection of duds like this?"

"I'm the Form captain, and I'll do as I like!" retorted Chambers. "You can mind your own business, Handforth!"

"Why, you—you—"

"And understand this!" shouted Chambers, thrusting his head forward. "I won't stand any criticism from you, or anybody else!"

"Won't you!" yelled Handforth. "Then perhaps you'll stand a punch of the nose from me?"

"If you touch me, I'll show you who's boss in this Form!" said Chambers hotly. "You'd better be careful, Handforth! You'd better think before you act. I'm not the kind of fellow to be provoked!"

"Put up your hands!"

"I won't do anything of the sort!" said Chambers curtly. "It's beneath the dignity of a Form captain to fight with one of the rabble!"

"Are you calling me rabble?" hooted Handforth.

"Yes, I am!"

"I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"You'll do nothing!" interrupted Chambers sourly.

And he really thought that Handforth was helpless. They were in the lobby, and a prefect might be coming through at any moment—even a master. Chambers felt perfectly secure. There were a large number of his own supporters there, too, and this added to his feeling of safety.

But Edward Oswald Handforth had always been reckless. He was reckless now.

Crash!

His famous right swung round and caught Cuthbert Chambers on the nose with terrific effect. Chambers hadn't been expecting it; he had believed it impossible that Handforth would actually strike him.

But he realised it now.

He staggered back, fell into the arms of two or three other juniors, tripped, and then sat down with a jarring thud.

"Get up!" thundered Handforth. "Get up, and let me knock you down again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Handy!"

"Give him beans!"

"I'm going to fight him!" yelled Handforth. "Get up, you cad! That tap was



Archie's jacket was seized, pulled over his head and torn in halves. Then, as he twirled round, a boot was placed firmly on the seat of his elegant trousers, and a sudden force was applied. The unhappy Archie shot through the open doorway like a stone from a catapult.

only just a sample! By the time I've finished with you, you'll look like sausage-meat! And when I've knocked you clean out, I'll be captain!"

"On him, you chaps!" sang out Hubbard excitedly. "Grab him!"

A number of Chambers' supporters prepared to seize Handforth; and Fullwood and Gresham and a good many others were equally prepared to prevent Handforth's seizure. In fact, there were the makings here of a good old free fight.

Fortunately, a sudden cry came from the Remove passage.

"Cave!"

It was enough. There was a rush, and most of the fellows dispersed. Two prefects came into the lobby, and they looked about them suspiciously. But they only saw Chambers dabbing his nose—which was bleeding—and breathing hard. They passed on, deciding that it would be wiser to make no inquiries.

And a minute later the bell rang, and so the crisis passed. But Chambers did not forget. He, the Form captain, had been knocked down in public! He knew that drastic measures would be necessary to wipe out that deed!



CHAPTER 12.

Something Like Cricket—
But Not Much!

JOHAN BUSTERFIELD
BOOTS chuckled
joyously.

"Well, we're going to whack the Remove to-day!" he declared. "It'll be our first win this term!"

"Well, you needn't crow!" grunted Bob Christine. "There'll be no honour in meeting Chambers' Eleven. Nearly everybody in the Remove looks upon the game as a joke."

The Fourth Form cricketers were on Little Side. The sun was shining brightly now, and although the ground was a trifle damp after the morning's rain the conditions were perfect for good cricket. The wicket would be rather difficult, perhaps, but that would make the game all the more interesting.

While Boots & Co. were discussing their own point of view, Chambers and his men were just emerging from the pavilion, all of them looking resplendent and business-like in their white flannels. Indeed, to look at,

there was nothing much wrong with Chambers' team. They appeared to be quite efficient. But appearances are sometimes deceptive.

"It won't be much of a game!" Chambers was saying. "These Fourth-Formers are no good. We shall easily be able to wipe them up!"

"I shouldn't be so sure!" said De Valerie, who was about the only decent cricketer in the Remove Eleven. "Over-confidence, Chambers, is worse than inability."

"Don't be an idiot!" retorted Chambers. "The Fourth hasn't won a game this season."

But De Valerie stuck to his opinion, and he was beginning to have doubts as to whether he was wise in remaining in the team. He felt conspicuous. He had half a mind to resign, and to "chuck up" Chambers altogether. The conceited skipper was beginning to get on his nerves.

A good many spectators had collected round the ground, and they were watching with interest.

"The wicket isn't dry yet," remarked Gresham, as he strolled up to a group which included Nipper and Fullwood and Reggie Pitt and Archie Glenthorne. "I've just inspected it, and I'm feeling wild."

"Because you're not playing, eh?" said Nipper.

"Yes!" grunted Gresham. "I like a tricky wicket."

"We all have our idiosyncrasies," smiled Fullwood. "Personally, there's nothing I hate worse than a tricky wicket. If Chambers wins the toss, he ought to put Boots & Co. in first."

"Of course he ought—but he won't," said Nipper.

And Chambers didn't.

The Remove captain won the toss and, as most of the fellows had expected, he decided to bat first. Boots & Co. grinned happily and went out into the field.

"This is where we make the joke really funny!" said Bob Christine. "On this wicket the bowlers will be able to do exactly as they like."

"But we mustn't be too jolly sure of ourselves!" warned Talmadge. "Most of the Remove team are duds, but De Valerie isn't so bad, and I believe that Doyle and Scott can play a bit. They'll be on their mettle, and if they happen to make a stand, we shall look silly!"

"Good man!" said Boots. "We'll go into this as though we were playing the regular eleven. Let Chambers be as over-confident as he likes. We don't want to copy him."

And so, when the match started, the Fourth was "on its toes." They instinctively felt that the game was in their hands, but in cricket—as in everything else—it was unsafe to count their chickens before they were hatched.

Chambers came out with Gore-Pearce to open the innings. They looked very important and imposing in their leg-pads, and

with their bats tucked under their arms. Any chance stranger could never have guessed that these two were the biggest duffers who had ever played in a Form match.

A cheer went up—largely of derision. But it was a genuine cheer from Chambers' own clique. The rest of the Remove clapped and shouted with tremendous vigour—so much vigour that the falseness of it was apparent. At least, it was apparent to anybody with sense. Chambers was idiot enough to believe that it was a genuine ovation.

"You see?" he murmured, glancing at Gore-Pearce. "There aren't many fellows who are against me. The bulk of 'em have confidence."

"I wonder?" said Gore-Pearce sceptically.

"What the deuce—"

But Chambers broke off. They had arrived at the wicket, and he did not want to enter into an argument in the hearing of the Fourth-Formers.

"Ready?" sang out Boots. "We'd better start strictly on time, Chambers! You fellows are going to give us a lot of leather-hunting, aren't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth-Formers. Chambers scowled.

"We'll keep you silly Fourth-Formers in the field all the afternoon!" he declared. "You'll be lucky if you get us out by tea-time!"

"Cricket's an uncertain game," said Boots, shaking his head.

"Not this time!" murmured Clapson.

Boots opened the bowling. His first ball was of bad length, and it went wide. Chambers hit out confidently, and neatly returned the leather into the bowler's hand.

Click!

Boots grinned, and lightly tossed the ball into the air.

"How's that?" he asked blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A perfect yell went up, and Chambers stood stock still, staring.

"What's the cackling about?" he demanded, in a blank voice. "What are you messing about for, Boots?"

"My dear chap, you're out!" said the umpire gently.

"Out!" gasped Chambers. "But—but— Oh, you mean that Boots caught the ball? I—I didn't understand— I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor chap!" sighed Bob Christine. "He knows so much about cricket that he has at last grasped the fact that it's not the general practice to return the ball to the bowler—at least, not in that way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chambers, very red in the face, walked back to the pavilion. He had made a hopeless mess of his innings, and he was maddened by the thought that he had only made things worse by his obtuseness. He couldn't possibly understand why he had failed to realise that he had been caught out. But his dismissal had come so suddenly and so

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unexpectedly that he hadn't been ready for it.

Gulliver came out to take his place. But Gulliver soon went back!



CHAPTER 13.

Playing the Game!

GULLIVER only lasted for three minutes, and during this time, much to the amazement of the spectators, he scored a single. Nobody knew how he did it. He didn't even know himself.

Boots hadn't got his length yet, and a rather loose ball came down and Gulliver swiped blindly.

"Run!" howled Gore-Pearce.

They ran, and the first run of the match was scored. Then Gore-Pearce faced the bowling, and his middle stump was neatly sent somersaulting over the turf.

"Jolly good!" said Handforth sarcastically. "One for two! At this rate, they'll score at least half-a-dozen runs between 'em!"

"Why wait?" asked Church. "It's only painful to watch."

"Just what I was thinking," said Fullwood. "It's a lovely afternoon, and we might as well spend it on the river."

"And there are some special ice-creams in the village, too," said McClure thoughtfully. "Hallo! De Valerie's coming in now!" he added, with interest. "Val ought to be pretty good."

"I'm ashamed of him!" said Handforth sternly. "I gave De Valerie credit for more sense! He ought to know better than to associate himself with Chambers' crowd!"

"He won't stick with them for long," said Nipper confidently.

Cecil de Valerie was a decent fellow in most ways, but he was inclined to be erratic. Even now he was seriously considering the prospect of withdrawing his support from Chambers. But, first of all, he would show Nipper that his cricket wasn't half so bad as he—Nipper—had imagined.

De Valerie hadn't had much chance this season, and he had really decided to play in this game so that he could exhibit his prowess to all and sundry.

And, in a measure, he succeeded.

He started off by knocking Boots to the boundary. It was a really good hit, for the ball had been a difficult one. The spectators began to take some real interest.

The rest of the over was non-productive of runs, and then Bob Christine came on to bowl at the other end. Gulliver made a dreadful hash of things, and was clean bowled second ball.

Then the Remove got a long laugh.

Four more members of Chambers' team went in and came out in succession. Bob Christine not only achieved the hat-trick, but he did better. Not that there was much credit in it. As long as he delivered a true ball, the result was inevitable.

Hubbard, Long, Owen major and Bell were all victims. And the unfortunate De Valerie was obliged to hang about at the other end, an embarrassed witness to these disasters.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cricket as it should not be played!" grinned Reggie Pitt.

"I wonder if Chambers is feeling pleased?" murmured Travers. "Do you know, dear old fellows, I have half an idea that he is upset."

Chambers, as a matter of fact, was dumb with the shock of it. He had been so full

of bluff and egotism that he had taken it for granted that cricket was child's play. He had always held that the brilliant players were just favourites. Anybody could do the same as they. But another of Chambers' little illusions was being dissipated.

De Valerie got the bowling again, and from the last ball of the over he managed to score a single. This made him face Boots for the next over, and he took full advantage of the opportunity.

In that over he scored ten off his own bat, thus helping to reduce the utter ignominy of the Remove innings, and later Scott, of the West House, helped him. Scott managed to score six, and he was the last man in. He succumbed in the end, giving an easy catch to first slip. De Valerie carried his bat out with eighteen runs to his credit.

The Remove had scored 27 all told, and the Fourth Formers had a vague idea that they would be able to beat this total. Chuckles were sounding from every part of Little Side as the Removites came off. The innings had lasted exactly twenty-two minutes.

"Well, we might as well go now," said Nipper. "Let's enjoy ourselves for the rest of the afternoon."

"Yes, there'll be nothing else to see," agreed Fullwood. "Boots and Christine will knock up the necessary runs in about a quarter of an hour, and the match will be over."

He was right.

Chambers led his men out into the field as bravely as he could; but he was painfully aware of the fact that he was a figure of ridicule. He and all his men were looked upon as clowns. When it was too late, Chambers regretted his folly.

As skipper, it had been his plain duty to play the best men available. And he had played the worst! He was afraid that there would be a big row afterwards. He remembered how the Remove had piled on Nipper for even the slightest errors of judgment. So what would the Remove do to *him*?

Yet Chambers remained crazily stubborn.

He swore that he would never admit that he had made a blunder. If the Remove grumbled, he would ignore them. He was captain, and his word was law! The Form could go and eat coke!

In this mood, Chambers arranged his field. He arranged it atrociously. He and De Valerie were the first bowlers—Chambers himself opening the attack. The result was funny.

Chambers couldn't bowl for nuts, and Bob Christine, who was batting, spent most of his time in dodging the balls. Sometimes they went a yard wide, and at other times they came for his head. The spectators howled with merriment, and Chambers got worse and worse, as he became flustered.

Christine knocked three boundaries in that first over, and when De Valerie came on, Boots calmly won the match straight off by hitting four successive boundaries in brilliant style. As he afterwards said, there was

really nothing in it. De Valerie was a fair bat, but he was a rotten bowler.

"Well, that's that!" said Boots blandly.

He hadn't run once, and neither had Christine. It was the most farcical match that had ever been played on the Junior ground. Boots, who loved cricket, felt that it wasn't good enough.

"You've had all the luck!" said Chambers gruffly.

"Ahem! Perhaps so—and perhaps not!" said Boots. "But what about a real game, Chambers? If you like, I'm willing to wash out this fiasco."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, there's still most of the afternoon left," replied Boots sportingly. "I'm agreeable to ignoring this last half-hour altogether. Supposing you select a real team, Chambers? Then we'll start the match proper."

Chambers flushed.

"That's not a bad idea!" he said grudgingly. "Of course, some of my men were a bit off colour—"

"Why go into it? What about that real game?"

"Yes!" said Chambers. "I think I'll give Gresham and Fullwood and those other chaps a chance."

"If you're wise, you'll play the ordinary Remove eleven," said Bob Christine bluntly. "And don't forget Nipper and Reggie Pitt. We're out here to play cricket, Chambers. So far, we've been swindled!"

But the cream of the fiasco was to come.

For after Chambers had decided to draw in his horns—like the weakling he was—the Remove eleven was not to be found! Nipper and Pitt and Gresham and the others had got fed up with watching, for the result of the match had been a foregone conclusion, and they had left the school premises.

Some were out cycling, some had gone to the river, and others were off for a ramble. At any rate, none of them could be found.

So Chambers was denied even the satisfaction of making amends for his inexcusable blunder. He had started his captaincy so badly that the Remove, as a whole, found it impossible to be angry. The thing was too silly—too utterly ridiculous. It had become laughable.

And Boots & Co. consoled themselves by getting up a scratch match of their own, and, on the whole, they preferred this to the ordeal of "standing" Cuthbert Chambers for the remainder of the afternoon.



CHAPTER 14.

The Chopper!

SOMETHING'S got to be done!"

Handforth uttered the words emphatically. He was pacing up and down Study D, and Church and McClure were waiting near the doorway.

It was tea-time, and the Remove had almost ceased to laugh at the fiasco of the Form match. There were many bitter feelings against Cuthbert Chambers. For the joke was one which possessed a nasty sting. It was not merely Chambers & Co. who suffered, but the whole Remove. The Form had been made ridiculous by this imitation skipper.

"Yes, something's got to be done!" declared Handforth, coming to a halt, and bringing his fist down on the table with terrific force. "It's time for action!"

"Well, I was thinking the same thing myself!" remarked Church. "And the first thing to be done, in my opinion, is to get some pastries and cakes."

"Eh?" said Handforth, staring.

"And we might try some of Mrs. Hake's potted ham, too," said Church. "Oh, yes! And we shall need a loaf of bread and half a pound of butter. There's practically nothing in the cupboard, and——"

"Are you talking about grub?" roared Handforth.

"Yes, of course."

"Why, you—you——"

"It's tea-time, isn't it?" asked Church.

"Tea-time!" thundered Handforth. "Is this an occasion to talk about tea? Is it a time to discuss buns and pastries?"

"Well, we've got to eat, old man," murmured McClure.

"We haven't got to eat!" retorted Handforth furiously. "We've got to go round the studies, urging the fellows to rise. That's the word—rise! There's got to be an insurrection of the Remove—and I'll lead it! If Nipper is too jolly weak, then I'll show everybody that I'm strong! Chambers must be shoved out of the captaincy this very evening!"

Church and McClure sighed. They were used to this sort of thing. Not that it really did any good.

"We'll help you after tea, Handy," said Church patiently. "But I'm afraid it's not much good just yet. You know what the fellows are. They won't move an inch until they've had tea."

Handforth breathed hard.

"Perhaps you're right," he said bitterly. "By George, where's their enthusiasm? Where's their loyalty? Grub comes before everything else with them! Chambers gives them a whacking great feed, and they elect him as captain! Instead of being guided by their brains, they're guided by their tummies!"

"Well, we'll go to the tuck-shop and get the things!" said McClure casually.

"All right—go!" said Handforth. "But I don't want any tea. Understand that! I couldn't eat a thing now! It would choke me!"

Church and McClure had heard this before, too. If ever Handforth was excited, he always declared that food would choke him—and then he would proceed to eat as much as Church and McClure put together. Yet, curiously enough, he had never yet been choked.

"Well, why don't you go?" he asked, as his chums still hung about.

"We're broke!" said McClure bluntly.

"Broke!" echoed Handforth. "Broke on Saturday evening!"

"Well, you know what it was this afternoon," said Church. "What with those ice-creams, and that new inner tube for my bike, and——"

"You'd better go to the Remove treasury and get a loan!" said Handforth, with heavy sarcasm. "Go to Chambers, and get five bob at a penny in the shilling interest!"

He pulled out some money and handed it over.

"By George!" he added. "I wonder what's become of all that tax money now? I don't trust Chambers—and I am jolly sure that I don't trust his rotten committee! I expect they've blued all that tin!"

But Church and McClure were not interested. They had got the money, and they hurried off to the tuck-shop. As they turned the corner of the Remove passage, a number of faces appeared round the bend at the other end. They were the faces of Gore-Pearce, Gulliver, Bell, Hubbard, and Long.

"The coast is clear!" murmured Gore-Pearce tensely. "Come on!"

They tip-toed to the door of Study D and listened for a moment. They could hear the sound of Handforth pacing up and down. Then with a sudden burst they flung themselves into the study.

"On him!" yelled Gore-Pearce excitedly.

Handforth was taken at a disadvantage. At the moment he had his back to the door, and before he could swing round, startled by this unexpected intrusion, the cads were on him. They clawed at him, they pulled him down backwards, and he thudded to the floor with terrific force.

"What the—— Why, you—you—— Lemme go!" yelled Handforth furiously. "You funny idiots! You—you—— Gug-gug-gurrrrrh!"

He subsided, as one of the raiders sat on his face. In the meantime Gore-Pearce and Bell were whipping some ropes round Handforth's wrists. He tried to put up a fight, but it was impossible. There were too many for him.

If he had not been taken at a disadvantage he would probably have fought these cads, and would have scattered them all. But he had been "downed" before he could even get his fists into working order.

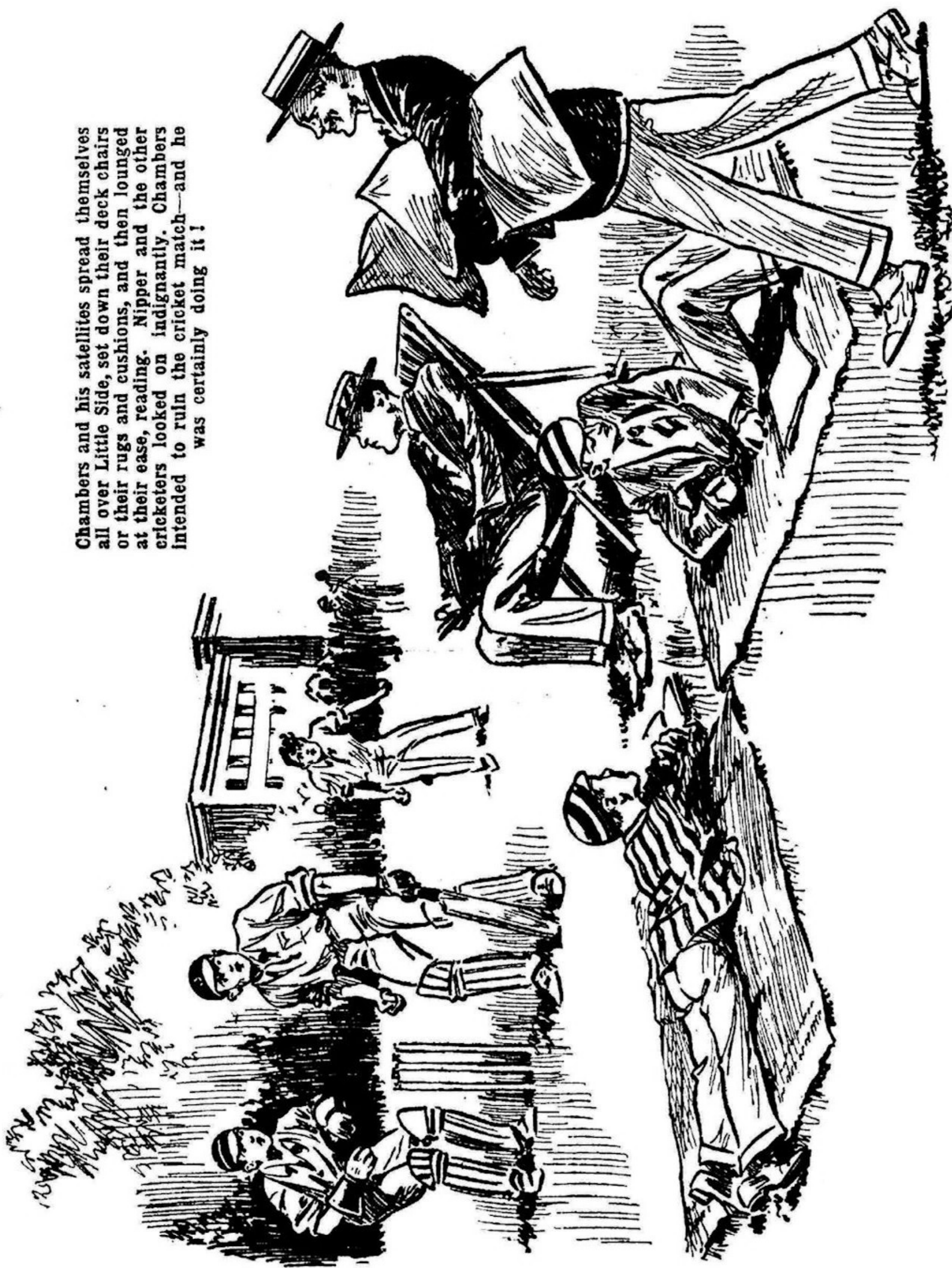
Once his arms were bound, he was yanked to his feet, and then propelled towards the door. A muffler had been flung over his face, and it covered his mouth, his nose, and his eyes. He could not even see where he was going.

"Good!" panted Gulliver. "Now we've got the rotter! Come on—let's hurry! Somebody might spot us!"

Handforth was whirled out of the study. He was pushed up the passage, and, a moment later, he was thrust through a doorway.

Slam!

Chambers and his satellites spread themselves all over Little Side, set down their deck chairs or their rugs and cushions, and then lounged at their ease, reading. Nipper and the other cricketers looked on indignantly. Chambers intended to ruin the cricket match—and he was certainly doing it!



The door closed, and the muffer was torn from Handforth's face. As he had half-expected, he found himself in Study H, and Cuthbert Chambers was facing him.

There was a grim, triumphant look on the captain's face.

"Well, Handforth," said Chambers harshly, "this is where you get it in the neck! This is where the chopper descends?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Handforth, white with fury. "What have you brought me here for? What's the silly idea?"

"I'm going to punish you for daring to strike me this morning!" said Chambers. "You thought I'd forgotten it, eh? Well, I don't forget things like that! You struck your skipper, and you're going to learn that it's a dangerous thing to defy me!"



CHAPTER 15.

Archie Does His Best!

HANDFORTH laughed loudly

"So it took half a dozen of you to get hold of me, eh? Is that the way you show me your authority, Chambers?"

Chambers scowled.

"I don't want any cheek!" he snapped.

"Cheek!" roared Handforth. "Who do you think you are? Do you happen to be a tin god, or what? Why, you miserable idiot, if you touch me the Form will chuck you out of the captaincy within five minutes! We don't stand this sort of thing in the Remove!"

"Don't you?" panted Chambers. "We'll see about that! I'm not going to waste any time over you, Handforth! This is going to be a quick business! We'll put you on trial at once, and if you're found guilty you'll receive your punishment without delay."

"Go ahead!" said Handforth thickly. "I can't do anything against a crowd like this—with my fists tied! But, by George, just you wait until I'm free!"

Chambers turned to Gore-Pearce.

"State the case!" he said curtly.

"There are several witnesses here who can prove that Handforth struck you forcibly on the nose," replied Claude Gore-Pearce. "The incident happened in the lobby, soon after morning lessons."

"Call the witnesses!" ordered Chambers.

Gulliver and Bell and Teddy Long and Hubbard grinned.

"Did you see this incident?" asked Gore-Pearce.

"Yes," answered the witnesses in one voice.

"Then your guilt is proved, Handforth," said Chambers, turning to the enraged leader of Study D. "The judicial authority of the Remove decrees that you shall be punished accordingly."

"Go and boil yourself!" said Handforth, with contempt.

"You had better understand at once that the judicial authority of the Remove has been formed in order to deal with all cases of insubordination!" said Chambers. "This is its first trial. And I had better tell you,



Handforth, that in every case where it is practicable the judicial authority will give sentences that are approximately the same as the offence."

"In other words," said Gore-Pearce, "we're going to make the punishment fit the crime."

"Dry up!" frowned Chambers. "Remember that I'm the president of this court. Prisoner, you are sentenced to a black eye!"

"Idiot!"

"By glory! I'll show you whether I'm in earnest or not!" shouted Chambers, in a sudden burst of fury. "You punched me on

the nose, didn't you! Well, the sentence of this court is that you shall be punched on both eyes!"

"Try and do it!" jeered Handforth. "Come on—set me free, and we'll have a scrap! Then we'll see if you can punch my eyes, you drivelling lunatic!"

"I'm not going to set you free!" replied Chambers. "Hold him tightly, you fellows!"

All the other Removites in the study seized

Chambers and his satellites spread themselves all over Little Side, set down their deck chairs or their rugs and cushions, and then lounged at their ease, reading. Nipper and the other cricketers looked on indignantly. Chambers intended to ruin the cricket match—and he was certainly doing it!



Handforth, and even the burly Edward Oswald found it impossible to get free. His struggles were useless. They were too many for him—particularly when it is remembered that his arms were bound.

"Now!" said Chambers savagely.

He had quickly pulled on some boxing gloves, and he advanced towards the prisoner.

"Great Scott!" gasped Handforth, staring. "You're not going to punch me in the eye—when I'm helpless like this?"

"I'm going to make the punishment fit the crime!" replied Chambers harshly. In his anger, he did not seem to realise the extreme cowardliness of his actions.

Crash!

Without warning, Chambers' fist thudded against Handforth's left eye. And then, while Handy was still staggering, Chambers punched again—on Handforth's right eye. Although the blows were lessened by the padded boxing gloves, Handforth was dazed and dizzy. His head was reeling.

"Outside with him!" snapped Chambers. "That's enough! He's had his gruel!"

The door was flung open, and Handforth was bundled out. Then the door slammed, and the key was turned in the lock.

Reeling, Handforth tottered down the passage, and, as luck would have it, he ran right into Archie Glenthorpe. Archie adjusted his monocle, and looked at him in wonder.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated. "That is to say, odds fixes and predicaments! I may be wrong, old tea-cup, but there seems to have been a spot of bother."

"The cads—the hounds!" panted Handforth thickly.

"Eh? I mean——"

"Untie these strings, Archie!" said Handforth, breathing hard. "Thanks, old man! It's Chambers—Chambers and his rotten gang! They bound me like this, took me into their study, and Chambers punched me in the eye whilst the others held me!"

"Not absolutely?" asked Archie, in horror. "I mean to say, good gad! They tied you up, and Chambers punched you in the good old optics? It seems to me, laddie, that something distinctly ought to be accomplished!"

He produced a pocket-knife, cut Handforth's bonds; then he walked to Study H, and rapped peremptorily upon the door.

"Who's that?" came Chambers' voice.

"Absolutely!" said Archie sternly. "That is to say, I! Be good enough, you foul blighters, to open this dashed door!"

The key was turned in the lock, and Archie strode in. He found

the judicial authority regarding him with cold anger.

"Did you call us 'foul blighters'?" demanded Chambers ominously.

"Yes, I absolutely did!" retorted Archie. "I mean to say, it was a cowardly business to punch Handforth in the eye department! I take it, Chambers, that you are 'the duffer' who is directing the dashed operations?"

"I am the president of the judicial authority!" replied Chambers.

"Good gad! Not really?" asked Archie. "Well, you dashed fright, you're not merely a foul blighter, but a poisonous blister! And that, I mean to say, is that!"

"And this," roared Chambers, "is this!"

He reached out a hand, grabbed Archie's collar, and tore it from his neck. He seized Archie's waistcoat, and ripped it up so violently that every button flew off.

"Here, I say!" howled Archie. "I mean, dash it——"

He received a jab below the belt, and doubled up. And instantly his jacket was seized, pulled over his head, and torn in halves. Then, as he was twirled round, a boot was placed firmly behind him, and a sudden force was applied.

The unhappy Archie shot through the open doorway like a stone from a catapult. He crashed to the floor, and sprawled over in an untidy, dishevelled, dusty heap.

Evidently the judicial authority of the Remove was standing no nonsense!



CHAPTER 16.

Handforth Calls for Action!

THE time is ripe!" said Handforth impressively.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie Glen-

thorne. "If anything, old cheese, slightly over-ripe! Not to say, rotten!"

Half an hour had elapsed, and Archie was looking something like himself again. Handforth's eyes, although they were not exactly blackened, were looking puffy and reddened; and he was boiling with rage at the caddish trick that had been played on him.

As it happened, Nipper & Co. had come down the Remove passage just after Archie had been hurled out of Study H, and Nipper had not only seen Archie's distress, but he had also seen Handforth's. And then and there a kind of impromptu meeting had been called. A good many of the juniors had trickled in from the river and from the lanes by now, and the common-room was selected as a rendezvous.

The party was a fairly big one, and it included the prominent Removites such as Nipper & Co., Handforth & Co.,

Archie, Travers, Jimmy Potts, Gresham, and Fullwood. In addition, Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey and a good many West House Removites had come in. A great wave of indignation had passed through them when they had heard of "Chambers' latest."

The judicial authority of the Remove was, indeed, something fresh! And its manner of dealing with Handforth stamped it, at the very beginning, as a vicious and evil organisation. Everybody had taken Cuthbert Chambers for an ordinary kind of ass; but he was developing into a very real menace.

"We can't let things go on like this!" said Handforth fiercely. "Look at the game this afternoon! Did you ever see such a farce? And now, because I punched Chambers on the nose, he grabs me and ——"

"Yes, we know all about it, Handy—you've told us!" interrupted Reggie Pitt gently. "But it's a rather ticklish position."

"How is it ticklish?"

"Well, Chambers has only been captain for a day or two, and he has started rottenly," replied Reggie thoughtfully. "There's not much chance that he'll improve, but there's some consolation in knowing that he can't get much worse."

"Why should he be allowed to carry on?"

"That's just the point!" said Reggie. "There's a possibility—a slim one, I'll admit—that Chambers may tone down. His success in the election seems to have got into his head, and he thinks he's a kind of St. Frank's Mussolini."

"Then he ought to be kicked out of the captaincy!"

"Not necessarily," put in Nipper. "I'm rather inclined to agree with Reggie, you fellows. I don't believe in doing anything hastily."

"Yes, you'd prefer to let things go from bad to worse, wouldn't you?" shouted Handforth. "But I believe in pulling a weed up by the roots, and throwing it away!"

"Yes, but even a weed ought to be given a chance," replied Nipper. "It might prove to be a very attractive flower. Not that Chambers will ever be attractive!" he added dryly. "Still, we want to be fair. We don't want to give Chambers the slightest excuse for saying, afterwards, that he was thrown out of the captaincy before he had had a chance of proving his worth."

"How can he prove his worth when he's worthless?" asked Handforth.

"That's a poser for you!" grinned Travers.

"It's such a poser that I'm not going to attempt to answer it," smiled Nipper. "Still, the principle remains the same. My suggestion is that we should give Chambers a good deal of rope. Let him have a week's run, say, and if, by next Wednesday, he isn't improved—well, then we'll force him to resign."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the wheeze!"

"Give him enough rope, and he'll trip himself up!"

The **POPULAR**
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"Absolutely!"

Handforth looked round, his expression angry.

"And do you mean to say you're willing to let this sort of thing go on?" he asked, in amazement. "You're prepared to give Chambers a run until next Wednesday?"

"That's the general idea," nodded Reggie Pitt.

"Then you're all mad!"

"Thanks!" said Reggie. "But, my dear chap, you don't seem to realise that nothing good ever comes of hurried action. Besides, Chambers was elected by the majority, and it's only right that those idiots should suffer! Let Chambers carry on, and get himself tied into more knots! It'll be interesting to watch."

"And you can take it from me that I'll be one of the watchers!" remarked Vivian Travers.

"Yes, it's mainly your fault that Chambers was elected!" said Handforth fiercely. "What the dickens do you mean by it, Travers?"

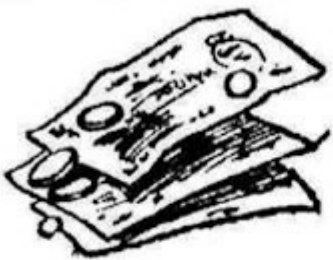
"Dear old fellow, I really don't know!" replied Travers frankly. "But we're having some fun, aren't we?"

"Fun!" howled Handforth.

"Well, well!" murmured Travers. "I mean, it's helping to pass away the dull, listless days. And, really, there is no need to worry. All this will do Chambers a great amount of good. Before we've finished with him, he'll be as meek as a lamb. He's been asking for this lesson for terms, and now he's getting it. But, as yet, he doesn't know what he's in for!"

Much to Handforth's disgust, the majority of the fellows decided to abide by the suggestion that Nipper and Pitt had made. They would give Chambers a chance—until next Wednesday, at least.

And it was the general idea that Chambers would "peter out" as a captain long before his week was over. Now that Vivian Travers was no longer behind him, his ultimate downfall was certain.



CHAPTER 17.

The Treasury at Work!

"HALLO! What's this?" It was Tuesday morning, and Handforth & Co., passing the notice board in the Ancient House lobby, had come to a halt. A fresh notice was on the green baize, and the chums of Study D paused and looked at it.

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Handforth, after he had read it.

Church and McClure whistled. Then they grinned. After that, they read the notice through for a second time:

"IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT."

"The office of the Remove Treasury, situated in Study H, will be open for business immediately after morning lessons to-day. Any fellow requiring a loan will be permitted to have his case heard. All applicants will be dealt with in strict rotation.

"(Signed) CUTHBERT CHAMBERS,
"President of the Treasury."

It wasn't long before a regular crowd gathered round, and everybody was hugely interested. Incidentally, nearly everybody was stoney broke, too. There would probably be a long queue of applicants outside the office of the Remove Treasury, immediately after morning lessons.

"Well, there seems to be something doing at last!" said Tommy Watson, with a grin.

"If you want to see something doing—wait until after lessons!" murmured Nipper. "The Tower of Babel won't be in it!"

There was a good deal of satisfaction amongst the rank and file. On the previous day—Monday—all sorts of fellows had gone to Chambers, asking for loans. They reminded him of his promises; they reminded him that he had told them that they would be able to borrow from the Reserve Fund. And Chambers had promised that something would be done about it.

Chambers, in fact, had been very subdued since the Saturday. Hardly anything had been seen of him. He had kept very quiet, and the Remove had pursued its normal course. Handforth, naturally, was disappointed; he had expected all sorts of sensational developments.

Chambers himself had been only too glad of the respite.

And yet he had not learned his lesson.

The farce of the match against the Fourth had not impressed him. At least, not in the way that it should have done. For, instead of concentrating his attentions upon the real Remove cricketers, Chambers spent every spare minute of the Monday at the nets himself.

Furthermore, he insisted that Gore-Peace & Co., Hubbard, Long, and the other "duds," should be with him. All those duffers who had played on Saturday were kept at the nets, practising. The regular cricketers were not invited to join in.

And this was very significant.

For on the Wednesday there was a match arranged against the River House School. Was it possible that Chambers would be insane enough to select the same team for that important match? It seemed incredible, and yet there were many fellows who declared that Chambers was fool enough for it.

In fairness to him, the fellows had to admit that he was applying himself to the cricket with a fair amount of gusto. But, when all was said and done, it was like flogging a dead horse. Neither he, nor any of his clique, could ever be any good at the great game.

The Fourth, naturally, was in a rare old stew about it. In a school game, the stalwarts of the Fourth were generally called upon to lend a hand, for the team was selected from the best men in the Remove and the Fourth. But Chambers was not only captain of the Remove, but junior skipper, too, and if he liked to leave the Fourth out of it, it was within his jurisdiction to do so.

However, he would answer no inquiries, and so the juniors were left in doubt. They would know nothing until the morrow—until Wednesday.

And to-day there was the matter of the Treasury to occupy the fellows' attentions.

As soon as morning lessons were over there was a stampede for the Remove passage in the Ancient House. Not that Chambers was ready for it. He might have known that it would come, but he was naturally incapable. His preparations were of the crudest.

Inside Study H, he and Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell were holding a little discussion.

"I expect there'll be a good few applications for loans, but we can easily deal with them," Chambers was saying. "And the fellows won't ask for much—a couple of bob here, and five bob there, I suppose."

"I'm not so sure," said Gore-Pearce dubiously. "They might ask for more."

"If they do, they'll only have to pay it back at the end of the week," replied Chambers. "They'll have to pay interest, too. If a fellow gets ten shillings, he'll have to pay ten and tenpence back on Saturday. And we'll stick to that rule, too. This thing will be run properly, or not at all!"

"How much money is there in the Treasury?" asked Gulliver.

"Oh, heaps!" said Chambers, opening a drawer. "There's over five quid in silver, piles of copper, and lots of notes. In fact, five quid of this money is mine—my personal

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cash. It's only here for the sake of appearances, of course."

"And there's a fiver of mine, too!" said Gore-Pearce promptly. "That's only for appearances, too!"

Before Chambers had been elected, he had promised the Remove that he would contribute the sum of twenty pounds to the Treasury—to be kept in hand as a kind of Reserve Fund—and Vivian Travers had guaranteed this amount. But Travers had only been called upon to "whack out" a tenner. The rest of the money belonged to Chambers and Gore-Pearce. Incidentally, Travers looked upon that tenner as lost. Not that he cared. He generally had plenty of money, and he was very careless with it.

Chambers had wanted to be big. And, indeed, he had gained many votes because of this supposed reserve fund. The idea of it had appealed to many of the lesser juniors. Then, too, there was the tax. And there would be the interest on any loans that were made. The fund would increase and increase, and it was generally believed that there would be no shortage of pocket-money in future. If ever a fellow was hard up, he only had to go to Chambers, and his difficulties would be over.

But, then, theory is a very different thing to practice!



CHAPTER 18.

Many Loans!

WHAT'S all that din?" asked Chambers irritably.

"Sounds like a few customers!" said Bell.

A tremendous uproar was taking place outside the door of Study H. The passage, judging by the sounds, was filled with struggling and shouting humanity. Chambers had an idea that a free fight was taking place, and he flung open the door and stared out.

"Great Scott!" he gasped blankly.

The passage was full of juniors. They were standing in a kind of queue, waiting, and scraps were occurring here and there, as one fellow or another tried to barge into the line out of his place.

"What's all this?" shouted Chambers. "Can't you play your games somewhere else?"

"Rats! We're waiting for the Treasury to open!" said Doyle.

"What!" gasped Chambers. "You haven't all come to borrow money, have you?"

"Yes, we have!" roared the crowd.

"But—but—"

Chambers paused, at a loss for words. Anybody with a grain of sense would have known that this rush would take place. But Chambers, unfortunately, did not possess a grain of sense.

And he was knocked all of a heap.

Well over half of the Remove was out in the passage, and Chambers was bewildered

and dumbfounded. He had had a general idea that two or three fellows would trickle up, casually asking for two or three shillings each. According to his calculations, there weren't many juniors who would be broke by Tuesday. Perhaps he was right. Perhaps there were a good many of the fellows who still possessed money. But this did not alter the fact that they were anxious to test the resources of the Treasury.

"Now then—one at a time!" sang out Gore-Pearce, from inside the study. "Let 'em in!"

"Wait a minute!" ejaculated Chambers. "There's a tremendous crowd—Whoa! Keep out, confound you! What the—"

He was swept aside by the flood of juniors, as they pushed their way into Study H, and Chambers found it almost impossible to get back. The fellows had surged in and the doorway was jammed. From inside there came a confused noise of shouting and gasping.

And Chambers, in this extremity, thought of Vivian Travers.

He had, indeed, caught sight of Travers, at the very back of the crowd, lounging near the angle to the passage. And Chambers remembered that ten pounds of the money belonged to Travers. Here was a good excuse to seek advice!

The Remove captain had sadly missed Travers' guiding brain during the past few days. While Travers had been with him he had not appreciated his advice. But after Travers had gone, Chambers had felt lost. Obstinate as he had carried on—mainly because he had done practically nothing. But now that this sudden crisis had arisen, Chambers felt that he needed some kind of support.

He pushed his way past the struggling juniors, broke free at last, and caught hold of Travers just as the latter was turning into the lobby.

"Half a minute, Travers!" panted Chambers. "I want a word with you—in private!"

"Go ahead!" said Travers calmly.

They drew aside, into a little recess, and Travers looked thoroughly amused.

"Well, what is it?" he inquired.

"You know what it is, as well as I do!" ejaculated Chambers. "What about all this crowd?"

"Well, what about it?"

"They've come to the study for loans!"

"No? Really?"

"You—you—I tell you they've come for loans!" insisted Chambers. "What shall I do?"

"Do as you please," replied Travers casually. "It's not my business."

"But there are too many of them!" said Chambers, in alarm. "I only expected three or four!"

"That was your mistake," nodded Travers. "If I had had anything to do with the arrangements, I should have prepared differently. For example, you ought to have made it plain that only six loans could be

made on any one day, and that no loan could be for a greater sum than five shillings."

"Good glory! I didn't think of that!"

"And you ought to have said, too, that there was to be no crowding in the corridor," added Travers. "But what's the good now? It's too late!"

"Too late!" gasped Chambers.

"Much too late," said Travers gravely. "You'll probably get back and find that the Treasury has been ransacked. When a crowd like that gets loose, there's no telling what'll happen!"

"But—but there's ten pounds of your money there!"

"That's not my money," said Travers, shrugging his shoulders. "I gave it up long ago."

"And there's five pounds of my money there!" roared Chambers.

"You'd better give that up, too."

"I won't!" hooted the skipper. "Great Scott! It's all the money I've got!"

"You mean it's all the money you had. You haven't got it now, dear old fellow."

Chambers turned, his face aflame with anxiety. Then he ran swiftly back up the passage. Half-way he turned, and stared uncertainly back.

"Won't you lend me a hand, Travers?" he asked hoarsely. "Won't you help to straighten this thing out?"

"Sorry—nothing doing!" called Travers. "You told me, quite plainly, the other day that you didn't want my advice, and that I could go and eat coke. I'll admit that I haven't been eating coke, but I'd rather not have anything more to do with you."

And Travers turned his back and walked away.

Chambers found himself fighting through a crowd of laughing, excited juniors. They were all streaming away from Study H, and most of them were yelling. At last, Chambers arrived at his study. He burst in, and stared round in dazed bewilderment.

The place was a wreck. The table was upside-down, the chairs were half-smashed, and Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell were torn and battered and dishevelled. Two of them were suffering from bleeding noses, and there were many other marks of violence on them.

"What—what's happened?" shouted Chambers hoarsely.

"You silly fool!" snarled Gore-Pearce. "This is a fine state of affairs! They've taken all the money—including mine!"

"All the money!" howled Chambers. "What about my fiver?"

"It's gone!" said Gore-Pearce. "We couldn't hold them back! It was all right at first, and we paid out five shillings here, and half a crown there. Then the crowd rushed us, and in about two minutes the table was upset, and all the cash was seized."

"The—the awful robbers!" hooted Chambers.

But the Remove was cackling over the

joke. The Treasury was a huge success. Everybody was flush, and the tuckshop was crowded. And nobody had any qualms of conscience—for that money had belonged to the Remove Treasury. Therefore, it belonged to the Removites.

As for paying it back—well, Saturday was a long way off!



CHAPTER 19.

A River House Rumpus!

"MAD!" said Fullwood. "Stark, staring, raving mad!"

"I can't believe it, you know!" ejaculated Clive Russell. "It's—it's too ridiculous!"

And most of the other Removites were saying the same sort of thing.

It was Wednesday mid-day. Chambers had only just published the list for the match against the River House School that afternoon, and, to everybody's stupefaction, he had posted exactly the same list as before! His team was unaltered—even after the pitiful farce of that Form game!

"But what's his idea?" asked Gresham wonderingly. "Look at the ghastly failure he made against the Fourth! How can he expect to play the River House with a team like this?"

Fullwood grunted.

"They've all been practising at the nets!" he said. "Probably Chambers believes that he and his men are fit players now! They're fools enough for anything!"

"There'll be trouble over this!" said Gresham darkly.

If talking constituted trouble, then there was plenty of it. Buster Boots and his men raged. But they could do nothing. Cuthbert Chambers was the captain, and his word was law. At least, when it came to the selection of a cricket team, there was nobody to over-rule him.

When it was nearly time for the match, Hal Brewster and his merry men from the River House School turned up. They knew nothing of the altered conditions at St. Frank's, and so they were taken by surprise.

The Hon. Aubrey de Vere Wellborne, on the other hand, knew everything. Wellborne was the leader of the Honourables at the River House School, and he and his set were just about on a par with Gore-Pearce & Co. As a matter of fact, Gore-Pearce had written a private letter to Wellborne the previous evening, and had asked him to come along with as many of his friends as he could bring.

Brewster had rather wondered at Wellborne & Co.'s sudden interest in cricket. Now he understood!

"But this is a joke, isn't it?" he asked, in wonder.



The fight waged fast and furious. Then, before anybody realised quite how it happened, Chambers found himself facing Nipper. And Nipper, quick as a flash, slapped Chambers on the face. "Now," he said tensely. "Come on, Chambers. You're the new captain and I'm the old. Let's fight it out!"

"What's a joke?" said Chambers.

"Well, hang it, your eleven!" said the River House Junior captain. "You're not really going to play such duds as Gulliver and Bell and Teddy Long, are you?"

"Are you questioning my selection?" shouted Chambers furiously.

"Keep your hair on!" said Brewster, with cold disdain. "I don't know anything about your authority, Chambers. But I do know that Gulliver and Bell and Long and all these others of the same kidney are about as much use in cricket as a row of skittles! Still, if you're willing to play them, all well and good. We're not grumbling."

"Not at all!" grinned Ascott.

"But we rather thought we came here for a game," put in Glynn. "What's wrong with Nipper and Gresham and Pitt and the others?"

"This team is *my* team—and I don't want to be questioned about it!" said Chambers rudely. "Either you play us, or you don't play at all!"

"All right; don't get excited."

"It won't take us long to polish off a crowd like you!" said Chambers contemptuously. "The River House is only a miserable little school, at the best. You ought to think yourselves jolly lucky that

we play you at all! I can tell you, it's a favour!"

Brewster went red.

"We don't want any favours from you, Chambers!" he retorted hotly. "And it's the first time I knew that St. Frank's was snobbish! The River House may be smaller than St. Frank's, but——"

"That's enough!"

"What! Are you talking to me?" gasped Brewster.

"Yes, I am!" roared Chambers. "Be quiet, or I won't play you at all!"

"Then you won't play us at all!" shouted Hal Brewster indignantly. "I'm not going to be quiet at your command, you big idiot! Who the dickens do you think you are? Is this the way you treat your visitors?"

Chambers flared up.

"That's enough for me!" he said savagely. "You can take your rotten team away, Brewster! There's going to be no game to-day! I wouldn't play you now if you begged on your knees! Get off these grounds—you and your miserable small-school men!"

"You insulting rotter!" yelled Ascott.

"Come on, you chaps—let's down him!"

"No!" said Brewster sharply. "Don't forget that we're visitors here. If Chambers chooses to insult us, let him. But we mustn't forget our own manners."

And the River House fellows, fuming, collected in an excited group. But they were soon joined by Nipper and Reggie Pitt and all the other prominent Removites.

"Don't take any notice, Brewster," said Nipper quietly. "Chambers is only a big windbag. You're lucky to escape the game. It would only have been a farce."

Brewster & Co. soon cooled down.

"How do you stick the man?" asked Grant in wonder.

"We're not going to stick him much longer!" replied Nipper. "I expect to-day will be his last day."

"Then I'm jolly glad to hear it!" said Handforth tartly. "I rather thought that you were going to let Chambers ride the high horse until the end of term. I vote that we kick him out of the captaincy now—this minute!"

"There's something better to do, Handy, old man," said Nipper. "Brewster & Co. have been dished out of their game with the regular Eleven—"

"The what Eleven?"

"Well, the official Eleven," amended Nipper. "What about giving them a real game?"

"By Jove, that's not a bad wheeze!" grinned Brewster.

"Good enough, then!" said Nipper crisply. "Come along, you fellows! We're all in flannels, ready. We'll play the usual Junior Eleven."

"Bravo!"

"And I vote that Nipper captains the side as of old!" said Reggie Pitt.

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the stuff!"

There was a tremendous amount of enthusiasm when the idea got round. Chambers had refused to play the River House School, so he could hardly grumble if a scratch team was formed to give Brewster & Co. a game.

But Chambers did grumble. He grumbled very, very loudly.



CHAPTER 20.

The Last Straw!

THE fact was, Chambers was taken by surprise. All the wind was knocked out of his sails.

He had fondly believed that he had "dished" the River House School by refusing to play. And thus, when he found that Nipper, Reggie Pitt, Buster Boots and the other Junior stalwarts were getting busy, he experienced a shock. Brewster & Co. were to be given a game, after all—and by fellows who had no authority to play!

Chambers came running back, just as the cricketers were making their final arrangements.

"Hold on, there!" bellowed Chambers. "Stop this!"

"Stop what?" asked Nipper steadily.

"Stop playing the fool!" retorted Chambers. "There's going to be no game on this field this afternoon!"

"Oh, isn't there?" asked about two dozen voices, in one solid blast.

"No, there isn't!" shouted Chambers. "I'm captain here, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go away, Chambers—your face gives us a pain!" said Handforth sourly. "And let

NEXT WEDNESDAY!



me tell you this, my son! You've finished yourself now! We don't recognise you as a captain any longer!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You and your gang can go your own way!" went on Handforth. "The Remove's split—see?"

"Why, you confounded—"

"Oh, let's chuck him off!" said Fullwood impatiently. "We've had more than enough of him!"

And Chambers, to his dismay and alarm, was seized by rough hands, propelled violently across the turf, and hurled off the ground.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no doubt about it. The Remove was split. Fully half the juniors disregarded Chambers completely, and from this minute

onwards they were ready to defy him in all things. They did not recognise him as their captain. And, what was more to the point, they were ready to re-elect Nipper as their own skipper at any moment.

But the game against Brewster & Co. called them now, and it occupied their full attention.

"I'm not going to stand it!" panted Chambers, as he found himself surrounded by Gore-Pearce & Co. and the Honourables from the River House. "The insubordinate rotters!"

"TAMED BY THE FAGS!"

Cuthbert Chambers a mere fag; forced to run errands for unsympathetic seniors!

Could anything be more humiliating? It was bad enough for the conceited ex-Fifth-Former to be sent down into the Remove, but this latest blow is more stunning still. And Cuthbert Chambers rebels. At least, he starts to rebel, but he finds himself up against Willy Handforth—and Willy, in the Third Form, is a power unto himself!

Also the Third-Formers have many old scores to settle with Chambers, and now that they have got the chance they pay them off—with interest!

Poor Chambers!

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"Yes, but hang it, what can you do?" asked the Hon. Aubrey.

"I'll show you what I can do!" said Chambers, his eyes flashing dangerously. "I'm captain, don't forget, and while I'm captain I'll have my own way! I've said that there isn't going to be a game on this ground this afternoon."

"But they're beginning to play their game!" said Gore-Pearce. "You can't go and stop it!"

"Yes, I can!"

"How? Here, I say, you'll have to be careful," said Gulliver, in dire alarm. "You mustn't rush them, Chambers! We can't have a free fight on the cricket pitch! There'll be an awful bust-up with the Head if anything like that happens!"

"Yes," said Hubbard. "We should all be gated for the rest of the term!"

"Leave it to me!" said Chambers darkly. "I want you fellows to help," he went on, turning to Wellborne & Co. "There are plenty of you here, and——"

"If it's all the same to you, old top, nothing doing," said the Hon. Aubrey, with a yawn. "We didn't come here to scrap, you know. In fact, the whole thing is a bit of a swindle. We thought we were going to see you fellows playing."

"You'll see something better!" said Chambers. "Look here—it can be done easily! And even Nipper and Handforth won't dare to start a fight. They can't! We're within full sight of Big Side, and there are lots of prefects playing there, to say nothing of masters. Oh, no, we shall be safe enough!"

And Chambers proceeded to explain his plan. Even Wellborne & Co. chuckled when they heard it.

In the meantime, Hal Brewster had won the toss, and he had elected to take first knock. Nipper's team went into the field, and Brewster and Glynn came out to open the River House innings.

The game started well, but that is about all that can be said of it. Harry Gresham was bowling, and Brewster was very cautious, for Gresham's bowling was masterly. Then, just when the over was completed, and when the field was changing, a very curious thing was noticed.

A large number of juniors were walking casually on to the field. Some of them were carrying deck-chairs, others rugs and cushions, and all of them had magazines. They seemed to be utterly oblivious of the game that was in progress.

Chambers was leading the way, with Gore-Pearce & Co., Hubbard, Doyle, Teddy Long, and others behind him. Even Merrell and Marriott, of the Fourth, had joined in, just for the fun of it, and the Hon. Aubrey de Vere Wellborne was much in evidence, with all his questionable pals.

The cricketers stood stock-still, looking in amazement.

But the intruders took no notice of them. They spread themselves all over Little Side, and they set down their deck-chairs, or their rugs and cushions, and then they lounged at their ease, reading.

It was all done deliberately, quietly. Nipper found himself looking at Reggie Pitt, and their exchange of glances was expressive. They knew exactly what this meant. Chambers had decided to ruin their game.

And, what was more to the point, Chambers was doing it!

For it was impossible to play any kind of cricket with the field overrun by fellows with deck-chairs and rugs and cushions.

"The rotters!" gasped Handforth. "By George! Are we going to stand this, you chaps? Come on! Up, the Remove! Let's drive 'em off!"

"Hear, hear!"

"On them, you chaps!"

"No!" urged Nipper. "We can't do it, you fatheads!"

"Can't!" roared Handforth. "Why not?"
 "Because we shall get into trouble—as the aggressors!" replied Nipper. "Don't forget that there are lots of prefects within sight. They'll be on us like a ton of bricks if we start any fighting."

"My only hat!" said Handforth blankly.

Nipper strode up to Chambers, and looked at him coldly.

"What does this mean, Chambers?" he asked.

"Mean?" replied Chambers coolly. "It means, my fine young pippin, that I'm the Junior Captain. And when I say a thing, I mean it!"

"I have always understood that a sports captain is a sportsman!" said Nipper quietly.

"Well, there's not going to be any game on this ground this afternoon!" said Chambers. "That's final. And if you dare to lay a finger on us, you'll soon find yourselves in serious trouble!"

And Chambers went on reading.



CHAPTER 21.

The Split!

WITHOUT doubt Chambers had played a trump card.

He, as the official captain, had ordained that there should be no match that afternoon. Therefore the ground could be used as a lawn, and any attempt to throw the intruders off would only result in disaster for the attackers.

"It's hopeless!" said Nipper as he returned to the other juniors. "We can't play! And if we go for these chaps, it'll end in a free fight!"

"Well, there's only one satisfactory result of this," said Reggie Pitt. "The split in the Remove is now complete. And Chambers' doom is sealed. He'll be forced to resign this evening."

It wasn't much of a consolation just at the moment. But what *was* a consolation—and a big one—was a large bank of rain-clouds which came up half an hour later, while the cricketers were still indignantly discussing the situation.

Rain began to fall, and Chambers & Co. and their helpers were compelled to scuttle away. Before long a regular downpour had developed.

"Well, thank goodness!" said Nipper. "I don't often long for rain on a Wednesday afternoon, when a cricket match is on; but this time it's welcome. We couldn't have played, in any case!"

"And now we can devote ourselves to the dethroning of Chambers," said Fullwood, with satisfaction.

In the meantime, while Nipper & Co. entertained their River House friends, Mr. Crowell had made his way to the Head's house.

Mr. Crowell was looking very grim.

He had, in fact, witnessed the whole unpleasant incident. He had seen Chambers & Co. coming on to the field with the deck-chairs; he had seen the Remove game interrupted. But Mr. Crowell had not interfered since he knew that Chambers was the captain, and because there had been no disorder.

But he was not entirely helpless.

He went to the Head. And he was very, very angry.

"I hope I am not disturbing you, sir, but there is a matter of some importance that I desire to place before your notice," he said. "It is in connection with Chambers, the captain of my Form."

Dr. Stafford, who had marked the Form-master's angry brow, looked rather astonished.

"Chambers?" he repeated. "It is quite all right, Mr. Crowell; you are not disturbing me in the least. I am sorry to hear that you have some complaint to make with regard to Chambers."

"Frankly, sir, the boy is getting on my nerves!" burst out Mr. Crowell angrily. "He is incapable, arrogant and lazy."

The Head pursed his lips.

"I should have thought that Mr. Lee would have dealt——"

"I prefer to come to you, sir!" said Mr. Crowell quickly. "Not that I have the slightest doubt with regard to Mr. Lee's ability or judgment. No, sir, it is not that. I felt impelled to come to the highest authority."

"You surprise me, Mr. Crowell!" exclaimed the Head, sitting back in his chair and looking troubled. "I had the impression that Chambers was improving. I have been told, indeed, that he has become the captain of his Form. You mentioned it yourself a minute ago."

Mr. Crowell nodded.

"I cannot pretend to understand why my boys elected this—this nincompoop to such a position, sir," he said grimly. "However, that need not trouble us—it is a matter for the boys themselves. But nothing can alter the fact that Chambers is an unmitigated nuisance!"

"Really, Mr. Crowell?"

"I cannot help it, sir—and I must speak bluntly!" said the Form-master. "I have no prejudice against the boy, and if he showed some signs of industry I would help him. But—no! Ever since he came down from the Fifth—ever since he entered my Form—he has done nothing!"

"Nothing?"

"Absolutely nothing!" insisted Mr. Crowell. "He is lazy, dull, and eaten up with his own importance."

"This is very distressing."

"The boy is a positive nuisance!" declared Mr. Crowell hotly. "He is no good in the class—no good whatsoever! He does no work, and he has no desire to work. He thinks only of his own arrogant pride. And,

on the top of all this, he is grossly abusing his privileges as Form captain."

"In what way does he abuse them?"

"I happened to be in the Junior pavilion this afternoon," replied Mr. Crowell, frowning. "I do not think the boys knew that I was there. The River House team came over, and it was not long before Chambers picked a quarrel with young Brewster."

"That was very ill-mannered of him, considering that these River House boys are visitors," said the Head gravely.

"It was utterly and absolutely uncalled for," replied the Form-master. "He insulted Brewster, and told him that there was to be no game. Then Hamilton and Pitt and a few other of my boys, rather than let the River House team go back disappointed, offered them a game."

"That was a very good idea."

"An excellent idea," said Mr. Crowell, nodding. "The game started, and then, much to my disgust and anger, Chambers and a large crowd of his friends actually came on to the field carrying deck-chairs and rugs. They disported themselves over the ground so that play was impossible."

"That was a most unsporting thing to do!" ejaculated the Head in indignation.

"It was done deliberately—so that the game should be spoilt," said Mr. Crowell. "The cricketers protested, but Chambers maintained that he was the captain, and that he had given his orders. I tell you, sir, the boy is a nuisance. He has not been taught a lesson by being sent down into the Remove. He is worse than ever!"

"But I thought that the humiliation would make him work."

"He has not been humiliated enough!" said Mr. Crowell bitterly. "Indeed, I am quite prepared to say that Chambers is far happier in the Remove than he was in the Fifth. For here he can give full play to his arrogance. If he felt any sense of humiliation at first it has long since been drowned by his so-called authority. In the Fifth he was a nobody, but in the Remove he feels that he is better than his fellows. And his indolence is atrocious."

Dr. Stafford did not hesitate long.

"Will you be good enough to bring me Chambers' books, Mr. Crowell?" he asked quietly. "I have a desire to examine them closely. I do not doubt your word, but I must have strong justification for the step I contemplate."

"What do you intend doing, sir?" asked Mr. Crowell, with interest.

"I will not tell you just yet, if you don't mind," replied the Head. "But I am determined to teach the boy a very severe lesson—one that he will not forget very quickly."

And there was something in Dr. Stafford's tone that gave Mr. Crowell much satisfaction.



CHAPTER 22.

Rallying to the Call!

UTHBERT CHAMBERS came to a halt in front of the notice-board in the Ancient House lobby, and his

eyes nearly started out of his head.

"Then it's true!" he panted, turning to Gore-Pearce, who had accompanied him.

"Look! Gulliver was right!"

"Seems like it!" said Claude Gore-Pearce, with a grin.

"It's nothing to laugh at, you fool!" roared Chambers.

It was getting on towards tea-time, and Chambers and Gore-Pearce had just come in.

On the way in they had met Gulliver, who had casually mentioned that there was a special notice on the board, addressed to all and sundry in the Remove, and that it was signed by Nipper.

Chambers had not been able to believe it; it had seemed too ridiculous. Who was Nipper to draw up notices? He had no authority now! He was no more than any other fellow!

Yet here the notice was in plain black and white.

"NOTICE!"

"There will be a general meeting of the Remove in the junior common-room immediately after tea this afternoon. All are urgently requested to come. A subject of paramount importance is to be discussed.

"NIPPER."

"The upstart! The confounded busy-body!" raved Chambers, seizing the notice and tearing it down. "I'll show him who's captain!"

"You haven't done any good by taking the notice down," said Gore-Pearce. "Everybody has read it by now, you know—and everybody is talking about it."

Chambers fumed.

"There'll be no meeting, though!" he shouted. "I'm going to put another notice on the board—forbidding the Remove to go!"

He did so, and he was staggered to find that it created nothing but storms of laughter. Almost before he had finished pinning the notice up, Fullwood and Russell and Handforth & Co. came along, to say nothing of Jerry Dodd and Jimmy Potts. They all stared at the notice, read it, and grinned. Then they laughed loudly.

"Well, this is the latest!" said Fullwood. "Chambers thinks that he can stop us going to Nipper's meeting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the others.

"Good old Nipper!"

"Hurrah!"

"Down with Chambers!"

And up went a perfect storm of booing and hooting. Chambers gnashed his teeth, and his inward alarm was considerable. Everybody knew that he was near by, but they pretended to ignore his presence.

Just then Nipper himself came in, and Chambers strode forward, seized Nipper by the arm, and pulled him up short.

"I want a word with you!" snapped Chambers savagely.

"Well?"

"What the thunder do you mean by ordering a meeting of the Remove?" demanded Chambers harshly.

"What do I mean by it?" repeated Nipper. "There's only one thing that it can mean, Chambers. I want the Remove to gather in the common-room after tea."

"Then you'll have to keep on wanting!" roared Chambers. "I've given orders that nobody is to go to your rotten meeting!"

Nipper did not seem very dismayed.

"And how do you propose to keep them away?" he asked curiously.

"My order is a command!" said Chambers in a pompous voice.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hail, Cæsar!"

"Look at the chap who commands!"

There was further laughter, and Chambers could hardly control himself.

"Don't forget, you rotters!" he shouted, glaring at the whole crowd. "I've ordered you not to go to that meeting—and you'd better obey me!"

"Rats!"

"Go and put your head in a squeezer—it needs reducing!" said Fullwood.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tea that evening was a somewhat hasty meal. Far from taking any notice of Cuthbert Chambers' prohibition, the Removites were very keen to get to the common-room, so that they would be there on time. Brewster & Co., of course, had gone back home long since, and all thoughts of cricket had vanished. There was something even more important on the agenda.

The Remove had split in two, and, it seemed, the larger portion was loyal to Nipper. They had had enough of Chambers and his nonsense, and they wanted to force his resignation at once.

To say that the common-room was crowded would be putting it mildly. By half-past five there wasn't room for another half-dozen in the place, although the junior common-room was a large, comfortable apartment. The tables and chairs were all thrust aside, and the crowd gathered in the main body of the room, talking excitedly and cheering. An extra loud cheer went up when Nipper stood on the platform and prepared to speak.

"Gentlemen of the Remove——" he began.

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Nipper!"

"Yah! Rotter! Three cheers for Chambers!"

"Hurrah!"

"Rats!" thundered Handforth. "Three cheers for Nipper!"

"Hip—hip—hurrah!"

The cheers for Nipper completely drowned the din that had arisen in Chambers' favour.

At this interesting point Chambers himself arrived. He was the very last Removite to enter the room. And he was in a towering rage. He had waited, to tell the truth, hardly crediting that the Remove would utterly ignore his explicit order. What had amazed him more than anything, however, was the fact that even those fellows who had nailed their colours to his own mast were here also.

"Stop!" he shouted, pushing his way through the crowd and leaping up on to the platform.

Everybody at once became quiet—suspiciously quiet. There were one or two significant grins between some of the juniors; surreptitious movements were made towards jacket and trousers pockets. Evidently something was in the wind.

Chambers, noticing nothing of these actions, continued to stare pompously yet angrily down upon the juniors from the platform.

"I'm the captain of this Form!" he bellowed. "And I order you all, here and now, to get out of this common-room and disperse!"

The Remove gasped, then a section of it gave a loud yell of derisive laughter—and acted!

A hail of eggs—bad 'uns!—and tomatoes—juicy 'uns!—and banana skins bombarded the luckless Chambers, who staggered back as they smothered him all over. In a few moments he looked a horrible mess.

"You rotters—ooosh!" he shouted, shaking his fist. "When you made me captain—groooh!—you promised me you would support me. Look—ow-ow!—at you now! All defying me. You wait, my lads! I'll give you one more chance. Get out of this room now or—ow-ooow-grooo——"

Chambers' little speech, punctuated by exclamations of pain as some missile struck him either in the eye or on the nose, caused the Removites to roar with laughter. By now all their ammunition supplies were exhausted, and the juniors contented themselves by hurling epithets at the unfortunate Chambers.



CHAPTER 23.

The Interruption!

O home, Chambers!

"You're not wanted!"

"Take your silly orders somewhere

else!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Three cheers for Nipper!"

The common-room was turned into pandemonium. Two-thirds of the fellows were cheering for Nipper at the tops of their voices. The remainder were either uttering catcalls, or calling for cheers for Chambers. The Remove was in two sections, and with every moment that passed one section was getting larger and the other smaller. For many of the fellows, seeing how things were going, were transferring their support.

They were leaving the sinking ship.

And Chambers, with more folly than he had yet shown—undeterred by his recent unpleasant and uncomfortable experience—incited his own crowd to violence.

"Up—up!" he shouted excitedly. "Come on, you chaps! I'm captain, and I'm in command! Everybody who's ready to follow my banner, help me now!"

"We're with you, Chambers!" shouted Hubbard excitedly.

"Good man!" roared Chambers. "Then come on! If most of you obey me, I won't say anything more about this affair. We'll let it drop. But we'll chuck Nipper out—and Pitt and Travers and all these other interfering busybodies! Out with them!"

"Hurrah!"

Chambers leapt down from the platform, and he flung himself with savage violence at Archie Glenthorne and Harry Gresham. This was the signal for a general melee. With lightning-like rapidity a free fight started.

"Hurrah!"

"Down with Chambers!"

"This is where we finish the rotter altogether!" yelled Handforth enthusiastically. "Come on, you chaps! If there's any chucking-out to be done, we're going to be the chuckers!"

The fight waged fast and furious. Then, before anybody quite realised how it had happened, Chambers found himself facing Nipper, and Nipper, quick as a flash, punched Chambers on the chest, and then slapped him on the face.

"Now!" he said tensely. "Come on, Chambers! You're the new captain, and I'm the old! Let's fight it out! Never mind about these others!"

"Hang you!" snarled Chambers.

But he realised that he was trapped. There was no getting out of it. He would have to fight. As though a magic wand had been waved over the crowd, the general rumpus ceased. A ring was rapidly formed, and Nipper and Chambers were going it for all they were worth.

From the very first there was no chance for Cuthbert Chambers.

He was half-mad with rage, and he was so reckless that he hit out savagely and brutally. He was nearly beside himself with alarm, too, otherwise he would not have adopted such questionable tactics. For, at heart, Chambers was only a big, bluffing ass. There was nothing really vicious about him.

The knock-out came after only a minute or two. There were no rounds—no time was

being kept. This was a fight to a finish, with bare knuckles.

Only twice did Chambers manage to hit Nipper, and then his blows were ineffective. On the other hand, Nipper had got in some tremendous punches, and Chambers was getting wilder and wilder.

"Finish him off, Nipper!"

"Let him have it straight from the shoulder, man!"

"Go it!"

Smash!

Nipper's right swept through Chambers' frantic defence, and Chambers took the blow on the chin. His head went back, his knees sagged, and he crashed to the floor, rolled over and lay still, panting heavily.

"Had enough?" asked Nipper, bending over him.

But Chambers was speechless. Somebody counted him out, and a roar of laughter went up. It was this, perhaps, which revived the fallen skipper. He sat up, blinking round, and then scowled. He remembered what had happened.

Very shakily he got to his feet, and Nipper went forward with hand outstretched.

"It was a fair fight, Chambers," he said quietly. "Let's shake hands, and consider the thing over."

Chambers breathed hard.

"I'll shake hands with you some other time, Nipper!" he panted. "Just now I've got something to do!"

He turned round and looked at all the faces. He did not see one friendly expression. Even Gore-Pearce & Co., and Hubbard and Long were looking at him with derision. He had been knocked out—and therefore he was finished.

"Get out of this room!" he shouted hoarsely. "This meeting is over!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A yell of laughter went up.

"I'm the captain, and I'm giving orders

"Rats!"

"Give your orders to somebody who will obey them!"

"You may have been captain ten minutes ago, but you're not captain now!" shouted Handforth excitedly. "Nipper's captain! If you chaps had any sense, you would elect me—but Nipper isn't such a bad old scout!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Three cheers for Nipper!"

They nearly cracked the ceiling with their cheering, and Chambers looked round him in a dazed, hopeless way. He was ignored—flouted! The extraordinary part about it was, Chambers felt surprised. His egotism was still so great that he could not believe that his brief reign was over!

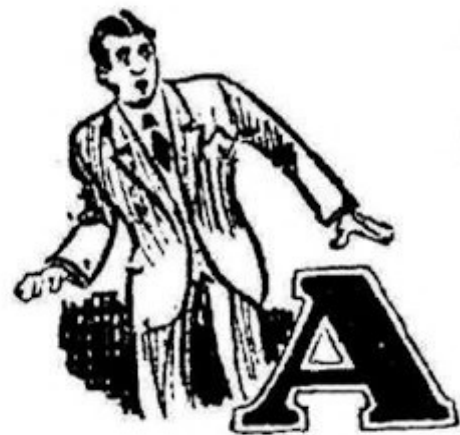
"Clear out, Chambers!"

"Go and hide your head!"

These and other shouts came to his burning ears. And just then, to put an end to this scene, the door opened, and Dr. Malcolm Stafford stood on the threshold!

CHAPTER 24.

The Biggest Shock of All!



HUSH fell over the Remove.

As Dr. Stafford advanced into the common-room, the only

sounds were those of heavy breathing and, here and there, a shuffling foot. All eyes were turned anxiously on the Head.

"There seems to have been a very big disturbance here!" said the Head sternly.

Nobody made any comment.

"Who is responsible?" asked Dr. Stafford, looking round.

"I called the meeting, sir," said Nipper quietly. "And I am willing to take responsibility——"

"But you are not the captain of this Form, are you, Hamilton?"

"No, sir."

"I'm the captain, sir!" said Chambers hotly. "Nipper called this meeting, and I came here and ordered everybody to clear out. As they wouldn't go, I started to drive them out!"

"That was a very foolish thing for you to do, Chambers," said Dr. Stafford coldly. "Is there any reason why Hamilton should not call a meeting if he chooses?"

"But I'm the captain, sir."

"Your duties as captain, Chambers, do not permit you to treat your Form fellows as though they were galley-slaves!" said the Head sternly. "I have been looking for you, and I am rather glad that the whole Form is present. There is something that I want to tell you, Chambers. It is something that I would ordinarily tell you in private, but your behaviour has been so outrageous that I feel impelled to tell you in public."

"There's just one thing, sir!" put in Handforth. "Chambers isn't the captain any longer! We have already elected Nipper!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Three cheers for Nipper!"

"Hurrah!"

The Head waited for the din to die down, and he nodded approvingly.

"You have made a very wise decision!" he said. "Hamilton was Form captain formerly, and I do not think you have ever had a more level-headed skipper. It is a pity that you ever changed."

The Remove was silent.

"As for you, Chambers, your resignation from the Remove captaincy is of no matter, for you are no longer in the Remove."

Chambers started, gasped, and then a light of relief leapt into his eyes.

"Oh, thanks awfully, sir!" he panted. "Not—not in the Remove?"

"No, Chambers; I have decided to take you out of this Form."

"Thank goodness, sir!" said Chambers breathlessly. "So I'm going back into the

Fifth, eh? Well, I'm sick of these noisy kids——"

"Silence!" commanded the Head angrily. "How dare you refer to these boys in such a manner to me, Chambers? And do not deceive yourself. You are not going into the Fifth Form again—yet."

"Not—not the Fifth, sir?" ejaculated Chambers blankly.

"I have been inspecting your work, Chambers," said the Head, in a relentless voice. "I have examined your books, and I have been having a conversation with Mr. Crowell. I have come to the conclusion that your sojourn in the Remove has led to no improvement; quite the contrary. Therefore, Chambers, for the remainder of this term you will take your place in the Third Form, under Mr. Suncliffe!"

Chambers fairly goggled, and the Remove, after one gasp, burst out into a titter of laughter. But the sound died away as Dr. Stafford frowned.

"The—the—the Third!" gabbled Chambers, as though he couldn't believe his ears. "But you can't mean it, sir! You're—you're not going to make me a fag!"

"You will go into the Third, Chambers!" said the Head icily. "If you apply yourself to work in a manner that convinces me that you are in earnest, you will be reinstated into the Fifth Form after the long vacation; but, for the remainder of this term, you will sit in the Third Form-room, and let me add that this will be your last chance!"

And Dr. Stafford, with a nod, went out of the common-room. He had deliberately told Chambers the bad news in front of the crowd, since he believed that the humiliation of it would sink deeply into the ex-Fifth-Former's mind.

But at the moment Cuthbert Chambers' mind was a blank.

He could not take it all in. He had been sent down into the Third! A fag! He, recently a senior, was now on a par with the lowliest fag in the school! It was unbelievable—it was ghastly!

But, somehow, the school didn't seem to think so.

Chambers had been asking for trouble—and now he had got it. He was the laughing-stock of St. Frank's!

And if anything was calculated to cure his swelled-headedness, this move of the Head's most certainly was!

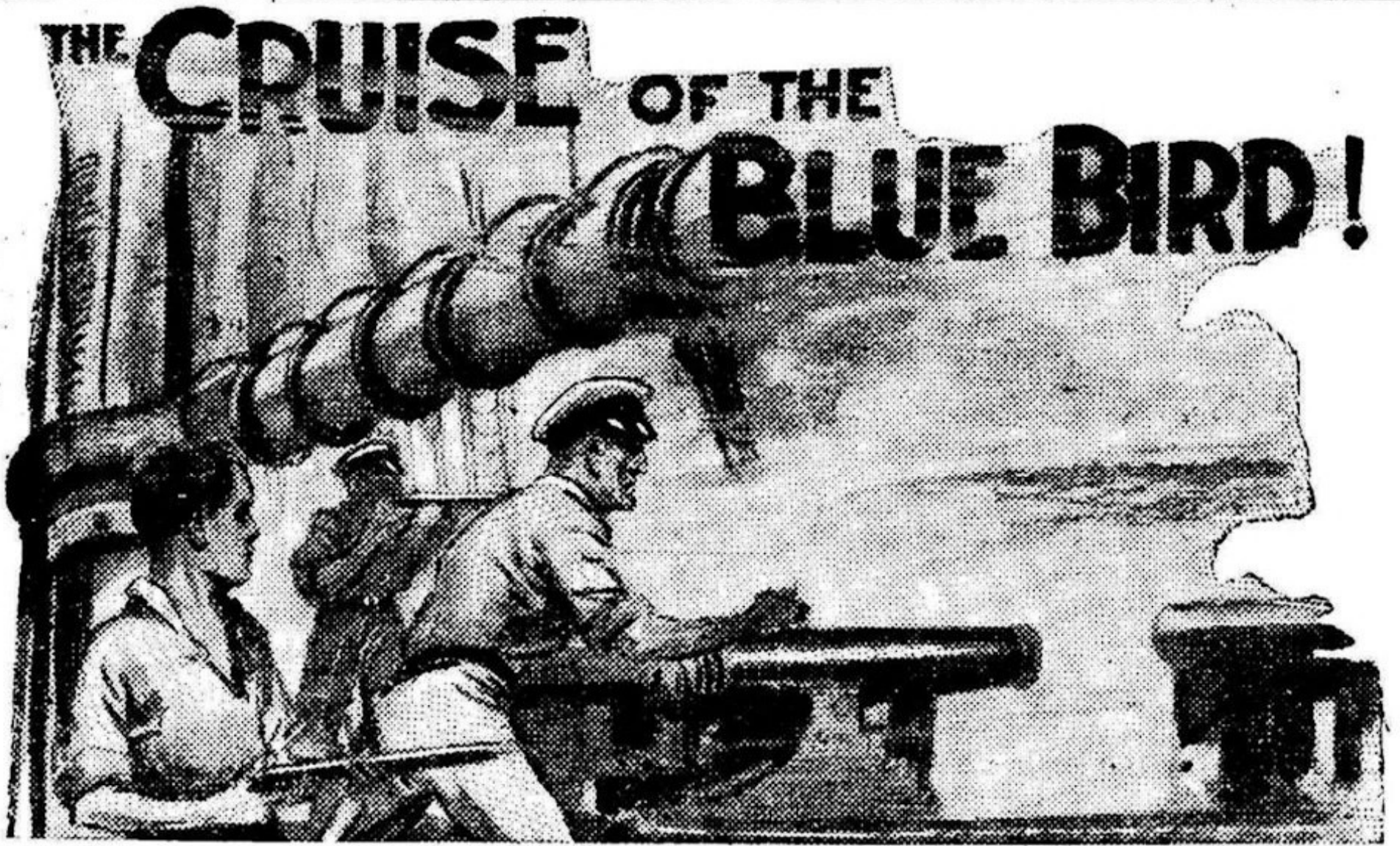
As for the Remove, Nipper was re-elected captain then and there, and the troubles of that turbulent Form were, for the moment, over.

But Cuthbert Chambers was "in" for the nightmare of his life!

THE END.

(Next week's corking yarn—it's an extra long one—is entitled "TAMED BY THE FAGS." The title gives you an idea of what the story is about, and you'll thoroughly enjoy reading of Chambers' experiences among the Third!)

FORTUNE BOUND! Graden Island and all its excitement is left behind, and now the Blue Bird is bound for the Malea atolls—and treasure-seeking adventure!



By COUTTS BRISBANE

WHAT'S ALREADY HAPPENED:

CAPTAIN MANBY is skipper of the schooner Blue Bird, which is lying at anchor in the lagoon of Graden Island, in the Southern Pacific. He is accompanied by his son

JACK MANBY, and his nephew

NED SUTTON, two adventure-loving boys. From a native Captain Manby has learned that in the Malea atolls is an uncharted island—supposed to be practically inaccessible—the lagoon of which is full of pearl shell. The captain intends to try and find this unknown island, but just at present

he is having trouble with a vessel which has come to Graden Island with nefarious intentions. There is a fight. Manby triumphs and captures some of the enemy crew; the rest are drowned, for their ship founders in a storm. The captain decides to take these prisoners to Bauro, and then sail on to Malea. He gives orders to Mr. Sinclair, the Blue Bird's mate, to prepare for sailing—in a little while now the schooner will be on its way to Malea—and fortune!

(Now read on.)

The Pearl Hunters!

WITH a fair wind, the Blue Bird stood away from Bauro. More than a month had passed since the morning when the Pangolin—that craft of evil omen—had crashed on the reef of Graden Island. The Blue Bird had sailed from Graden three days later and made a quick passage to Bauro, where Manby had made his report and delivered over the wounded survivors of the Pangolin's crew to the authorities.

He had renewed his supply of stores and water, shipped three new hands to replace the men he had lost at Graden, and after various unavoidable delays had sailed for a destination of which the shore authorities knew nothing, except that he was in search of a paying freight.

No one except the boys and Mr. Sinclair knew just how paying he hoped that freight

might be; indeed, must be, if he was to avoid financial disaster. As Sinclair had said, it was to be touch and go.

But all his life Captain Manby had been accustomed to taking risks when he thought the facts of the case warranted it. This characteristic had made him a successful cruiser commander in war, and had hitherto, when luck had been with him, made him a successful trader amongst the islands.

The Graden Island adventure, through no fault of his own, had been a dead loss, and very few men would have ventured to try to recoup it by sailing in search of a hearsay island so fenced with reefs and currents that it had never been charted or visited.

Rua-Rua, the leader of the revolt of the Solomon labourers on Graden, had said he had lived on the island, had offered to take Manby through the reefs by a passage which he claimed to know. Sinclair had heard of

it from an old beachcomber, who had sighted it when aboard a whaler. That was all the positive evidence beyond rumour, and most skippers would have shied at the very notion of taking a ship into such dangerous waters on such flimsy grounds.

Yet the thought of the lagoon full of untouched pearl shell, which Rua-Rua asserted was there, inflamed Captain Manby's imagination.

"I propose to cruise for a month around the Malea atolls," he said to Sinclair, as they paced the deck together, while Bauro dropped over the horizon. "If we fail to get through in that time, or fail to find any island after making a way to the heart of the group, then there's nothing for it but to go and hunt a freight and live on short commons while we're doing so. And if we don't get a freight—why, then I'm bust, and will have to go and hunt for a shore job."

"I'm game for anything, sir," replied Sinclair. "And this cruise is going to be a lucky one, I feel it in my bones."

"So do I!" cried Manby. "Let's get a little more sail on the old hooker. The sooner we get there, the longer we'll have to search around for this island containing the pearl shell."

All that day, and for six days more, the wind held steady, and the schooner reeled off the miles with monotonous regularity. Then it began to slacken. On the morning of the eighth day it had fallen to a breeze, and the first of the numerous group of the Malea atolls—a bunch of five—were plainly in sight a couple of miles away, with others, just discernible through light mist, dotted about the sea as though some playful god had scattered huge handfuls of coral rock at random.

Captain Manby and the mate had got out the chart and were studying it. Thanks to accurate and a careful dead reckoning, they knew their exact position.

"These are Group seven," said Manby. "Over there, S.S.W., is Group eight. Four, five, six, are there, to starboard. So far, so good. It isn't the atolls, but the reefs that are the nuisance. See, this long fellow, number eleven, is indicated with dots. That means that the survey ship didn't know its exact size, Jack."

"Yes, father. Makes it a bit awkward, doesn't it?" answered Jack, who, with Ned, was looking on.

"Oh, we can give it a wide berth. The real trouble will start further in."

"Is an atoll the beginning of an island?" asked Ned.

"In a way, it's an end," replied his uncle.

"An end of one island, which had subsided a long while ago. The coral insects start to build upon it, and after a while you have a ring of coral, sometimes with a little island in the centre. Mostly they're barren, as these are, and no good to anyone or anything but seabirds. Now scud aloft, the pair of you, and keep your eyes skinned. If you see any least indication of shoal water, give

word at once. Take glasses. The foretop is your post from now on."

All that day the schooner made fair headway, though time and again she had to go about to avoid some reef which had escaped the attention of the surveyors of many years before. Towards nightfall the wind, which had been failing, died away altogether, and the schooner lay becalmed.

"Lucky thing," said Sinclair. "We have plenty of room just here, but it's a chancy thing to go tacking back and forward in the dark, even with plenty of room. We'll get the auxiliary to work to-morrow, sir!"

"Yes, if a breeze doesn't spring up," said Captain Manby. "We've made good progress to-day, and at least we've corrected that chart considerably. I can't say I think much of the men who made it. They must have worn their eyes in their pockets."

"I expect they did a bit of guessing, sir," replied Sinclair. "It's a nasty spot to be caught in when the wind comes strong from easterly, so I fancy they'd be in a hurry. They sort of labelled the whole group 'Dangerous,' and let it go at that. The current doesn't amount to anything, but the motor is all ready to start in case we should need it in the night. The glass keeps high, so there's little fear of a blow."

In spite of all this, Captain Manby slept little that night. He had taken every possible precaution. The boats, with water and provisions aboard enough for a long voyage, were all ready for hoisting out in case of extremity, and the crew were on the alert, for they knew the dangers of this half-blind navigation as well as their officers.

The Island in the Sky!

BUT the night passed without any alarm, and dawn found the Blue Bird in very much the same position. The sea was now dead calm. Only the slow swell that never ceases except when a calm has continued for a very long time, heaved across the oily waters.

As on the previous day, there was a light mist which slowly began to dissipate as the heat of the yet unseen sun made itself felt in the upper air.

Jack and Ned came on deck, and at once scuttled aloft to the main-top. From that elevation they looked out upon a sea of mist. The deck below was veiled in haze, the water close at hand was barely discernible, while the big atoll which they had located at sunset was entirely invisible, though the thin screaming of the many seabirds which roosted on it came faintly to their ears.

"Blind man's buff isn't in it with this," said Jack, after a long look round. "But it makes it all the more exciting, doesn't it? I'm certain the gov'nor will hit on this island."

Ned made no reply. He was looking, not at the sea, but at the sky above the invisible horizon to the north-east—that is, towards the heart of the group of reefs. Something that wasn't the usual sort of cloud seemed to

be shaping itself there as the light grew stronger; something darker and more solid-looking, something which grew clearer and more detailed every moment.

Jack, following his gaze, gaped in astonishment.

"It's a—it's a——" he began. Ned's shout to the deck cut him short.

"Deck, there! Captain! Mr. Sinclair! Come up here, quick!" he yelled. "Quick!"

There was a patter of feet below, an answering hail, then the rigging creaked as Captain Manby on the port, Sinclair on the starboard side, came speeding up the ratlines.

"Well, I'm hanged!" repeated Sinclair. "It's the place. Rua-Rua didn't lie, after all."

"Is—is it real?" whispered Jack. "Isn't it a—mirage?"

"It's a miracle!" grunted Manby. "No, lad, it's real enough—the original of that image, I mean. The island is there, though I can't say how far off. This is a trick played by refraction. It's seldom seen, for the conditions want to be just right. The calm, the mist and the low light, all have a part in it. Down, quick, Mr. Sinclair, and take the bearings. It'll be gone in a minute."

As the small boat approached the Blue Bird, the six occupants waved their hands and cheered shrilly. "Viva l'Anglais!" called out one of them excitedly.



"What's the trouble, youngster?" demanded Manby. "What——"

"Up there! L-l-look!" said Ned, stammering in his eagerness.

"An i-i-island—in the s-sky!" echoed Jack, catching the infection.

"Well, I'm hanged!" ejaculated Sinclair, while Manby grunted in wholehearted astonishment and pleasure.

There, high aloft in the sky, solid-looking, as though it were magically suspended, amidst roseate clouds thousand's of feet above the sea, was an island, a thing of fair beauty, with a white beach and a guardian reef. The greater part of the island was of rich vegetation, while towards one end rose a conical hill from which lazily curled a wisp of white smoke or steam!

Sinclair obeyed, sliding down the shrouds to save time. In a few moments he was back with a compass. Together the two men took the bearings of the image. Then Manby made a rough but accurate outline of it; but even as he did so it began to fade. A couple of minutes later there was only a thin cloud, grown golden with the light of the rising sun, in the place where palm groves and peak had been.

"Luck!" murmured Sinclair. "I said so in the beginning, though I only half-believed it then. But I believe it all the way now. If you two youngsters hadn't been aloft to see it, or hadn't looked that way, it would have been wasted. As it is——"

"We'll get there to-day, won't we?" asked Jack excitedly.

"I don't think so, son," replied Captain Manby. "I remember once, when I was a middy, we sighted the Azores under somewhat similar conditions when we were nearly a hundred miles away. The image wasn't so clear and well defined, and it didn't last so long, but it was unmistakable. Say another day or two, or perhaps three. And please remember, it's quite on the cards that we may spend weeks in a fruitless attempt to get in."

"We'll get there, if we have to sound every inch of the way, sir," insisted Sinclair. "This calm is going to hold for days. I'll start up the motor directly we've had breakfast. The mist will have gone by then."

Breakfast was a mere farce, for nobody ate much, though Ah Moy had prepared an excellent meal. Perplexed by this, the cook cornered the boys as they dashed out of the cabin.

"What for you fella no catee?" he demanded. "Velly good chop, eh?"

"First-class," replied Jack. "But we weren't hungry. We've seen the island we're looking for. Dad—the captain—says you may know. There's an island away over there, and we're going to it. No white man has ever been there before."

Ah Moy looked in the direction indicated, and shook his head.

"No see island. Mist he gone, weatlah all clearee, but no can see."

"We saw it in the sky. Up there. It's gone now."

"Millage?" asked Ah Moy.

"Mirage, yes. But the captain says it's all right."

"Allee lightee. Me see oñe timee. Me go makee special chop. Shlark fin soupee. Velly good. Soakce two day, makee soupee number thlee day. You see island when see soupee."

And with that he trotted back to his galley to begin the preparation of the delicacy.

"The beggar seems to think it'll be a three-day job," said Jack disconsolately.

"Well, anyhow, he seems to know something about it. He has seen a mirage before."

"Never mind the mirage! Get aloft and look out for real reefs!" shouted Captain Manby; and so the two boys went to their perch, where they remained the greater part of the ensuing day.

With the auxiliary engine chugging, the Blue Bird moved forward at some three knots—no greater pace, but fast enough for navigation amidst the reefs that now showed themselves everywhere. Before mid-day, Captain Manby had given up even a pretence of using the chart. Indeed, it seemed as though the chart-makers had merely looked at the area from the masthead, splattered their paper with rocks at random, and then abandoned the hopeless task by inscribing the word "Doubtful."

Yet when night came the Blue Bird had made good progress towards the heart of the maze, though it had been achieved by

much doubling and twisting. She was anchored above the tail of a long reef in seven fathoms of water, the watch was set, and, weary though they were with the long day's vigilance, Manby and Sinclair sat down to make a fair copy of the notes they had taken.

"If we do nothing else, at least we are making certain that we'll be able to get out again," said Sinclair.

"Yes, in a calm," agreed Manby. "I shouldn't care to try navigating under sail with a half-gale blowing. Anyhow, nothing venture, nothing win. The island is there, and once we reach it we can take our time and choose our weather for leaving it. This calm will certainly hold for several days. You were right. My luck has turned at last. First the calm, then the mirage—which only happens once in a blue moon—then the fortunate chance of the boys being aloft at the moment when they could see the island. Oh, yes, you were right! Luck's with us."

The Castaways!

ANOTHER night passed quietly, another day dawned, and once again Jack and Ned scuttled aloft with the first light. The conditions were very much the same as on the previous morning. The sea was even calmer, the mist lay upon it as before; the two boys had hopes that once away they might see the island mirrored in the sky.

But they looked in vain. There was a band of light rosy cloud high above the horizon, but it reflected no island. Captain Manby and Sinclair, who had been hard behind the boys, glanced at the sky, then brought their glasses to bear on the horizon, and almost simultaneously an exclamation burst from their lips.

"Not a mirage but reality this time, my lads," cried Captain Manby joyfully. "Look yonder. Very low down, just cutting the horizon. D'you see it?"

The boys stared under their hands. There, notching the pale blue of the sky touching the rim of the ocean, was something that looked not unlike the gable of a house. It was the top of the peak which they had seen so clearly thousands of feet in the air two mornings before.

"Land ho!" shouted Sinclair. "And now we shan't be long!"

"Don't shout before you're out of the woods," said Manby. "Look at the sea ahead."

The mist was rising, and as it swirled up from the smooth surface of the sea a regular wilderness of rocks came into view. And then something else. Jack was the first to make out the vague shape that grew clearer as the last wisp of vapour flew up and dissipated under the warm, level rays of the sun.

"Over there. Just beside that long bit of rock!" he cried. "It's a boat!"

"By Jenks, yes!" exclaimed Sinclair.

"Moored to the reef. A ship's cutter with half a dozen fellows aboard her. They've seen us. They're casting off. Now, what in the name o' wonder are they doing here?"

"They must be castaways," suggested Captain Manby. "And judging by their style of rowing, I should say they were Portuguese men o' war, eh? They're all over the ship. Still, they're pushing her along. Get down, boys, and tell Ah Moy there'll be six more to breakfast."

The boat approached rapidly. Soon the men in her could be clearly seen. Their clothes were patched with bits of odd cloth, and they looked rather dirty, but there was never a trace of starvation about them. In fact, they all looked fat and well fed.

"Hallo! They're not from any ship—at least, not recently," said Manby, leaning on the rail and scanning the newcomers through his binoculars. "By Jove, I believe they must be from the island. They have a big bunch of bananas and a pile of green, drinking coco-nuts in the bows. What d'you make of them, Sinclair? They're all white men, but they're not Britishers. They look to me to be French or possibly Italian."

"That's a French built boat, sir. They build that particular cut of craft at Marseilles. I spent about a month there once, and I used to watch 'em at work in a boat-builder's yard. Yes. Hark at 'em!"

The six men in the approaching boat had ceased rowing for a moment when they were within a dozen lengths of the schooner. They waved their hands and cheered shrilly. One of them, noting the drooping ensign that had been run up to the masthead at day-break, man-o'-war fashion, shouted:

"Vivo l'Anglais!"

"Come aboard!" responded Captain Manby. "I hope some of them speak English," he added to Sinclair. "My French was never first-class, and I'm afraid it has gone rusty."

"I can speak a bit," said Ned. "There was a French boy at our school, and he was a pal of mine. He taught me a lot."

"Then you can do the interpreting if necessary. Stand by to give them a cheer, men. One, two, three!"

The cheer rang out heartily as the boat came alongside, for all the crew were on deck. A few moments later the six had scrambled on board, and were shaking hands indiscriminately. One, indeed, went so far as to grab Jack and kiss him heartily on both cheeks before he could break away. Captain Manby dodged another such attempt, holding off the man with one hand while he shook his right hand with the other.

"We're pleased to see you," he said. "Where'd d'you hail from? This is the Blue Bird, of Brisbane. How d'you come to be here?"

"We are transported with joy to see fresh faces," replied the man, in English. "Permit that I introduce myself. Pierre Benoist, merchant, of Marseilles. Our ship, alas! she has wrecked herself this year and a half ago. She was the Jean Bart, of Marseilles. Of

her crew remain only two men. For the rest, there are twenty and two men that were passengers. They were to make themselves a colony, you must to understand, in an island of Solomon's, to plant there vines. It is a venture made by some merchants of Marseilles, and I come to be in charge."

"But the wreck? Where was it?" asked Manby.

"Away there. On the island you can see there."

"But how on earth did you manage to get there through all these reefs?"

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders and spread his hands.

"It was what you call miracles. The sailors they say so. We were on a great wave, yes. It carried us so high we escape the rocks. The poor ship drop on the island and broke. The captain and all his men they are swept away, all but two. We who were below on the underside, we escape. That was a year and a half ago. We have made little voyages out in the boat to find the way to the open sea, and we have found it so far. Yesterday, in the evening, we see your so beautiful ship and come towards it."

"You are certain of the channel in to the island?" asked Manby.

"But yes, my capitan. We shall guide you through, and we shall receive you joyfully. If you have the leetle engine, then you shall be there before the evening. Oh, this is a most happy day for us!"

It was a joyous party that sat down to the breakfast that Ah Moy had prepared, for though none of the other Frenchmen spoke English, they chattered away in their own language, explaining their meaning by signs as far as possible when Manby and Ned failed to understand them. Then, the meal over, they went on deck. The engine was started and controlled by a man called Pascal, who had been one of the sailors of the ill-fated Jean Bart, and the Blue Bird moved forward.

For a while the passage proved to be tortuous, but before midday the way grew clearer. There was still an hour of daylight left when the schooner glided through the opening of the island reef and, running close to a beach on which were gathered the rest of the castaways, all yelling and prancing with joy, dropped anchor in ten fathoms of water.

Sinclair, unheeding the clamour ashore, stared down through the clear water as the ripples made by the anchor subsided, then turned to Manby.

"The luck's in all right, sir," he murmured softly. "That fellow Rua-Rua told no lie. The lagoon is chocabloc with shell. We're mebbe anchored to a fortune!"

A Valuable Find!

"WHAT d'you think of 'em?" said Jack to Ned, as the boat in which they had gone ashore with the captain glided back to the Blue Bird. "Bright and cheery lot, eh? Only I wish

they wouldn't be quite so ready to kiss one. I got caught twice. And I don't like this sort of thing. It's all right for natives, but it seems a bit off for white men."

He slipped off the heavy wreath of flowers which had been dropped on his neck at their going ashore. They had spent a rather hectic hour amongst the castaway Frenchmen, who all talked at once and at the top of their voices. They had been offered various drinks prepared from bananas or coco-nut juice, which they had only sipped, and a quantity of cakes and fruit, far more than they could possibly have eaten.

"What do I think of them?" repeated Ned. "Oh, I don't know yet. I don't know much about Frenchmen, and they talk a different sort of French to the fellow I knew at school. Half of it seems to be slang, and I couldn't make head or tail of it. But I could understand what that chap, Pierre Benoist, was saying when he first went ashore ahead of us. He was telling them to be on their very best behaviour, and not to shock us by any of their beastly manners. Why should he need to do that?"

"Oh, I expect they've got very rough and ready through living here by themselves. I looked into one of their huts and it's precious dirty."

"With the exception of Benoist, and, perhaps, that thin, tall man, they are all low-class Frenchmen," put in Captain Manby. "So don't be too critical. To-morrow we will move up the lagoon, a bit away from them, and start examining the sea bed. So far as I can discover, they know nothing about the pearl shell."

"Will you get them to help us, sir?" asked Ned.

"I think not. Our own crew will be sufficient. We are the finders of the shell, and we are going to reap the benefit of it. If they have been here all this time, and haven't discovered that they had a fortune before their eyes, so much the worse for them. They'll have to be content with a passage to civilisation, and perhaps a little cash to help them along if we do well."

They found that Mr. Sinclair had been busy during their absence. He had dropped a drag overboard and scooped up a few oysters, which now lay slimy and uninviting-looking on the white deck.

"I've opened one with a chisel," said Sinclair. "It's a good quality shell, sir, with a pink lip."

"Did you find a pearl in it, Mr. Sinclair?" asked Jack eagerly.

"No. But there's the shell. Search in the oyster if you like," replied Sinclair, with a grin. "You'll find it a bit messy. Usually you lay the oysters out in the sun and let them rot for a bit. Then you wash the rotted meat away, and if there are any pearls you find 'em. It's a smelly job, but it's wonderful how you get to disregard the smell once you've found a pearl or two. If you must search now, start on this one.

Good luck! There's the chisel and mallet."

The boys fell to work, beginning upon the oyster which already had been opened, and which was about as big as a small dinner-plate. They cut the thing in slices and dabbed about in the slimy, glutinous flesh without any result.

"Pearls are really the result of a disease in the oyster," said Captain Manby. "So I guess that was a healthy one. Perhaps you'll find no pearls at all in the whole lagoon. You never can tell."

"That you can't," agreed Sinclair. "I've known of a man clearing up a couple of hundred tons of shell and finding only about a couple of hundred seed pearls in the lot. On the other hand, I remember a man who found a black pearl worth over three thousand dollars in the first dozen he searched."

"Oh, black! Are they worth all that?" asked Ned. "I thought it was the white ones that were worth most."

"The pink are the rarest and worth most. Then black. Then the pure white. I've heard of a green, but they're so rare they don't count. You find a few score big pink ones, Jack, and that'll be all right."

Jack grinned awry. He was endeavouring to lever open a big oyster with the chisel, and, finding the job quite beyond his power, Ned came to his assistance. Finally they cut the "hinge," got the shell open, and began to hack the flesh away.

Suddenly Ned straightened up with a fragment in his fingers.

"There's something hard here," he said, and, laying the chunk of oozy oyster meat on the table, dissected it carefully. A moment afterwards, with a cry of excitement, he held something in his palm under the hanging lamp; something that gleamed with a pink yet milky radiance. Sinclair whistled softly and nodded at Captain Manby.

"Well, I'm blowed! That's beginner's luck for you!" he exclaimed. "A pink 'un!" He picked it out of Ned's palm and examined it. "It's a true round and un-flawed. Young 'un, that's a thousand dollars' worth in Sydney!"

"I'm awfully glad for your sake, uncle," said Ned. "If only there is one in every twentieth—"

"Or every hundredth, why, we'd all be millionaires," put in Manby. "But don't count too much on keeping up that rate. If we find one good pearl in every ton of shell we'll be doing very nicely. Now leave the others alone. We're going to turn in, get up early, and explore the lagoon systematically to-morrow."

(Captain Manby really does seem to be in clover, doesn't he? He's only been on the island a little while, and already he's found a valuable pearl. But what about those French castaways? Perhaps they're not so friendly as they make themselves out to be. Anyway, only the future can tell—and it's going to be an exciting future for the Britishers!)

BETWEEN OURSELVES

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

I DON'T play much cricket now—Denis Bland (Shrewsbury)—although at one time of day I thought absolutely nothing of going out to the wicket and scoring a duck for my side. What my side thought of it is another matter, but they probably thought less than nothing of it. To be fair to myself, however, I must add that occasionally I came out with no less than seven or eight runs to my credit! I can tell you, I was jolly hot! The only wonder is, I wasn't chucked out of the team. With regard to that poison, Issi Kala, which I mentioned in one of my series, this is a sort of Mexican name, and the poison itself is only to be found in remote parts of Central America. It's so little known that you won't be able to find any mention of it in any English text-book.

I'm surprised at you—Sid Waite (Highbury). What do you mean by saying that you can't find anything to write about each week? What about my weekly yarns? Surely there's something you can complain about, or grumble at, or pull to pieces, or criticise—or, possibly, praise?

I shall certainly have to write a series about New Zealand before long—Clifford Whall (Linwood, N.Z.). What with boiling pools and geysers, to say nothing of volcanoes (to mention only a few of the things you tell me) I ought to be able to get old Handy into quite a large number of scrapes. But what's going to happen to me among the Australian readers? I think the safest course will be to take the St. Frank's chaps out to Australasia, and give them a tour of the whole territory. Then I can be safe. But please don't be impatient. Everything comes to him who waits—even if it's only a dose of medicine.

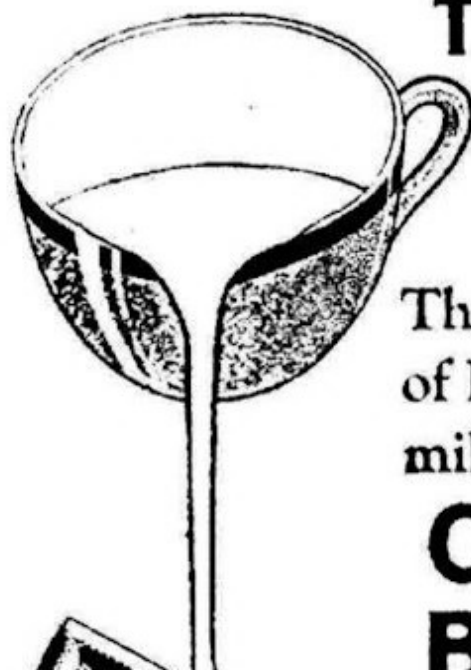
You remind me of another of my correspondents—Ivy Swailes (Heckmondwike)—in your enthusiasm. I am referring to "Dora, of the Happy Seven" (Norwich). Week after week you write to me, and you always tell me something interesting. If it comes to that, I've got dozens and dozens of such readers, and it bucks me up no end when I get their letters. Considering that you are a Yorkshire girl, Ivy, you are very fair indeed when you give it as your opinion that Hobbs is a better batsman than Sutcliffe. And you have certainly hit it on the nail when you declare that Yorkshire's Eleven is one to be proud of. Holmes and Sutcliffe, as an opening pair, are positively "the goods."

Very many thanks—Edgar Austin Mittelholzer (New Amsterdam, British Guiana)—for your extraordinarily interesting letters, and also for your kindness in sending me so

many Georgetown newspapers. Anybody can send me newspapers, of course, but what I particularly appreciate in your case is the fact that the ones you send are full of valuable descriptive matter, which is certain to be very helpful to me in my work. One of these days you will positively force me into writing a series about British Guiana, you boulder!

* * *

In the old days, I used to put a star against the names of those who wrote me especially commendable letters. But now, instead of

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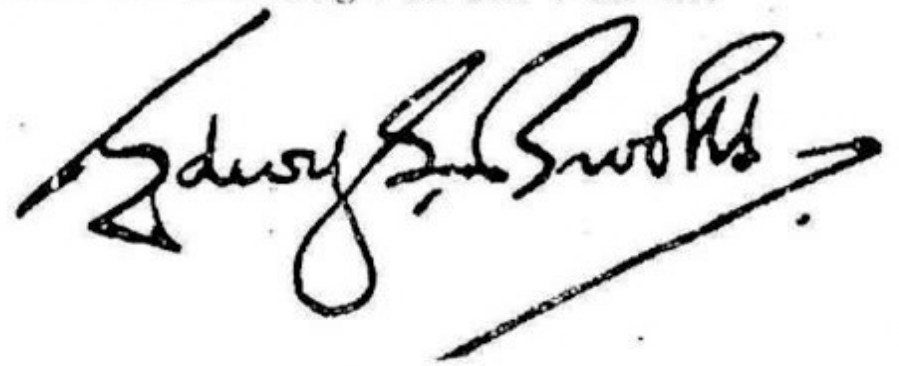
(Continued from previous page.)

getting a star, you'll get an acknowledgment—either on this page or through the post. But "commendable" letters don't mean letters of praise. (That's all right when it's honestly meant, but worth less than nothing when insincere.) No: "commendable" may mean righteously critical, or of absorbing interest, or particularly neatly written, or something written in exceptionally trying circumstances, or a communication containing a photo of yourself—or it may mean one or more of fifty other things, which I'll leave you to think out for yourselves.

Journalism—K. Steller (Cape Town)—is, in my opinion, a thing that cannot be actually taught. Even if you receive instruction, it's no good unless you've got it *in* you. Taking courses, and going through exams., can only, at the best, give you the theory of journalism, and add to your general knowledge. But a journalist, first and foremost, must be able to *write*. Why not, as a test, go to one or two functions, and report on them. Then submit your report to one of your local papers? You never know, you might hit

the bull's-eye first time. This sort of thing is either natural in one, or it's not. And practical experience, in this as in everything else—to express a truism—is the best of all teachers.

Quite right—J. O. Y. Barnes (Tottenham). In fact, absolutely! To repeat your own words, you are approaching twenty, and it is another proof that the Old Paper is suitable reading for all youngsters from nine to ninety. And you don't care who knows it, do you? It's surprising how many fellows are afraid of keeping young. They want to be old before their time, and they look upon school stories as beneath them. But we know better, don't we? There's nothing so fine as keeping young. I'm—well, never mind how old I actually *am*—but I feel as frisky as ever. And the friskier all of us keep, the more we can laugh at our troubles.




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