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THE

WHIP HAND!

A dramatic long complete yarn of schoolboy sport and adventure, featuring the famous chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 181.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

October 19th, 1929.

JUST THE SCHOOL YARN YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!

THE WHIP HAND!



BY
EDWY
SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER 1.

Trouble for Gore-Pearce!

"SOMETHING on the mind, dear old chappie?" Archie Glenthorne, of the Remove, paused in the Ancient House lobby to speak to Gore-Pearce. Gore-Pearce glared at the elegant Removite and grunted.

"No!" he said sourly.

"Oh, well, I thought I'd ask," said Archie, jamming his monocle into his eye and inspecting Gore-Pearce with greater interest. "I must say, old lad, that you look dashed groggy!"

"I'll look how I please!" retorted Gore-Pearce irritably.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "If it pleases you to look like this, old cocktail, by all means go ahead! But I don't think it'll please anybody else. I mean, the very look of you is enough to give a chappie the pip!"

"You're not compelled to look at me, are you?"

"Mercifully, no," said Archie with a slight shudder, as he passed on.

It was Sunday afternoon, and most of the fellows were in their studies reading, for the October weather was chilly. A few were in the Common-room, chatting in front

Looked upon as a hero by St. Frank's, Bernard Forrest continues his scheming ways, unsuspected by anybody. Little does he realise the shock that is awaiting him—a shock that is to be the start of many troublesome times for Forrest!

of the fire. There was nothing much to do before tea-time. Sunday afternoon at St. Frank's was generally rather dull.

Bernard Forrest came in from the Triangle, with Gulliver and Bell. The three nuts of Study A were looking more than usually elegant. Claude Gore-Pearce scowled at them, but said nothing. He wasn't on speaking terms with Gulliver and Bell now, although only recently he had been the leader of their study.

Since Forrest's return, however, his position had been usurped. Gulliver and Bell had thrown him out, and he had sought shelter in Study B, with Hubbard and Long. Not unnaturally, Gore-Pearce felt bitter about it.

He had a suspicion, too, that Forrest was not all that he pretended to be.

IN this Gore-Pearce was right. Bernard Forrest was deceiving the whole school by leading a double life, so to speak. He had already been expelled from St. Frank's for dishonourable conduct, but he had managed to get back by a trick. He had even been helped in this by his father, who had set his heart upon the boy going right through St. Frank's. Since he had been back, Forrest had given plenty of proof that he was a very different fellow nowadays.

He behaved like a sportsman, and he had taken great pains to make himself agreeable to all and sundry. And the manner in which he played football was really astonishing.



Forrest had played centre-forward in a recent match against Bannington Grammar School, and had scored the winning goal, after playing a brilliant game throughout. Little did the Removites know that Forrest was as contemptuous of football as ever.

He was very thorough, however; he had set out to make himself popular, and in order to gain his ends he had taken up football in real earnest, and was clever enough to "put it over."

Only Gulliver and Bell knew what his real game was. Even his place in the Junior Eleven had been secured by means of a blackguardly trick. He had deliberately injured Nipper, knowing full well that Nipper would give him his place as centre-forward—for Forrest had previously shown great form in an unimportant match.

The bulk of the juniors hailed him as a very fine fellow; they were willing enough to give him a fair chance, and, undoubtedly, he had started well.

CLAUDE GORE-PEARCE, as he watched Forrest & Co. go off to the Common-room, was not thinking of Bernard Forrest's rapid rise to popularity. His bitterness against Gulliver and Bell was just as strong, and he loathed Forrest because the latter had usurped his position. This afternoon, however, he had troubles of his own.

They were big troubles, too. He went along to Study B, closed the door, and flung himself into the easy-chair. He was glad that Hubbard and Long were not present. Solitude was what he required just now, so that he could think.

He had been deeply concerned ever since the previous day, when he had watched post after post arrive. He had expected a registered letter from his father. The letter itself didn't matter much, but there was usually a fiver accompanying such a missive.

This week-end it hadn't come, and, as is generally the case in such circumstances, Gore-Pearce wanted it this week-end more than any other he could remember. For Mr. Montague Bland was getting impatient. Indeed, he was getting quite nasty.

Mr. Montague Bland was a commission agent in Helmford. Gore-Pearce had opened an account with him, and had done quite a good deal of betting during the term. He felt that it was safer to make his bets by post, rather than consort with the shady local characters. And as Mr. Bland had readily agreed to open an account for him, Gore-Pearce had been having so many flutters that he was now in quite a mess.

Everything had gone all right for the first week or two. He had cleared just over three pounds on the first week, and had lost thirty shillings on the second.

Then rapidly his losses had increased. He now owed Mr. Bland something like twelve pounds ten, and the bookmaker would not accept any further commissions from him. He had been pressing for payment of the account, and had even threatened that he would do something drastic unless Gore-Pearce gave him some satisfaction.

Over the telephone, Claude had definitely promised Mr. Bland that he would post off at least five pounds on the Saturday. Actually, he had meant to post three, for he wasn't going to be left penniless because of this confounded bookie.

However, the expected fiver hadn't arrived, and Gore-Pearce was now wondering what on earth he could write to Mr. Bland. A letter of some kind was essential.

"Hang the fellow!" muttered Claude, as he got up from the easy-chair and went to the table. "I'll tell him the truth; I'll tell him that the cash didn't turn up and that I'll post it to him to-morrow. That letter is bound to come by the morning's post. The pater has never let me down like this before. Confound it, I can't understand what's the matter!"

He was so engrossed with his own troubles that he did not hear the arrival of a big car. It glided into the Triangle, and came to a

halt in front of the Ancient House. The chauffeur jumped down, and opened one of the rear doors. A big, heavily-built man alighted.

Somehow, he looked aggressively unpleasant. He was clean-shaven, slightly bloated, and there was a general effect of coarseness about him—heightened by the enormous cigar which stuck out at right angles from his mouth.

"Wait here, Williams," he said curtly. "I shan't be long."

"Yes, sir," said the chauffeur.

The big man mounted the Ancient House steps, and he immediately found himself confronted by Teddy Long, of the Remove.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Gore-Pearce!" said Teddy eagerly. "Do you want to know where your son is?"

Mr. William Gore-Pearce looked at the sneak of the Remove with disfavour.

"I suppose you're expecting a shilling from me, for showing me the way to my son's room?" he asked contemptuously. "Go away, boy! I can find my son without any help from you."

"All right, sir—no harm," said Teddy, rather taken aback. "But your son is in my study now, sir, and I thought you'd like to know me."

"I haven't the slightest desire to know you, boy."

"My name's Long, sir," said Teddy. "Your son now shares Study B with me. Hubbard's in it, too, but Hubbard's nobody. It won't take me a minute to show you—"

"I don't want you to show me, and I won't have you hanging round me," interrupted Mr. Gore-Pearce unpleasantly. "Go away when I tell you."

"Yes, sir, but—"

"Go away!" thundered the irate man.

Teddy bolted, disgusted and disappointed. He knew that Mr. William Gore-Pearce was a millionaire, and he had expected at least five shillings for directing him to his son's study.

Teddy had a habit of setting a high value upon his little services.

Mr. Gore-Pearce, having got rid of the unwelcome junior, made his way towards the Remove passage. He was no stranger at St. Frank's, and he knew that Claude now occupied Study B. Claude had mentioned it in one of his recent letters to his mother. Gore-Pearce seldom wrote to his mother, by the way, unless it was to ask her for some extra money.

Arrived at Study B, Mr. Gore-Pearce glanced up and down. Everything was very quiet on this Sunday afternoon, and nothing suited Mr. Gore-Pearce's purpose better. He squared his shoulders, seized the handle of the door, and walked in.

One glance told him that his son was alone. But even so, if there had been any other fellows in the room, he would have rudely sent them out.

"Pater!" ejaculated Claude, startled.

He was sitting at the table, writing. His face was expressive of consternation and alarm—and, suddenly, he screwed up the sheet of paper in front of him, and threw it into the fire.

Mr. Gore-Pearce said nothing whatever. But his actions were significant. He closed the door, and deliberately turned the key in the lock. Then he set his hat down on a chair and advanced into the centre of the study.

"Is—is anything wrong, pater?" asked Claude shakily.

Still his father remained silent. His face was grim and set, and there was a dangerous light in his eyes. Claude watched, his heart sinking. He felt trapped; he had a premonition that something uncomfortable was going to happen.

He watched fascinatedly as Mr. Gore-Pearce removed a letter from his inside coat pocket and opened it.

"Read this!" said the millionaire, thrusting the letter forward.

Claude gulped.

"What—what is it, pater?" he asked hoarsely.

"Read it!"

Claude took the letter, his hand trembling. And then he nearly jumped a foot into the air. The letter was typewritten, but Claude only saw a blur. What he did see distinctly was the signature—"Montague Bland."

It was a terrible shock to him. He realised in a flash that the bookmaker, having grown impatient, had written to his father, applying for the settlement of the account. It was a underhanded trick, for Mr. Bland had promised him that he would wait until the Monday.

"Don't stand there like a fool!" said Mr. Gore-Pearce harshly. "Read that letter, Claude!"

"I—I—I—I—I don't know anything about it, pater—" began Claude desperately.

"Be careful!" warned his father, in an ominous voice. "Be very careful what you say, young man."

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



CHUBBY HEATH.

One of the leading lights in the Third Form at St. Frank's, although he is kept well in check by his leader and chum, Willy Handforth. Cheeky, and inclined to be daring.

up!" he said grimly. "If you had denied the debt, I should have gone straight to your headmaster. As it is, I'll deal with the matter myself."

Claude fairly clutched at the table. "Don't go to the Head, pater!" he gasped. "If Dr. Nicholls knows anything about this he'll sack me!"

Claude pulled himself together, and he managed to read the letter. It was brief and businesslike. It informed Mr. Gore-Pearce that there was a sum of twelve pounds fifteen shillings and sixpence owing by Claude, and that this sum had been outstanding for practically four weeks. Mr. Bland regretted the necessity of applying direct to Mr. Gore-Pearce, but as his applications to Claude had been of no avail, it was his only alternative.

As white as a sheet, Claude allowed the letter to flutter to the table.

"The man's a liar, pater!" he muttered. "He promised to wait until Monday morning—"

"Do you owe this fellow, Bland, the sum mentioned?"

"Yes, pater," whispered the miserable junior.

Mr. Gore-Pearce seized the letter, rolled it into a ball, and threw it into the fire. Then he faced his son squarely.

"It's just as well for you, my boy, that you owned

"Don't you think you deserve to be sacked?"

"It'll mean ruin, pater!" panted Claude. "Once I'm expelled from St. Frank's——"

"I know," interrupted Mr. Gore-Pearce. "You will bring disgrace on me, as well as on yourself, and I don't want that to happen. That is why I have come here personally, that is why I am determined to settle this affair privately. The headmaster will know nothing of it, Claude. I have already paid Bland, and I have told him that if ever you apply to him again he is to inform me."

Claude experienced such a feeling of relief that he went weak at the knees and sank into a chair. The Head wasn't to know. That, at all events, was a piece of wonderful news.

But there was something about his father's attitude which was very, very ominous.

CHAPTER 2.

Thrashed!

MR. WILLIAM GORE-PEARCE regarded his son in that same steady, deliberate way.

"You young fool!" he said angrily. "Haven't you any more sense than to get yourself mixed up with bookmakers? Don't you know that you're risking your whole career by such folly? And what about me? Do you want to bring disgrace upon me?"

"I—I didn't think I should lose, pater!" faltered Claude. "I did all right for the first week or two, and—and——"

"I'm disgusted to know that a son of mine should be such an arrant imbecile!" interrupted Mr. Gore-Pearce contemptuously. "I can see that I have been allowing you too much pocket-money. Instead of using it, you have abused it."

"I won't do it again, pater!" said Claude desperately. "I promise!"

"You certainly won't do it again!" agreed Mr. Gore-Pearce, grim and hard. "I'll see to that, young man! I have come here this afternoon for the sole purpose of thrashing you!"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Claude, staggering to his feet.

"Yes, thrashing you!" repeated his father. "I am going to teach you a lesson that you won't forget in a hurry. And if you get into any further trouble after this I shall take you away from this school and have you placed under a tutor, where I can keep you constantly under my own eye."

Mr. Gore-Pearce was harsh in his tone; he meant every word he said. If Claude got mixed up in a scandal, he, Mr. Gore-Pearce, would suffer. And the millionaire, a self-made man, was very jealous of his good name. He was proud to have his son at such a famous school as St. Frank's; later, he wanted Claude to go up to Oxford. And any more folly of this kind might mean

Claude's expulsion, with the resultant wrecking of his career.

"Look here, pater, you can't do it!" said Claude hoarsely. "Somebody will hear you, and then——"

"Nobody will hear me if you keep quiet!" broke in Mr. Gore-Pearce. "And what do I care if I am heard? I am your father, and if I want to thrash you it's my business and nobody else's. For your own sake, young man, you'd better take your thrashing quietly."

"But it's not done nowadays, pater!" said Claude savagely. "Parents don't thrash their sons!"

"Don't they?" said the big man. "Well, this parent is going to thrash his son. And never did a son more deserve a thrashing. Come here!"

"But, pater——"

"Come here!" repeated Mr. Gore-Pearce.

"I'll—I'll shout for help!" gasped the wretched boy.

"Shout—and bring your masters!" snapped his father. "I've allowed you a good deal of rope—too much—but there's a limit. And I'm old-fashioned enough to know that when a son oversteps the mark, the best thing is to give him a good hiding. You worthless young scamp! I'll teach you to get mixed up with bookmakers and incur big debts that you cannot settle!"

"But—but it's Sunday afternoon——"

"The better the day, the better the deed!" retorted Mr. Gore-Pearce promptly. "And this is going to be one of the best deeds I have ever done. It's all for your own good. If I don't knock some sense into you this afternoon I never will!"

He strode forward, seized the desperate boy by the scruff of the neck, and grabbed his cane with the other hand.

"Now!" he said between his teeth.

Slash! Slash!

The cane came down with tremendous effect, and Claude howled.

"Stop it!" he shrieked. "You're hurting me, pater! I'm not a kid! You can't thrash me in this brutal way——"

"Brutal?" thundered his father. "Good heavens! I intended to let you off pretty lightly, Claude, but since you expect me to be brutal, I will be brutal. I can see that——"

"If you hit me again, pater, I'll—I'll fight!"

"Oh, you'll fight, will you?" said his father. "You think that you can defy me, eh? You infernal young fool!"

Slash! Slash!

"It's up to you!" panted Mr. Gore-Pearce. "Take this thrashing quietly and nobody will ever know. But if you howl you'll bring your school-fellows, and perhaps your masters. I shan't tell your masters why I'm thrashing you, but I shall certainly maintain my right to flog my own son. Your school-fellows will make things pretty

uncomfortable for you after I've gone, won't they? Better take it quietly."

And Claude, shocked into a realisation of the truth, stifled his cries. It would indeed be bad for him if the other Removites got to know about this. He would be the laughing-stock of the entire junior school.

MR. WILLIAM GORE-PEARCE finished at last. He had used that Malacca cane of his with painful effect. Claude was now sitting in a collapsed heap in the easy-chair, sobbing convulsively. He was aching and burning, and his pride, too, had suffered a fall.

Unquestionably, he had deserved a thrashing, but it was a fact that Mr. Gore-Pearce was a brute. He had used that cane viciously and with unpardonable ferocity. Claude Gore-Pearce was likely to remember this flogging for many a long day.

"I'm going now, Claude!" said his father, as he straightened his tie and tidied himself up generally. "I am glad you made no outcry. This little matter remains private—just between ourselves."

Claude said nothing; he was incapable of speech just then.

"Before I go, however, I shall have a brief interview with your Housemaster," continued the millionaire. "I am going to arrange that you shall receive half-a-crown every week for the remainder of this term."

Claude was startled into looking up, and there was a horrified expression in his eyes.

"Half—half-a-crown, pater!" he gasped.

"Half-a-crown!" repeated Mr. Gore-Pearce with relish. "That will be the full amount of your weekly pocket-money, Claude, for the remainder of this term."

"But—but you can't mean it!" ejaculated Claude, aghast. "I can't manage with only half-a-crown, pater!"

"You can't, eh? That's a pity!" said Mr. Gore-Pearce. "Because you'll get no more from me, Claude—or from your mother, either. So you needn't write her any desperate letters."

"You've given me a thrashing—isn't that enough?" asked the junior bitterly.

"Enough be hanged!" retorted his father. "I've given you the thrashing you deserve, and I'm not going to have you squandering any more money. If you had used your liberal pocket-money sensibly, I should have maintained the allowance. But I'm going to teach you to be careful, Claude. Half-a-crown a week is all you will receive. Not a cent more!"

"But what about my exes, pater?" asked the boy in despair. "I pay for nearly everything in the study. These other two chaps haven't any money. Besides, what about going to the pictures, and—"

He broke off as he suddenly remembered something. He had arranged to give a special tea-party on the following evening. He had invited people, and he had promised a very luxurious spread.

"You can't do it, pater!" said Claude, springing up and clutching at his father's arm. "Everybody knows that you're a millionaire, and they expect me to have money. Life won't be worth living unless—"

"Other boys manage on half-a-crown a week, and you'll manage!" said Mr. Gore-Pearce relentlessly.

"Let me have a fiver—now!" urged Claude. "Cut my pocket-money down to half-a-crown a week afterwards, if you like—but let me have a fiver now! I must have it, pater! You don't understand—"

"I understand that I'm going, and that you'll get no pocket-money of any kind until next Saturday," said the millionaire. "And then you'll receive half-a-crown from your Housemaster, if you apply for it. That's all!"

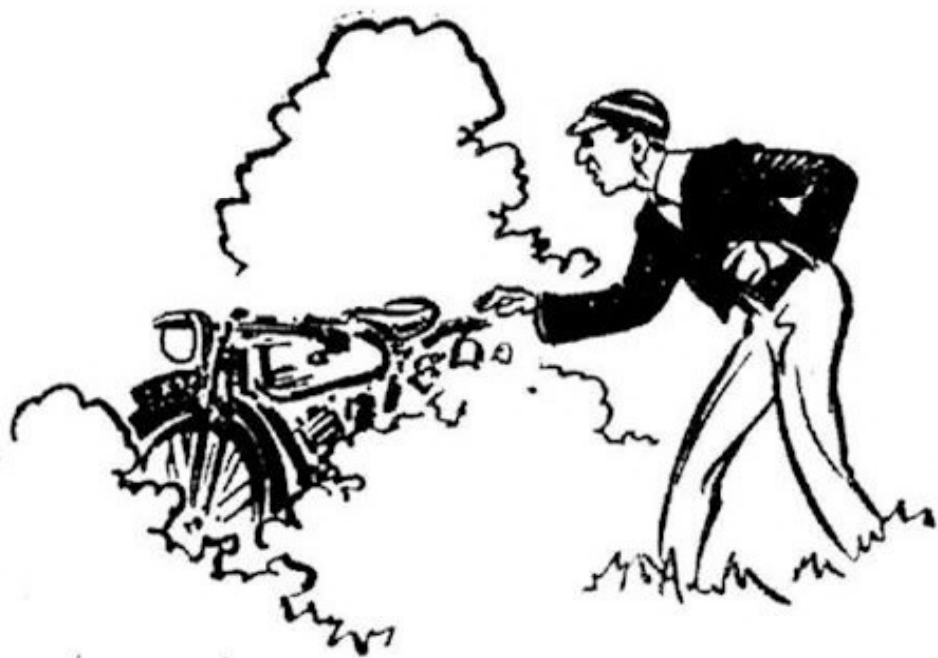
And, without another word, Mr. William Gore-Pearce unlocked the door, strode out, and slammed the door behind him.

"Pater!" babbled the stricken boy.

But "pater" was striding down the passage, and the sound of his footfalls gradually died away.

"**H**ALF-A-CROWN a week!" muttered Claude wretchedly.

Fifteen minutes had elapsed, and he was feeling less sore. The smarting was decreasing, and this other blow, too, had done much to lessen his physical pain. He knew his father of old; he knew that it would be quite useless to



make any further appeals. Besides, by this time Mr. Gore-Pearce had probably gone.

Claude was absolutely dumbfounded.

Half-a-crown a week! It was ridiculous. Hitherto he had had at least a fiver. Many a time he had even had ten pounds a week as pocket-money. And to have this magnificent sum reduced to half-a-crown was a big blow.

What could he do? What could he say? How could he explain his impecuniosity to the other fellows? It was some consolation to realise that nobody in the Remove knew about the dreadful episode that had just closed.

Claude groaned as he shifted his position. His outlook was black—absolutely hopeless.

He thought of his study-mates—Hubbard and Long. They were nearly always broke, and he had thrown his own money about like water. He had provided the study teas, and had thought nothing of it. Money had meant so little to him that he had never appreciated its value. Now, when he was suddenly confronted with the prospect of being penniless himself, he was at his wits' end.

It was absolutely impossible to tell Hubbard and Long the real truth. He must not breathe a word of that to a living soul. He, a millionaire's son, with an allowance of half-a-crown a week! It was too absurd. He would be the laughing-stock of the whole school. Fellows would chip him and make his life a misery. Nobody must ever know!

Teddy Long, having seen Mr. Gore-Pearce's car glide out of the gateway, sped like the wind to Study B. He burst in, eager and excited.

"Your pater's gone!" he announced breathlessly.

Gore-Pearce, who had been startled, glared at him with baleful ferocity.

"You young fool!" he snapped. "What's the idea of barging in like this?"

Teddy Long stared at him.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Anything wrong?"

"No, confound you!"

"Did your pater leave you a liberal tip?"

Gore-Pearce gulped. He had expected a question of that sort—only not quite so soon.

"Yes!" he grunted.

"How much?"

"Mind your own confounded business!" retorted Gore-Pearce savagely. "Have I got to tell you how much my pater gave me?"

"Well, you needn't be so grumpy about it," protested Teddy. "Your pater's a millionaire, and I thought he might have left you about twenty quid, or something."

"You're too nose-y, Long—that's what's the matter with you," said Gore-Pearce. "I've got plenty of money, but you're not going to get any."

He could not bring himself to the point of telling Teddy Long that he was absolutely penniless. In fact, he had to lie. At all costs, he had to fool the other fellows into believing that he was as plentifully supplied with pocket-money as ever.

"You look awfully seedy, you know, Gore-Pearce," said Teddy, as he examined Claude. "What's wrong? Has your pater been giving you a telling off?"

Claude did not like this cross-examination.

"I've had some bad news—about my mater," he said gruffly. "She's ill."

"Oh, I say—I'm sorry," said Teddy awkwardly.

"It's bowled me over a bit," went on Gore-Pearce. "And I don't want any more questions from you, Long. Understand? I'm not feeling in the mood for questions."

He pushed past and went out of the study. Teddy Long always irritated him, and this afternoon he irritated him so much that he

could hardly keep his hands off him. It was safer to get out.

Besides, there was tea. He didn't want to go through the ordeal of sitting down to tea with Hubbard and Long, and having their eyes on him all the time.

He got his hat and overcoat, and walked out. He walked up the lane, scarcely caring which way he went. He only wanted to be alone—so that he could think. Something drastic would have to be done. But what? Where could he obtain some money?

He remembered that tea-party for the following evening, too. He went hot and cold as he thought of it. He had invited some of the Moor View girls to come along to Study B—to indulge in a very special spread. How could he possibly cancel that tea-party now?

He recalled the incident which had led up to the invitation. He had met Joan Tarrant, and her two chums, Bessie Groves and Hilda Smith. These three girls were generally together, and at the Moor View School they were regarded as being not what they should be. In other words, they took a pleasure in defying the school rules and in making mischief generally. Gore-Pearce had met them in the village, and he had treated them to chocolates; this had led up to the invitation to tea for the Monday. And Claude, being a bit of a swanker, had promised a very swell spread.

"I've got to do something!" he muttered desperately. "I must have money!"

CHAPTER 3.

An Unexpected Development!

"GOING out?" asked Handforth.

"Yes," replied Bernard Forrest, with a friendly air. "Gully and I are going to take a walk to Bannington."

"What's the good of going to Bannington on a Sunday evening?" said Handforth suspiciously. "Besides, you won't get back in time for calling-over. There aren't any buses running."

"My bus will be running."

"Your bus!"

"My motor-bike," explained Forrest.

"Oh!"

"It's been at the garage at Bannington for some days now," continued Forrest. "I thought that Gully and I would walk over and ride back. We can easily do it before calling-over. Anything else you would like to know, Handforth?"

"You silly ass—"

"We'd take Bell with us, only Bell has gone over to see some pals at the River House School," continued Forrest obligingly. "If there's anything we can do for you in Bannington, just say the word."

"There's nothing, thanks," replied Handforth gruffly.

He watched the pair go out through the gateway, and he frowned. Church and



Slash! Slash! Again and again Mr. Gore-Pearce brought the stick down across his erring son's back. Claude howled and shrieked for mercy, but in vain.

McClure, who were with him, regarded him interestedly.

"Still suspicious of Forrest?" asked Church, grinning.

"Yes, I am!" replied Edward Oswald Handforth. "The leopard can't change his spots—not a leopard like Forrest, anyhow. He's playing some deep game, or I'll eat my hat!"

"And we thought you were a sportsman, Handy," said McClure, with a sad shake of his head.

"So I am, you fathead!"

"Then give the chap a chance," said the Scottish junior. "He's come back to St. Frank's to prove that he's dropped all his old bad ways. And I must say that he's started well. Look at the way he played football against the Grammar School. If the fellow was still a rotter, he couldn't play like that!"

"No fear!" agreed Church. "His game was glorious!"

Handforth gave one of his expressive grunts.

"All the same, I wouldn't trust Forrest any further than I can see him," he said. "He's a tricky, slippery bounder. Always has been. Always will be. I'd just like to

know the real reason for his trip to Bannington."

GORE-PEARCE came in soon afterwards, and he had to run the gauntlet of Handforth & Co. on the Ancient House steps. He was still looking a bit "groggy," and Handforth noticed it at once. But there was something sympathetic in Edward Oswald's manner as he pulled Gore-Pearce to a standstill.

"What's the idea?" asked Claude impatiently.

"Keep your hair on!" said Handforth. "We've heard that your mater is ill, Gore-Pearce. Hard lines, old man. Hope she soon gets better, and that you hear some good news."

"Thanks," said Claude, rather taken aback.

"Hope it's not very serious," went on Handforth earnestly.

"I'm afraid it is," said Gore-Pearce. "The mater is most frightfully unwell. Three or four doctors, you know, and all that. The pater came down especially to tell me. He's in an awful stew."

Having told one lie, Gore-Pearce found it necessary to tell others. And he was ready enough to grasp at any plausible excuse for

his harassed appearance. He went indoors and wandered to Study B. He found Hubbard and Long there, and they both looked at him strangely as he appeared.

"Did you have your tea somewhere else?" asked Hubbard.

"Tea?"

"We finished ours ages ago," went on Hubbard. "We thought you weren't coming, Gore-Pearce."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Claude. "I wasn't keen about tea. Never mind."

"I've heard that your mater is in hospital," continued Hubbard compassionately.

"Hospital?" ejaculated Gore-Pearce.

"That's what Long tells me," said Hubbard. "Isn't she about to undergo a serious operation?"

Much as Gore-Pearce liked this imaginary illness of his mother's as an excuse, he considered that this was going a bit too far.

"Long had better mind his own business!" he retorted, glaring at Teddy. "My mother's ill, but she's not in hospital, and there's going to be no operation."

"But I thought you said—" began Teddy lamely.

"Never mind what I said!" broke in Gore-Pearce. "I'm worried about the mater. That's all. She's ill. And I don't feel in the mood to be questioned, or to talk at all."

"We'll clear out if you like," said Hubbard obligingly.

"Thanks—I wish you would."

Hubbard and Long went off in a bit of a huff; for Hubbard had not expected to be taken so literally. Alone in Study B, Gore-

Pearce paced feverishly up and down. His long walk had been futile. He had had no inspiration.

How on earth he was to get money by the following day remained an insoluble problem. He could not go to fellows like Archie Glen-thorne, or Tregellis West, or the Hon. Douglas Singleton, or Vivian Travers. They all had plenty of money, and they would lend him some if he asked them.

But the very act of asking would set tongues wagging, for he could hardly request them to keep the affair secret. Besides, how could he pay them back? His sole income for the future would be half-a-crown a week. He couldn't ask them to wait until next term.

His feelings against his father were bitter. He was broke. And there was that tea-party on the morrow.

It would be bad enough to have the fellows talking; but what about those three girls? This was the very first time he had invited them to tea in his study. What would they say when he made some excuse and called it off? He refused to think of the consequences.

"I've got to give that tea-party," he muttered grimly. "Five quid will do it. But there's nobody— By gad! I wonder?"

A new idea had come to him. There was Mr. Porlock, the landlord of the White Harp—the rather disreputable inn in Bellton. He was on very good terms with Jonas Porlock, and the innkeeper, of course, would know nothing whatever about his trouble.

Why not go down to Porlock and borrow a fiver? He could do so on the strength of a supposed delayed remittance from his father. Porlock would shell out all right; and, as for paying him back—well, that would be another day's worry. Let it take care of itself.

"I'll try it," muttered Gore-Pearce. "Anyhow, I shan't be borrowing from anybody in the school, and the chaps will never know. And I shall be able to give that tea-party."

IN the meantime, Bernard Forrest and Albert Gulliver were hanging about within the recesses of Bellton Wood.

It was not a very pleasant occupation, for the October evening was chilly, and a keen wind was blowing through the trees.

"Haven't we been here long enough?" grumbled Gulliver at length.

"Let's wait another ten minutes," said Forrest. "Don't want to be in too much of a hurry, or some of the chaps might ask questions."

"We've had time to walk to Bannington by now," said Gulliver. "And on your motor-bike it wouldn't take more than ten minutes to get back."

The two young rascals had not been to Bannington, and had had no intention of going to Bannington. They had lingered in the wood, killing time. Forrest's remarks to Handforth had been chosen carefully—and with an object. Handforth was liable to talk, and Forrest wanted the juniors in general to understand that he and Gulliver had gone to the local town to collect the motor-bike.

As a matter of fact, the machine was here, in Bellton Wood, concealed in a thick clump of trees not far from the road.



It had been there for some days.

There was something remarkably unlucky, about that motor-cycle. One night, during the week, Forrest had determined to sneak off to Bannington, to have "a good time" at the Wheatsheaf. In short, he had been up to his old games. He had brought his machine down to the wood in the dusk, and had concealed it—in readiness for the jaunt after lights-out.

But everything had gone wrong that night. Forrest and his two precious pals had run into Mr. Nelson Lee, their own House-master. Forrest had promptly made a rush at Nelson Lee's legs, and had bowled him over. Then the trio had bolted across the fields, and, in order to distract Lee's attention whilst they got back into their bed room, Forrest had deliberately and maliciously set fire to one of Farmer Holt's haystacks.

There had been quite a sensation about this little affair. The hay stack had been completely demolished, with a loss of two or three hundred pounds. Another stack had become involved, and had been partially destroyed. Only the valiant efforts of the St. Frank's Fire Brigade had saved the whole stackyard from destruction.

The police had investigated the affair, and, although Nelson Lee suspected one of the St. Frank's fellows of being responsible, he had absolutely no evidence. For Forrest and Gulliver and Bell had been enabled, by that destructive trick, to get back into their beds in-time.

And there was Forrest's motor-cycle hidden in the wood. Its discovery might have led to serious results, for Forrest would have been required to explain what the machine was doing there. He had not dared to get it back on the fateful night. And since then he had made one or two attempts. But on each occasion somebody had inopportunistically appeared, making the project impossible.

This evening, being Sunday, looked promising. Forrest had already paved the way. For some days he had casually dropped a word here and there that his machine was being overhauled. And it was quite logical

that he and Gulliver should walk over on this Sunday evening to collect the "jigger." Forrest was hoping that he and Gulliver would be able to whisk the machine out safely in the dusk. Until it was recovered, Forrest would not feel easy in mind.

AT just about this same time, Claude Gore-Pearce was hastening down to the village. His common sense told him that it would be more advisable to leave this visit to the White Harp until after dark; but he could not wait. And, when all was said and done, there wasn't much chance of anybody spotting him on a quiet Sunday evening. The inn wouldn't be open, and he could easily sneak round to the back door. And why break bounds when he could just as easily accomplish his purpose during legitimate hours?

He was nearly opposite the stile, with Bellton Wood frowning darkly on his left-hand side, when he beheld a figure in the distance down the lane. Although it was dusk, he instantly recognised Dr. Morrison Nicholls.

"Gad, the Head!" breathed Claude in alarm.

It was guilty conscience, perhaps, which caused him to be so scared. The knowledge of his errand made him nervous. Again,

he had half an idea that his father had seen the Head during the afternoon. Perhaps his father had mentioned something about the curtailed pocket-money to the Head. Gore-Pearce was horrified at the thought of being stopped and questioned.

In any case, why take the risk? He dodged quickly through a gap in the hedge and plunged into the wood. He was satisfied that Dr. Nicholls had not seen him, and it would be easy enough for him to wait until the Head had walked by, and then continue his own short journey.

And with this idea in mind he plunged deeper into the wood. A few yards ahead he spotted a kind of gully which seemed to be almost entirely surrounded by thick bushes. It would make an ideal place in which to hide! Gore-Pearce ran forward eagerly, slithered down the steep slope—and landed beside a motor-cycle!



The THIEF!

Quietly the junior moved across the room. His eyes were

staring fixedly at the table, whereon reposed a pile of bank notes. How he needed that money. Failure to get it, indeed, might well mean his ruin at St. Frank's! Yet if he were discovered stealing a master's money—expulsion!

Slowly the junior's hand stretched forward; grasped the notes. The temptation had proved too strong for Bernard Forrest.

Read all about this dramatic incident in next Wednesday's stunning long school yarn entitled:

“THE THIEF!”

CHAPTER 4.

The Unseen Listener!

"WELL I'm hanged!" said Gore-Pearce in astonishment.

There was every reason for his surprise. The light was not good—indeed, it was dim in the extreme; but he could easily see that this machine was a good one; in fact, nearly new. There were one or two spots of rust on the handle-bars, owing to recent rain, but apart from this, the motor-cycle was in splendid condition. It was completely hidden by the surrounding bushes. Unless Gore-Pearce had happened to push them aside, in order to seek a better hiding-place, he would never have known.

"There's something rummy about this!" he muttered, as he crouched down, listening.

He waited until he heard the headmaster's footsteps. They came nearer, grew distinct, and then receded. Dr. Nicholls had passed on, and Claude breathed a sigh of relief. That little peril was over, anyhow.

He looked at the motor-cycle more closely, and saw that it was a powerful machine of a well-known make—and one of the latest models, too.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated suddenly. "It's Forrest's!"

He recognised it now. Undoubtedly, this machine belonged to Bernard Forrest, of the Remove. It was the one which was supposed to be in a repair shop in Bannington. Then what was it doing here? There was good and sufficient reason for Gore-Pearce feeling suspicious.

Yet it was impossible for him to have any inkling of the real truth.

After considering the matter for some moments, he concluded that Forrest had hidden the machine here because of some financial bother. Perhaps it was on hire purchase, and perhaps the people were coming down to claim it, or something like that. So Forrest had put it carefully out of the way, until the representatives of the hire purchase firm should have abandoned their quest.

He wondered if he could make any capital out of his discovery, but came to the conclusion that he could not. He was hardly on speaking terms with Forrest, and—

His thoughts received a jar, for he heard voices quite near at hand. And it seemed to him that they were coming nearer. He could hear, too, the gentle crackling of twigs.

"Don't be an idiot!" came a voice. "You were looking in the wrong place, that's all. The jigger is further on, among all these bushes."

It was Forrest's voice. And obviously Forrest was coming to fetch his motor-bicycle. Gore-Pearce looked round, alarmed. He had no wish to be found here. Forrest might conclude that he had been spying, and really he had only stumbled upon the machine by the sheerest accident. Not

that Forrest was likely to believe such an explanation.

Claude glanced round, saw that there was a little opening amongst the bushes, and slipped through. He slipped literally, for there was a depression on the other side of that bush and he fell into it. It had been his idea to get completely away, but he soon found that this was impossible.

For there was no exit from that cleft. Beyond him there were masses of rough stones, with ferns growing. The only way out was by climbing up the loose earth, and in climbing out he would betray himself. So he crouched there, waiting.

It was impossible for him to see Forrest and his companion. He was hidden by the ferns, and by the formation of the ground.

"Here she is!" came Forrest's voice. "Confound it, I thought some of the plated parts would be rusty!"

"Well, what do you expect?" came another voice—Gulliver's. "The jigger's been out in the rain. I don't suppose she's come to any real harm."

"That's not the point," said Forrest. "I don't want any of the other fellows to notice those rusty spots and get curious. The machine is supposed to have been in the garage for the past three or four days."

"I'd forgotten that," said Gulliver slowly.

"There's Handforth, for example," continued Forrest. "He's infernally inquisitive, and he's still suspicious of me, too."

"I believe Nipper is keeping an eye on you, old man," said Gulliver.

"Nipper's too confoundedly deep!" growled Forrest. "He's jolly pleasant, and he's trying to make me believe that he accepts me as a good fellow. Confound his nerve! He'll be ready enough to jump on me if he only gets the chance. What's he going to say if he sees these rust spots? We shall have to clean them off, Gully."

"Well, let's get the bike out first," said Gulliver.

"Better do it here," came Forrest's voice. "We don't want to take any chances. If Nipper spotted this machine as it is, he'd guess at once that it had been out in the open for two or three days. If he connected it with that night of the haystack fire it might lead to awkward questions."

Gore-Pearce, listening, pricked up his ears. The night of the haystack fire. What did Forrest mean?

"I believe Lee is suspicious, too," continued Forrest savagely. "Nipper's jolly thick with Lee, as you know."

"Well, Lee is Nipper's guardian."

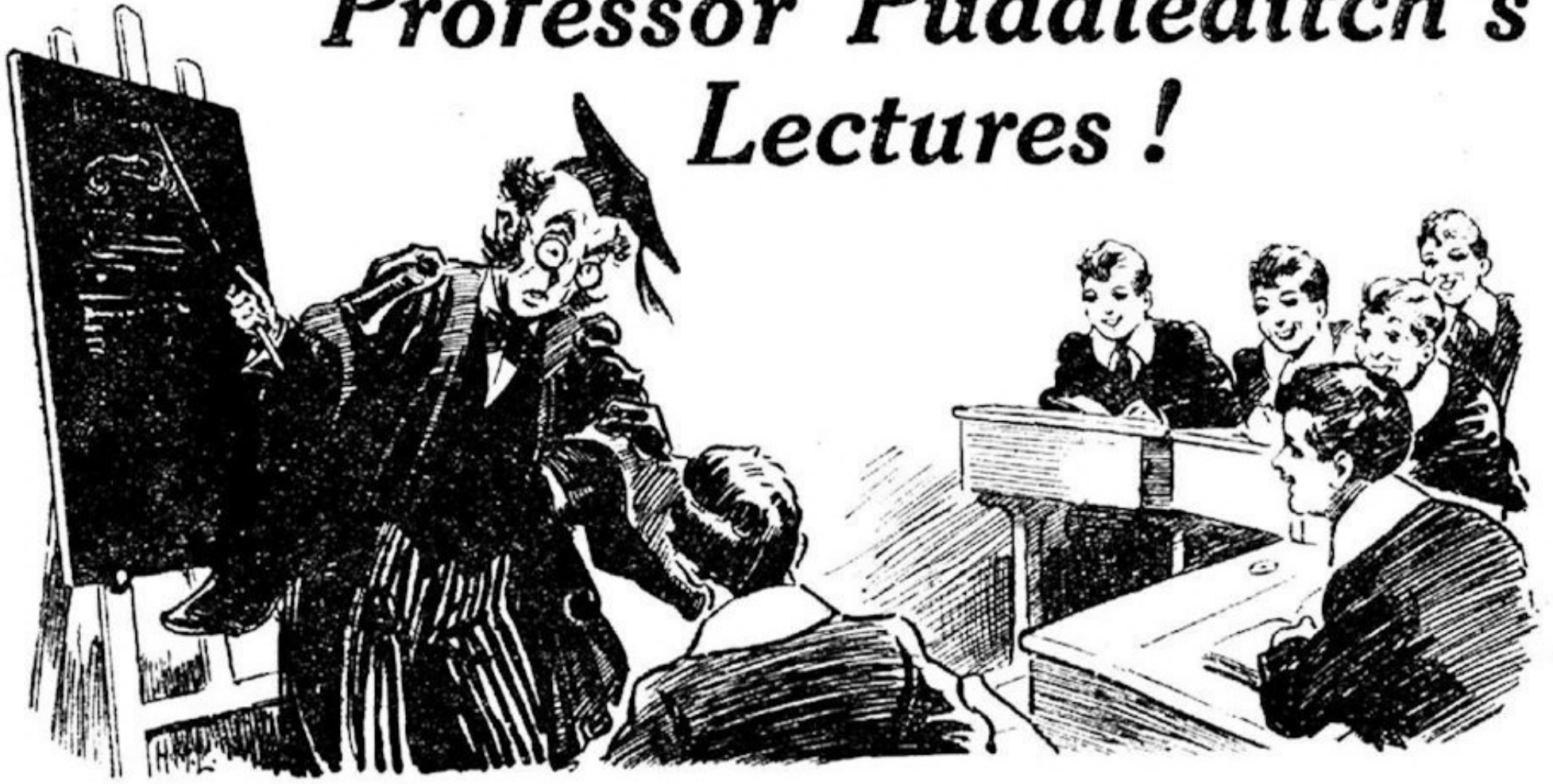
"If Lee ever finds out anything about this machine, he'll know that we were the fellows who bowled him over on that night of the fire," said Forrest.

"I like the 'we,' confound you!" said Gulliver, with some warmth. "It was you who did that. Don't drag me into it!"

"You were with me—and so was Bell," retorted Forrest. "If we hadn't set fire to

(Continued on page 15.)

Professor Puddleditch's Lectures!



Continuing his lectures on unnatural history, Professor Puddleditch has something to say about the "grumph" this week. Perhaps you have never heard of that extraordinary fish? If you haven't, it's all to the good. Just let the professor tell you all about it in his own amusing fashion!

By Reggie Pitt

LECTURE 3—THE GRUMPH

PROFESSOR PUDDLEDITCH staggered into the Hall, where were assembled the boys of St. Sycamore's, and managed to reach the dais before his huge dictionary slipped from under his arm on to the table, knocking over the glass of water before it came to rest.

"Dear, dear!" muttered the professor. "Never mind. It is somewhat appropriate, as to-day we are to deal with a watery subject."

"The creature we are to study is the Grumph— No, no, Jones minor, I have not got a cold; that is the thing's name. Now the Grumph is perhaps one of the most fearsome of living monsters. It is aero-amphibious. That is to say, it is able to exist under the water, on dry land, or to fly in the air.

"It has three hundred and sixty-five legs; one for each day of the year—except Leap Year, when it uses the same leg two days following. At the end of its long tail is a couple of fins which revolve like the blades of a propeller. This, of course, serves a double purpose; one, to propel it through the water as a submarine; two, to drive it through the air in the manner of an aeroplane.

"What did you say, Smith? What happens if its engine conks out whilst flying? Well, it simply takes a very deep breath which it retains, and thus converts itself into a kind

of dirigible or airship and gently floats down to the surface of the water, when it can do the necessary repairs to its carburettor at leisure.

"Its breathing apparatus is unique, and has a direct bearing on its method of propulsion, whether by air or by water. Briefly, it is thus: As it takes a breath, the air is passed into the lungs in the usual way, but is ejected from the tip of its tail on to the propeller fins, causing them to rotate and become a driving power. The same applies when in the sea, when it uses the water in the same manner by an alternative route in its internal organs.

"I have here a diagram," and the professor hung a plan of the beast on the blackboard, and felt for the glass of water which was not there. Unconsciously he grasped the inkpot in its place, and after taking a drink, spoilt the diagram.

Having at length recovered his composure and his spectacles, he ignored the blackboard and the blotchy diagram and continued:

"Now where was I? Uck-uck-uck!" The professor put out his tongue to the class and gently drew it back over his teeth, while the boys one and all began to think he had suddenly developed an attack of bats in the belfry.

"The Grumph—uck-uck!" he began again. "Excuse me, boys. It is the ink on my tongue. No doubt—uck—it will soon—uck—

wear off. As I was saying, the Grumph gets very touchy in temper occasionally, and is much annoyed by the sly attacks of some species of crustacea, namely, or to wit, the crab and the lobster. These naughty creatures are wont to fasten on to the propeller fins of the Grumph and treat the revolutions as an amusement in the form of a merry-go-round.

"And lastly I intend to read to you an extract from a story told by one of the old school of seafarers, who experienced an adventure with one of these gigantic denizens of the deep. If the language is not as refined as one could wish, the interest of the encounter must, in this case, make up for that defect.

"The story is told by the master of the sailing vessel, Sippy Susan. He was affectionately known to the crew as Wobble-legged William, on account of his having one wooden leg."

* * *

THE sun was shining brilliantly (read the professor) somewhere else, but it was raining like billyo in the Astrachan Archipelago where we were sailing in search of pearls. I had set the Sippy Susan on her course, heading straight for Ooshtah Island, and had lashed the wheel to the mainmast before going below to finish my game of marbles with the first mate, Sinuous Samuel.

I was just taking aim with my largest blood alley when—crash, I was preci—we were precipi— Well, we were knocked into a heap.

"We've struck summat," said the mate.

"I knows that, you blithering idiot!" I said. "I've got a lump on my head as big as a football. Tell the bosun to pipe all hands on deck."

So Sinuous Samuel went to his cabin and put on his bosun's cap and piped the crew. When they were both on deck I addresses them in a loud voice.

"Avast there!" says I. "Avast and ahoy! Take two reefs in the fo'castle. Jump to it, my hearties. Look lively. The mate says we've struck a rock."

The crew spread themselves out to execute my orders, one going one way and one the other. Then I looks over the offside of the bow and sees all the side stove in.

"Shiver me timbers, we've sprung a leak!" I yells to Sam, who had changed his cap again and was now the mate.

"Aye, aye, sir!" says Sam.

"Well, what are we going to do about it?" says I.

"I'll see what the book of rules says, sir."

He took from his pocket a guide called "Notions for Navigators" and runs his finger down the index.

"'R,'" he muttered. "'R' for Rock. 'A Rock is a lump of ground stuck in the sea for ships to strike on.'"

"That's no good," I says. "Try leak."

"Leak," he says. "Letter 'L.' Lake—land—language— Lumme, no, that's too far! Here we are. 'Leak; fishes in a vessel—no, no, *fissure* in a vessel. Cure: stuff mattresses in the hole.'"

"That's it!" I says, and then called half the crew.

I sends him below with orders to stuff a mattress in the hole. I found out afterwards that he used mine to stop the leak, so I severely repri—repri— Well, I told him off.

The other half of the crew came running fo'ard.

"Cool!" he shouted (he was cabin-boy in his spare time). "Coo, sir, there's a submerged city!"

And sure enough there were a long row of chimneys sticking out of the water. But even as we watched, the whole row of chimneys disappeared and up comes a whacking great sea-serpent.

The mate rushed below, and I must confess that my nerves were a bit shaky.

"Full speed astern!" I yelled. "Put the brakes on, you landlubbers!"

But no! On we rushes towards the sea-serpent, which ducks under the water as we reach it and comes up again astern the vessel.

Then, to my horror, it opens its mouth and seizes the ship in its jaws and pushes like blazes. We goes forward like the wind, the foam dashing over the sides of the Sippy Susan in cascades.

In about two shakes we hove in sight of Ooshtah Island, and then the wonderful thing happened. The serpent lets go and rises into the air and we gets a view of hundreds of its legs, which we mistook for chimneys when it was floating on its back. It circled the ship three times, and to our relief hopped it back the way it came, and believe me or believe me not, fastened to its tail was a propeller, like those which send these new-fangled steamships along.

* * *

THE professor closed the volume with a snap and remarked:

"So you see, boys, we have here a narrative by an eye-witness of this rare inhabitant of the sea. You may now dismiss."

Professor Puddleditch picked up his dictionary and dropped his spectacles; picked up his spectacles and dropped his dictionary, and so on alternately until he reached the edge of the platform, when in stooping to recover the last dropped article, he fell over the edge with a clatter and thus made his exit, rolling through the door

THE WHIP HAND!

(Continued from page 12.)

that stack, we should never have got safely in. But don't let's argue. We've got to get these rust spots off."

They apparently busied themselves then, Gore-Pearce hearing no more conversation for some little time. He was quivering with excitement, for he had heard something of great significance. And he was glad now that he had been compelled to remain close at hand.

"It'll be a jolly good thing when we get this machine back in the garage," said Gulliver. "And if you'll take any advice from me, Forrest, you won't try any night jaunts. They're too risky!"

"I don't want your advice!" grunted Bernard.

"Well, hang it, you're pretending to be a fine sport, aren't you?" said Gulliver. "Even if the beaks never discover anything, it'll be all up with your game if the chaps get to know. Strikes me you're being too reckless."

"Rot!"

"It's all very well to say 'rot,' but what happened the very first time you broke bounds?" argued Gulliver. "You ran into Lee, and you had to set fire to that stack so that you could get back into your bedroom. Was it worth the risk?"

"How was I to know that he would be out in the lane at that hour?"

"There was that affair of the golf ball, too," went on Gulliver. "It was a pretty smart scheme to catapult the ball at Nipper's knee from behind the hedge, and make the fellows believe that I had made a bad drive from the other meadow, but the risk was great."

"Don't be a fool! There was no risk at all," said Forrest. "And what was the result, anyhow? Didn't I play in Nipper's place? And aren't the fellows buzzing round me like flies, patting me on the back and calling me a fine sportsman?"

"But supposing somebody had spotted you with that catapult?" asked Gulliver. "I've warned you about this before, and you won't take any notice. One of these days you'll be bowled out, Forrest. You can fool the chaps for a certain time, but if you make one slip they'll be on to your game, and then you'll come a cropper."

"Confound your cheek!" snapped Forrest. "I know what I'm doing, and I don't want any advice from you. There, she's all right

now, I think. You buzz to that gap in the hedge and have a look up and down the lane."

"What shall I do if the coast's clear?"

"Give a whistle."

"And supposing there's somebody in sight?"

"Then do nothing, idiot!" said Forrest. "Don't give any whistle until the coast is absolutely clear. I'll be ready to dodge out."

CLAUDE GORE-PEARCE heard Gulliver pushing his way through the bushes. But Claude only noticed this in a subconscious kind of way. His brain was throbbing with the important information that he had just heard.

So Bernard Forrest's "reformation" was a mere pose! He had been breaking bounds after lights-out, as of old, and it was he who had set fire to that haystack in Farmer Holt's meadow. There was that affair of the golf ball, too.

Gore-Pearce clearly remembered the incident. Nipper, on Little Side, had been struck by a golf ball, and it had been impossible for him to play in the match against Bannington Grammar School. Gulliver had come running up from a great distance, and had expressed consternation and surprise when he had learned that Nipper had been hit. All the evidence indicated that Gulliver had given the ball a mighty swipe, and that it had travelled in a wrong direction.

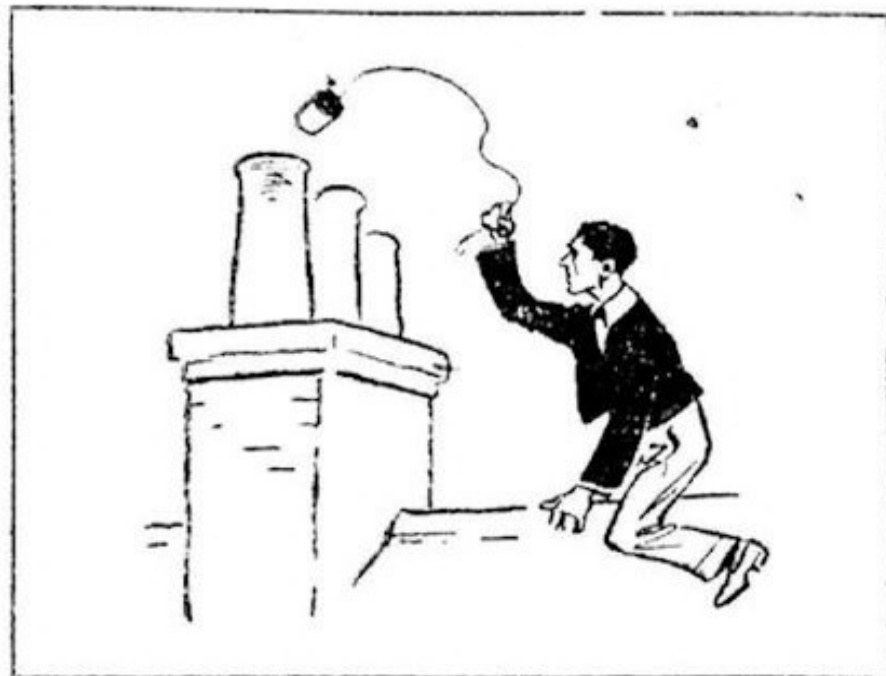
Actually, Forrest had been concealed behind an adjacent hedge, and he had accurately catapulted the golf ball at Nipper. It had been no accident at all—but a deliberate, malicious plot to put Nipper out of the game. And Forrest had played in Nipper's place! Nobody had had the slightest inkling that Forrest had purposely schemed towards that end.

A low whistle came to Gore-Pearce's ears, and immediately afterwards he heard a great crackling of twigs and one or two metallic bumps. Bernard Forrest was pushing the machine out into the open.

After a bit there came the sound of the kick-starter being operated. The machine was now on the road, and obviously the two young rascals had succeeded in getting it there unobserved. The dusk was so deep that their task had been comparatively easy.

Zurrrrrrh!

There came the low purr of the powerful engine. It raced for a moment or two, and then settled down into a quieter pulsation.



"ALL serene!" said Forrest calmly. Gulliver was riding on the pillion, and they were nearing the gates of St. Frank's. They were satisfied that their recent movements had been unobserved. They turned into the gateway just as Josh Cuttle, the porter, was about to close the portals.

Bell was waiting in the Triangle, and he knew that a number of other juniors were within earshot.

"Hallo!" he sang out. "I thought you chaps weren't going to get back in time for locking-up."

"Those garage people ought to be boiled," said Forrest. "They promise a thing, and they don't keep to it. Gully and I had to wait."

"Is the jigger all right now?" asked Bell.

"Runs like a dream," said Forrest. "We let her out a bit on the straight stretch just outside Bannington, and she touched fifty with ease."

"How much did they charge you?" asked Bell.

They all went off together towards the school garage, and if any of the other juniors had heard those words they would naturally jump to the obvious conclusion that Forrest and Gulliver had just got back from Bannington, after having fetched the machine from the garage.

A little later, in Study A, the three young schemers grinned.

"Everything's O.K. now," said Forrest complacently. "Nothing more to worry about. Thank goodness we got that jigger out of that beastly wood!"

"It's been a nightmare," said Bell. "How many times have we tried to get it out?"

"Never mind that," said Forrest. "It's out now, and we haven't aroused any suspicions."

They would have been alarmed if they could have seen Claude Gore-Pearce at that moment. For Gore-Pearce was out in the Triangle, in the deep dusk, and on his face there was an expression of gloating triumph.

He had not been to see Mr. Jonas Porlock. That idea was washed out. He had a much better scheme on hand now—a very much better scheme.

He hated Bernard Forrest, for Forrest had usurped his position in Study A. Here was a golden opportunity of getting his own back!

In fact, Gore-Pearce was quite convinced that his problem was solved.

CHAPTER 5.

A "Friendly" Call!

AFTER evening service there was a lazy half-hour for the juniors before supper. There was no prep. to-night, of course, and so most of the fellows gathered in the Common-room or lounged in their studies.

Forrest and Gulliver and Bell went straight to Study A. They would then show themselves in the Common-room, when Forrest would make himself pleasant to everybody in general. Afterwards, they might chance having a cigarette in the privacy of their study.

But this programme was not carried out.

For when they got into Study A they found the light burning, the fire blazing merrily, and Claude Gore-Pearce was lounging luxuriously in the armchair.

"Made a mistake, haven't you?" asked Forrest, staring.

"A mistake?" drawled Claude, yawning. "I don't think so."

"This isn't your study."

"I don't believe it is, now you come to mention it," agreed Claude. "It used to be, of course, but we won't go into that. I thought you wouldn't mind me strolling in and making myself at home."

"Well, I do mind," said Forrest curtly. "You can clear out!"

There was something about Gore-Pearce's manner which puzzled Bernard. And it caused Gulliver and Bell to stare, too. Since they had thrown Gore-Pearce out, he had never spoken to them. He had cut them completely. What was the meaning, then, of this sudden friendliness?

"Did you hear me?" demanded Forrest.

Claude yawned, bent forward, and poked the fire.

"You might shut the door," he said, glancing round. "There's a bit of a draught."

"I'll shut the door after you've gone!" retorted Forrest. "Of all the infernal nerve—"

"I really think you'd better shut the door," said Claude gently.

"Oh! Why?"

"I've something to say—and it's private."

"What's your game, Gore-Pearce?" demanded Forrest curiously. "No, don't shut that door, Bell!—I'm not going to be dictated to by this jackass. He's not going to have a game with me!"

"Game?" repeated Claude, with exasperating coolness. "What game? Congrats, Forrest, on your wonderful recovery."

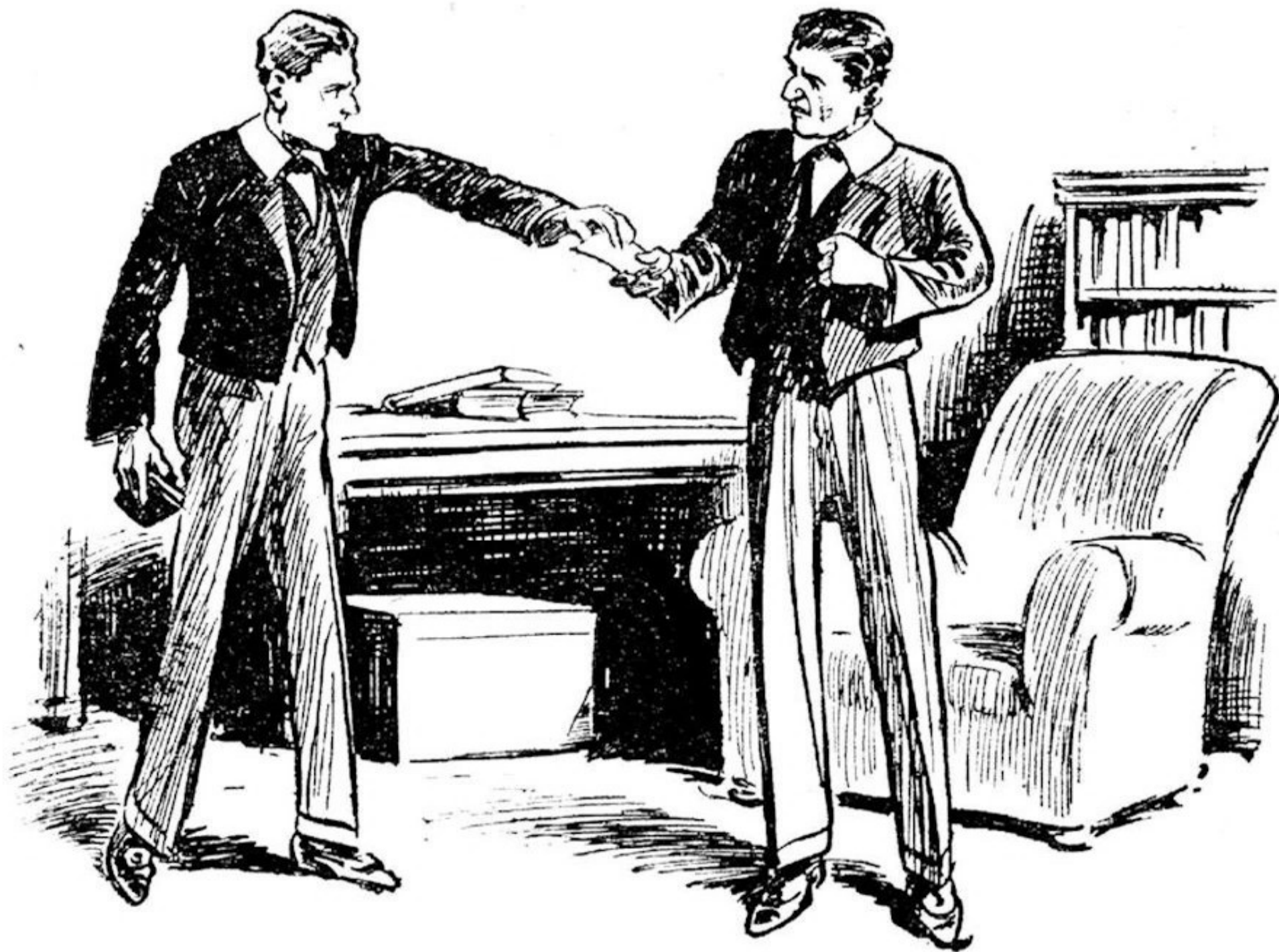
"What do you mean—my recovery?"

"You used to be such a blackguard," said Claude musingly, as he lay back in the chair again. "A really frightful blackguard, Forrest. Didn't you, now? Don't try to deny it, old man."

"Get out of this study!" snapped Forrest hotly.

"And now you're such a splendid fellow," continued Gore-Pearce, with approval. "You're so spotless, Forrest. Never break bounds at night, eh? Never indulge in any little wickednesses. And you play football so well, don't you? The junior school is raving about you. I really don't wonder."

Bernard Forrest did not fail to detect the mocking irony of Gore-Pearce's tone. He



“If you don’t loan me a tenner I shall tell the school what I know about you!” threatened Gore-Pearce. Bernard Forrest was beaten—and he knew it! “Hold on!” he panted desperately. “Here’s your tenner!” And he took out his wallet and handed the money to the scheming Gore-Pearce.

glanced at the amazed Gulliver and Bell, and motioned his head towards the half-open door.

“Lend a hand here,” he said curtly. “We’ll throw this fool outside.”

“Just a minute!” said Gore-Pearce, sitting up. “Before you throw me out, Forrest, I want you to do me a little favour. That’s really why I came here.”

“A favour—from me?”

“As a matter of fact, and strictly on the q.t., I want you to lend me a tenner,” said Claude softly. “As it’s strictly between ourselves, I’m only whispering. It’ll be a lot better if you close that door. I shouldn’t like anybody else to know.”

Forrest was no fool, and there was something in Claude’s tone which inwardly startled him. Claude’s very action in coming here, too, for the loan of a tenner was significant. It struck Forrest very forcibly that Gore-Pearce knew something.

“Shut that door, Bell!” he said, breathing hard.

“That’s better,” murmured Claude musingly.

Bell shut the door, and Forrest strode across to the easy-chair and glared down at the unwelcome visitor.

“What’s your game?” he demanded harshly.

“First of all, I’d like to see that tenner,” smiled Gore-Pearce.

“You babbling lunatic! If you think you’ll yet any money out of me, you’re crazy!” said Forrest. “If I had a thousand pounds in my pocket at this moment, I wouldn’t lend you a brass farthing.”

“Well, that wouldn’t worry me,” said Gore-Pearce. “I don’t want a brass farthing—I want a tenner. Besides, brass farthings don’t exist!”

“He’s off his rocker!” said Gulliver blankly.

“Mad as a hatter!” agreed Bell.

“Perhaps I am,” nodded Gore-Pearce. “I’m so mad, in fact, that I’m quite certain that I shall have ten quid in my pocket before I leave this study.”

“You won’t get ten pence—let alone ten pounds,” grated Forrest.

“No?” said Claude. “I’m awfully sorry you’re so definite, Forrest. You wouldn’t like me to go to the Head, and tell him about your motor-bike, would you?”

Forrest started, and Gulliver and Bell turned pale. They uttered startled ejaculations, and Forrest glanced at them fero-

ciously. It was just like the idiots to give themselves away.

"What about my motor-bike?" he asked ominously.

"Oh, nothing," said Claude, waving a hand. "Nothing much, anyhow. Only I thought you'd rather it be kept dark that you've had your jigger hidden in Bellton Wood for some days—ever since the night of that haystack fire, in fact."

"He knows!" breathed Bell, in a panic.

Claude Gore-Pearce nodded.

"I know quite a lot," he replied lazily. "Hard luck, Forrest, old man. A pity you couldn't get your machine out of that wood until this evening. It would have looked so suspicious if it had been found by one of the masters on the night of the fire. It was quite a clever dodge of yours to set that stack on fire so that Mr. Lee would be put off the scent. It enabled you to get indoors before you could be discovered, didn't it?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Gulliver desperately. "He knows all about it, Forrest! He knows that you fired that haystack——"

"Shut up, you fool!" snarled Forrest, turning on him fiercely. "Can't you keep your confounded tongue still? He might have only suspected—but now you've given the game away!"

"It didn't matter," said Claude. "I knew it all the time. And now, Forrest, about that tenner? You'll be a sport, won't you, and lend it to me?"

"Wait a minute!" said Forrest, trying to fight down his alarm. "I don't admit anything, Gore-Pearce. And your word isn't of any value——"

"Perhaps you don't admit that you played a pretty low-down trick on Nipper—just before the big football match?" asked Claude. "It was a smart dodge, wasn't it, to injure him with a golf ball loosed from a catapult?"

"Didn't I tell you?" asked Gulliver excitedly. "I warned you, Forrest, that it was risky! Gore-Pearce must have spotted you with that catapult——"

"If you can't be quiet, I'll knock your head off!" snapped Forrest. "Who else knows about this, Gore-Pearce?"

"Nobody," replied Claude. "I've kept it strictly to myself. My dear fellow, I wouldn't dream of giving you away. Perish the thought! Don't forget that I'm your pal!"

He smiled into Forrest's eyes, but there was such gloating maliciousness behind that smile that Forrest was left with no doubt as to the kind of "pal" he had to deal with.

"I admire anybody clever," went on Gore-Pearce, as he made himself more comfortable. "And you really are awfully clever, Forrest. You'll have to let me compliment you upon your great spoof. One of the best dodges I've ever heard of."

"Go on!" said Forrest between his teeth.

"Not that I mind, of course," said Claude, shrugging his shoulders. "The more you

can spoof the chaps, the better. As far as I'm concerned, you can carry on with the good work for as long as you please. This idea, I mean, of pretending to be so upright and honourable—and yet being a pretty low-down sort of trickster. It requires a nerve to do what you're doing, Forrest. Congrats, old man!"

Bernard Forrest nearly choked. There was something indescribably menacing about Gore-Pearce's attitude—in spite of his smoothly-spoken words. And Forrest could not lose sight of the fact that Gore-Pearce knew a great deal more than he should have known.

"I can see what your game is," he said harshly. "Somehow, you've been spying on me——"

"Not at all," interrupted Claude. "What I have found out, I've found out quite by accident. But there's really no reason why we shouldn't be the best of friends. And surely there's nothing unusual in one friend making a loan to another? What about that tenner, Forrest?"

Forrest drew in a deep breath.

"Blackmail, eh?" he snarled.

Gore-Pearce frowned and rose to his feet.

"That's not a nice word," he said protestingly.

"It's the only word that fits the case!"

"If you use it again, I shall feel impelled by my high spirit of duty to pay a visit to the Head," said Gore-Pearce. "I shall have to tell him that it was you who set fire to that haystack——"

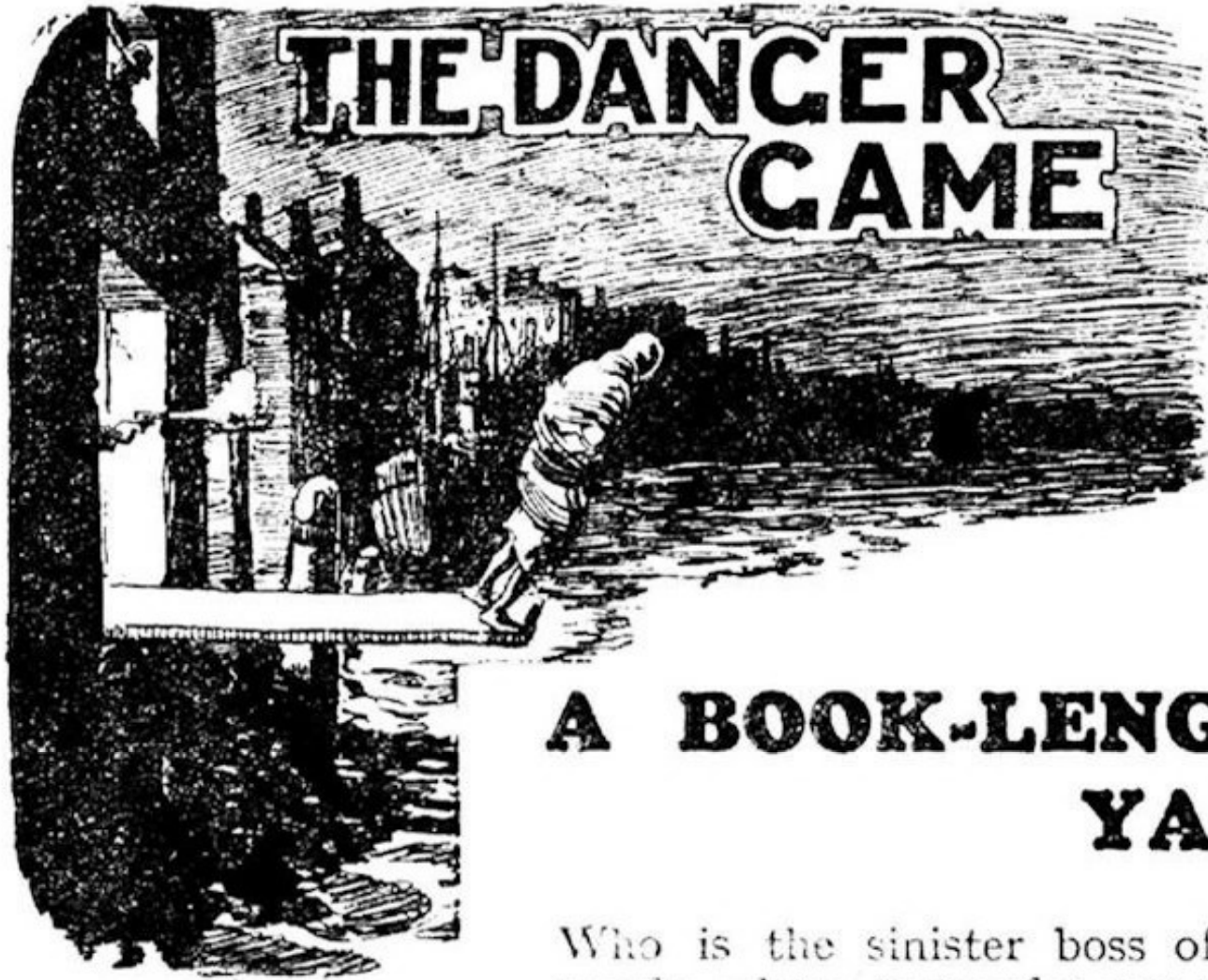
"You fool!" broke in Forrest. "What do you take me for? I'm not scared by your threats. My word is as good as yours, and I shall deny everything. You can't prove——"

"All the same, it'll be a bit awkward for you when the Head makes inquiries in Bannington," interrupted Gore-Pearce, confident in the strength of his position.

"What do you mean—inquiries in Bannington?"

"Weren't you supposed to have left your motor-bike to be repaired?" asked Claude cunningly. "What do you think the Head will think when he discovers that your machine hasn't been at the repairer's at all? And don't you think there'll be any traces in the wood? Marks of the tyres, for example, where the machine rested? My poor fellow, if Mr. Nelson Lee is put on this job—as he will be if I have a chat with the Head—you won't have a leg to stand on. As matters now stand, there'll be no inquiry, and so nothing will be found out. I'm a reasonable chap, and I wouldn't dream of interfering in an affair which doesn't concern me. I shan't breathe a word to another soul. Wouldn't it be a good idea, don't you think, to lend me a humble tenner?"

Forrest stood there, really and truly alarmed now. Matters would be awkward for him if there was an official inquiry. He had little or no confidence in Gulliver and Bell; put to the test, they would probably



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blab. Forrest was even beginning to regret that he had taken those two weaklings into his confidence. It was only because they had been his former friends that he had allowed them to share his secret.

In spite of all his fury, he was obliged to be polite to Claude Gore-Pearce.

"All right, we'll be frank," he said bluntly. "You know all this, Gore-Pearce, and you say you'll keep it to yourself. Why do you want money from me? Isn't your pater a millionaire? Doesn't he give you pots of cash?"

Gore-Pearce had been expecting this, and he was prepared.

"I've got some extra-special expenses," he said promptly. "As a matter of fact, my pater is so worried about the mater's illness that he forgot to leave me any money. And I don't want to bother him for some little time—not until the mater is definitely better. So if you can come across with that tenner

"I can only let you have five," broke in Forrest savagely.

"That's a pity," drawled Gore-Pearce. "I distinctly saw a ten-pound note in your pocket-book yesterday, when you were in the school shop. I know you haven't changed it, Forrest. Be a real pal, and lend it to me."

"You—you miserable, blackmailing black-guard—"

"I told you what I should do if you mentioned that word again," said Gore-Pearce, making for the door. "I've merely asked you for a loan, as one friend to another. All right! If you choose to insult me, I shall have to do my duty."

"Hold on!" panted Forrest desperately. "Here's your rotten tenner!"

He was nearly choking, and his hand trembled as he took out his pocket-book and removed the ten-pound note. Gore-Pearce took it and thrust it into his pocket.

"Thanks," he said as he made for the door. "That will do nicely, Forrest—to be going on with."

He smiled and went out.

CHAPTER 6.

Preparing for the Fair Visitors!

"IT worked like a dream," murmured Gore-Pearce exultantly.

He had gone next door into Study B; and he could hear an excited buzz of voices coming through the wall which separated his study from Forrest's. The Study A trio were evidently discussing the recent bombshell.

"I knew he'd shell out—he had to!" breathed Claude, fairly hugging himself. "By gad! And this won't be the only tenner, either! There'll be another one towards the end of the week—and more of them all through the term! I've got Forrest where I want him!"

If Gore-Pearce had not been in such extremities, owing to the harsh decree of his father, he might have hesitated to indulge in this evil practice. Ordinarily, he would have drawn the line at blackmail. For it was blackmail, pure and simple.

But the prospect of being without cash through the term had made him more than usually rascally.

Claude made a bit of a mistake later on when the Remove went up to bed. He tacked himself on to Forrest—much to Forrest's secret annoyance—and he became very agreeable. Forrest was compelled to accept these advances.

"Going to get up early in the morning, Forrest, old man?" asked Claude in the corridor. "More football practice, eh?"

"If it's fine I shall be up," said Forrest.

"You might give me a call," nodded Claude. "I have a fancy to get up, so that I can come and watch you. It'll be awfully interesting. Oh, and by the way, you've got a very special alarm clock in your bedroom, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Be a pal, and lend it to me," said Gore-Pearce genially. "If you do that, I'll be the first to wake, and I'll come along and call you. How's that?"

"I want the clock for myself, if it's all the same to you," replied Forrest, fighting down his fury.

"Rats!" grinned Gore-Pearce. "You'll lend me the clock, I know. In fact, I'll come along and fetch it."

He linked his arm with Forrest's, and together they went into the latter's bed-room.

"Something fishy about that," remarked Handforth darkly.

He was standing a little farther up the corridor, with Church and McClure. Nipper and Travers and a few others were also there, having a final word or two before they went into their respective rooms.

"I don't know about being fishy, Handy," said Nipper, "but it's certainly rather surprising to see Gore-Pearce so thick with Forrest."

"Forrest's pretending to be a good chap since he's come back," argued Handforth. "And we all know that Gore-Pearce is a rotter. The very fact that Forrest is friendly with him proves that there's something fishy going on."

"Perhaps Forrest has been exerting his good influence, dear old fellow," suggested Travers. "Perhaps Gore-Pearce is turning over a new leaf, what? Well, well! Can it be possible that two leopards are changing their spots?"

"The first one hasn't changed his spots yet," retorted Handforth. "I don't believe all this bunkum about Forrest. He's playing some deep game——"

"Oh, dry up!" interrupted Gresham. "Give Forrest a chance!"

"Hear, hear!"

"A chap who can play football as he does, and score goals, is all right," said somebody else.

And Handforth was ignored.

After Forrest's glorious football—and, indeed, he had been playing brilliantly lately—he was quite popular. Most of the fellows believed that he had definitely reformed, and they were only too eager to show him that they were willing to be friendly.

IN Gore-Pearce's bed-room, Arthur Hubbard and Teddy Long regarded Claude with some curiosity. Earlier in the evening he had been haggard and worried—presumably because of the illness of his mother. But now he had completely recovered, and he was in high good-humour.

"What's happened to you, Gore-Pearce?" asked Teddy Long inquisitively. "You've got pretty merry all of a sudden, haven't you? And why are you so thick with Forrest? I thought you hated him?"

"Forrest isn't so bad," replied Gore-Pearce, as he commenced undressing. "In fact, I believe I shall be quite friendly with him in future."

"You've changed your views pretty quickly," said Hubbard, staring.

"Well, as a matter of fact, he was rather decent this evening," said Claude, who felt that it would be advisable to make some sort of explanation. "He was so genuinely concerned when I told him about my mater's illness that I felt a bit touched. I realised that the fellow wasn't so bad as I had thought."

"You don't seem to be very worried about your mater now," said Hubbard pointedly.

"Oh, didn't I tell you?" asked Claude. "I had a 'phone call. I've heard that the mater has taken such a splendid turn for the better that all danger has passed. It's bucked me up no end."

THE ST. FRANK'S QUESTIONNAIRE!

Here are twelve testers for you, chums—questions which refer to St. Frank's and its members. Give them the "once-over," jot down the answers to those which you know, and then compare them with the correct list which will be given, together with another set of questions, next week.

- 1.—Which building near St. Frank's is known as Fort Resolute by the juniors?
- 2.—What is the name of the lady who once reigned at St. Frank's as temporary Head?
- 3.—Where is Chubby Heath's home?
- 4.—Who is the leading rotter among the juniors at the River House School?
- 5.—Which Moor View School girl is Johnny Onions' particular chum?
- 6.—Who are the occupants of Study No. 13 in the East House?
- 7.—How many young lady assistants are employed in the School Shop?
- 8.—What is the name of the Maths. expert?
- 9.—Who is the Swimming Instructor at St. Frank's?
- 10.—What is the name of the big talkie cinema in Bannington?
- 11.—Who is the usual centre-forward of the St. Frank's Junior Eleven?
- 12.—What is the name of Willy Handforth's pet rat?

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTIONS.

1. *Edgar Stanmore.* 2. *Mr. Arthur Fielding.* 3. *Mrs. Potter.* 4. *Mr. William Payett.* 5. *Dave Ascott and Georgie Glynn.* 6. *Walter Church and Arnold McClure.* 7. *Betty Barlowe.* 8. *Marmaduke.* 9. *Terence O'Grady.* 10. *Mr. Robert Hobb.* 11. *Arnold McClure.* 12. *Five miles.*

"So that's it," said Teddy. "We wondered why you were so chirpy. Hallo, you've dropped something."

"It's all right," said Gore-Pearce, as he picked up a piece of crisp paper. "It's only a tenner."

"A tenner?" gasped Teddy, eyeing it greedily.

"My pater gave it to me this afternoon," said Gore-Pearce in a careless voice. "By the way, that reminds me. I shall spend a good deal of this on the tea-party to-morrow. We're going to have something extra special in Study B, my sons!"

"Good egg!" said Teddy, licking his lips.

"Joan Tarrant and her friends are coming," went on Gore-Pearce genially. "We'll give those girls the best feed they've ever had. We'll take the shine out of Handforth and Nipper and those others, too. When I give a feed, it's got to be a good one."

GORE-PEARCE'S wasn't the only tea-party arranged for the Monday evening.

As it happened, the chums of Study H—Vivian Travers and Jimmy Potts—had issued a special invitation to Phyllis Palmer, Tessa Love, and Betty Barlowe. They knew nothing of Gore-Pearce's plans, of course, and it was only by chance that these other three girls should have been invited to St. Frank's for the same evening.

The next day Claude made himself excessively busy over the preparations. He saw no reason why he should not spend most of that tenner on this special tea-party. There was plenty more money to be

obtained from the same source! Forrest was one of those lucky fellows who could nearly always produce a fiver. Indeed, he had generally had a greater supply of pocket-money than Gore-Pearce.

Towards the afternoon the preparations were nearing completion. Study B was generally tidied up, flowers were obtained, and all sorts of titivations had been made. Hubbard and Long were kept busy during every one of their spare moments.

Gore-Pearce was having a complete feast provided by one of the swell confectioners in Bannington. The whole order was being delivered by a special van, and Gore-Pearce intended to "surprise the natives." He would show everybody how young lady guests should be treated.

There would be nothing so common as sardines, or tinned salmon, or sausages, or veal and ham pies, or anything like that. The caterers were supplying something out of the common.

And while the millionaire's son was going about boasting of his plans, Jimmy Potts and Travers were making more humble arrangements of their own in Study H. They did not despise hot sausages or eggs and bacon.

"There'll be six of us altogether," said Sic James Potts, Bart., as he sorted out the crockery. "I'm afraid we shall have to borrow a few cups, Travers."

"That'll be easy enough," replied Travers. "What do you think we'd better start with? Hot sausages or cheese omelette? If there's one thing I can do, it's make a cheese omelette."



The juniors and their fair visitors looked at the study in startled amazement and indignation. Everywhere and everything was covered with soot!

"Don't I know it?" grinned the school-boy baronet. "Your cheese omelette, old son, is a dream. I think we'd better start with hot sausages, and work up to the omelette later. Then, of course, we'll finish with cream buns and doughnuts and fancy cakes."

Stanley Waldo came in, cheerful and happy.

"Want any help here?" he asked genially. "As I'm to be a guest, I think I ought to lend a hand——"

"Guests aren't permitted to lend any hands, thanks," replied Vivian Travers. "If it's all the same to you, dear old fellow, we'll attend to the details."

They had especially invited Waldo because he was rather keen on Betty Barlowe. And it would be a good opportunity for him to get better acquainted with that young lady. Waldo was a comparative newcomer, and he was one of the best.

Strictly speaking, this feed in Study H was not being held so much for Waldo's benefit as for Travers.

The cool, level-headed Travers was very much attracted by Phyllis Palmer. Curiously enough, all his assurance and coolness deserted him when in the presence of the fair Phyllis. Quite recently he had been positively tongue-tied, and had been compelled to flee in complete disorder, much to Jimmy Potts' consternation.

So it was Jimmy's idea to invite Phyllis to tea. As she could hardly be invited alone, the other two girls were coming with her. And there was to be a regular little party in Study H.

"I hope you won't make a mess of things again, Travers," said Jimmy warningly. "You don't want to make an ass of yourself in front of Phyllis, you know."

"Heaven forbid!" said Travers with a shiver. "For the love of Samson! Don't remind me of what happened the other day! I'll be better this time, Jimmy, dear old fellow."

"Well, you ought to be, seeing that there'll be plenty of us," said Jimmy. "And once the ice is broken, everything will be all serene."

"I hear that Gore-Pearce is entertaining some of the girls this evening, too," said Travers.

"Joan Tarrant and her friends," said Jimmy with a sniff. "Joan Tarrant is just about Gore-Pearce's mark! He's going to swank, too, with a special feed from Bannington. But if I'm any judge, Phyllis and Tessa and Betty will prefer sausages fried over our own fire and served on odd plates, and your cheese omelettes straight

out of the frying-pan. They're the kind of girls who don't like any fuss."

"And the feed will be a lot better than Gore-Pearce's, too," agreed Travers.

On this occasion, such notable Moor View girls as Irene Manners and Mary Summers



The juniors and their fair visitors looked at the

and Doris Berkeley were rather out in the cold—which was an unusual state of affairs. But then, they were frequent visitors to St. Frank's, for they were always being invited by Nipper and Handforth and the others.

BERNARD FORREST was looking thoughtful immediately after lessons were over.

He retired into Study A with Gulliver and Bell, and these latter juniors were nervous and uneasy.



amazement and indignation. Everywhere and everything in a state of confusion!

"I expect Gore-Pearce will be along soon," said Gulliver. "He'll probably try to borrow money from me—or from Bell. The cad! It's your money he's using, Forrest, for that big feed of his."

Forrest grunted.

"Never mind Gore-Pearce now," he said. "I've got something else to talk about. Did you know that Phyllis Palmer is coming to tea in Study H?"

"I heard somebody saying something about it," replied Gulliver.

"Well, I've made up my mind to have Phyllis for myself," said Forrest coolly. "She's keen on me—thinks I'm no end of a good fellow with my football, and all that. I'm going to cut Travers out with Phyllis."

"You won't have much chance—after this evening," said Bell, shaking his head.

"We'll see," replied Forrest. "I've thought of a little idea, my sons, and I want one of you to help me. If Phyllis doesn't come to tea with us in this study, you can call me a Dutchman!"

CHAPTER 7.

Not Quite as Planned!

JIMMY POTTS surveyed the table approvingly. Everything was in readiness.

There were flowers in the centre, the cloth was snowy white, and there were various dishes of cakes and pastries dotted here and there.

The crockery was odd, perhaps, but what did that matter? And one or two of the forks were inclined to be out of true. Some of the fellows frequently used them as tin-openers, and it was only to be expected that they should get slightly out of shape. However, these were mere details.

"Pretty good, eh, Travers?" said Jimmy contentedly.

"First class," said Travers, nodding.

"Well, I think we'd better go along and wait in the Triangle," continued Jimmy. "Might as well have this door locked while we're gone. We don't want any of this stuff boned, do we? I hate being suspicious, but there's nothing like being on the safe side."

They went out, and locked the door after them. It was a very necessary precaution—especially with such fellows as Teddy Long about the place. Teddy would think nothing of popping in and helping himself to a large proportion of the good things. There were others, too, who would not hesitate to do the same thing.

Forrest happened to be chatting in the passage, with Gulliver and Bell, but he appeared to take no notice as Travers and Potts went along to the lobby. As soon as they had gone, however, he glanced at Gulliver and nodded.

"Go ahead, Gully!" he said briskly.

"Do you think it's safe to—"

"I've told you to go ahead," interrupted Forrest in a low voice.

This was no place for an argument. Gulliver already had his instructions, and it was perfectly idle for him to question what he had to do.

Forrest took Bell's arm, and they both went into the lobby, where Forrest made himself very agreeable to one or two other juniors who were already there.

Jimmy Potts and Vivian Travers were in the doorway, on the look-out for their guests. It was nearly time for the girls' arrival.

"I hear you're having visitors this evening," remarked Forrest in a friendly way, as he strolled up to the chums of Study H. "Lucky bounders!"

"Just a little party," said Jimmy, turning.

"Including Phyllis Palmer, eh?"

"Yes."

"Any room for another guest?" asked Forrest suggestively.

"No," replied Travers. "Awfully sorry, dear old fellow, but we're liable to be rather crowded as it is."

"To say nothing of the fact that you want the fair Phyllis for yourself, eh?" grinned Forrest. "Well, she's a corking girl. I don't mind admitting that I'm jealous."

Forrest had an object in staying here, chatting with Travers and Potts. He glanced at his watch, and then looked at Bell.

"Gully's a long time," he remarked. "He ought to have been back before this."

"Oh, give him a chance," said Bell. "You can't get to the village and back in two minutes, you know."

Evidently Forrest wanted to give out the impression that Gulliver had gone down to Bellton; and although nobody took any particular notice of his words, there was always the chance that some of the juniors would subconsciously absorb them. And it was just as well that Gulliver should have an alibi. For Gulliver, at this moment, was engaged upon a most curious mission!

"Hallo! Here they are!" said Jimmy Potts brightly.

"For the love of Samson!" muttered Travers, with a gulp.

"Remember! No backing out at the last minute!" warned Jimmy. "Phyllis won't bite you!"

The usually-cool Travers was looking uneasy and perturbed. He nervously fingered

his tie, and he just as nervously passed a hand round his collar, as though it was in danger of suffocating him.

"Hallo! I think I'm wrong," said Jimmy suddenly. "These aren't the right girls. It's Joan Tarrant and her friends."

An expression of relief came into Travers' eyes.

"Good!" he whispered. "I shall have a chance to steady myself."

"Ass!" said Potts.

Joan Tarrant came tripping lightly in with her two bosom friends, Bessie Groves and Hilda Smith. They were all attractive-looking, in a way, but somehow they did not seem so healthy and radiant as Irene Manners and her own large circle of friends. There was powder on their faces, and Joan's lips were most certainly "improved" by the application of a lipstick.

"Welcome, girls!" sang out Claude Gore-Pearce, hurrying forward from the rear of the lobby. "Just in time! Everything's ready for the big feast."

"Hallo, Claude!" said Joan Tarrant cheerily. "It's really *too* delicious of you to invite us like this."

"We're so awfully pleased," said Bessie Groves, simpering.

"It's too precious," said Hilda. "I hope you won't give us too much to eat, though. Don't forget that we've got to preserve our schoolgirlish slimness."

"To say nothing of 'that schoolgirl complexion,' what?" grinned Gore-Pearce. "Well, come along! Everything's waiting."

And flashing a triumphant glance at the other juniors, he escorted his guests along the Remove passage.

"Don't think much of those girls," said Forrest confidentially. "Too flighty for my liking. Too fond of lipstick and rouge. Nothing really genuine about them."

"That's funny," said Handforth, who had come into the lobby. "I thought they'd be just the kind of girls you'd revel in, Forrest. Just your type."

Forrest yawned.

"I'm not much interested in girls, anyhow," he said languidly. "They're too expensive—and too fussy. Phyllis Palmer is about the only girl I'd care to be really friendly with—and I don't seem to have much chance with her. Travers is stealing a march on me."

"Good luck to him!" said Handforth bluntly.

WHILE this was going on, Gulliver was upstairs. His mission, as already hinted, was a most curious one. Gulliver not only got out on to the roof—after sneaking up the attic stairs—but he prepared to take certain liberties with the chimney of Study H.

He knew which was the chimney—for Forrest, some time earlier, had casually walked

(Continued on page 25.)

The POPULAR
Every Tuesday 2d



Handforth undertakes to answer, in his own unique fashion, any question "N.L." readers care to submit to him. But, although of a certainty the results will be amusing and entertaining, the Editor takes no responsibility for their veracity. Write to Handforth, c/o the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, to-day.

"AJAX" (Bow). Thank you for your offer to buy my little sardine tin of a car for ten shillings. I presume you mean my Austin Seven. Sorry, but I can't accept. Your extremely liberal offer has literally staggered me. I'm still recovering from the effects. I haven't got big feet—at least, they're not extra large. I regard you as a fathead—and that's flat!

"SPARKS" (Bexhill-on-Sea) wants to know the difference between an orange and a lemon. The answer is a lemon.

"DARLING" (Southend). Yours was an exceedingly charming letter—if somewhat embarrassing. I'm sorry, but I cannot answer letters personally. Churchy says it's because I'm afraid to show readers my writing, but you don't believe such a harsh thing as that, do you, "Darling"? Ahem! I have two favourite colours—red and yellow. So if you can arrange to write me again on red notepaper covered with yellow spots I shall be happy.

"PUZZLED" (Keighley). What's the idea of sending me that confetti? It caused quite a rumpus in Study D, blow you! I opened your letter during tea, and all the confetti fell out of the envelope into the jam, the sardines, and some of it even went into Church's tea. He was no end annoyed, and I regret to say I was compelled to—well, to rebuke him. I think your riddle rubbish: "If it takes a man a week to work a fortnight, how much calico will it take to make a hypopotamus a flannel waistcoat?" What's a "hypopotamus," anyway? You've got me puzzled there, "Puzzled."

HAROLD FINCH (Brixham) asks why all gates have five bars. I dispute that fact. After Fatty Little leans against a gate a one, or two, or three-bar gate is invariably left. Harold also inquires as to what kind of motor-bikes Travers and Nipper possess. Oh, just the ordinary kind, you know—those with two wheels and all that sort of thing!

"SCOTTY" (Eastwood). Here's another of you asking me dotty riddles. "How long would it take to sandpaper an elephant down to a whippet?" Send me along an elephant and a few tons of sandpaper and I'll let you know when I've done the deed.

RALPH J. HIRSCHMANN (Chiswick). There's no need to be nervous when writing to me, old man. I'm as gentle as a cooing dove. Glad to hear that your father likes my Trackett Grim yarns, and pleased to hear that he nearly killed himself with laughter at reading them!

"KID" (Wood Green). My face isn't funny, and I'm not related with donkeys. You can thank your lucky stars that you're a girl. If you weren't—

LEN (Enfield). Thanks muchly for your volume of questions—and I don't think. In answer to questions No's. 1, 5, 6, 9, 12, 14—no; No's. 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11—yes; No. 4—go and eat coke; No. 13—gr-r-r-r! Now run away and play marbles before I get on your track.

"???" (Leicester). A caterpillar has as many legs again as half. Work that out and I defy you to find it incorrect. I haven't scored any goals whilst at St. Frank's. If you'd only read the Old Paper intelligently you'd discover that my job is to stop goals—not score 'em! You're a chump!

E. O. HARE (Islington) tells me he thinks it's funny that we should have the same initials. I see no humour at all in the similarity. In fact, I consider it a "nerve" on his part. This reader then goes on to say: "Still, a brainy chap and a silly ass can have the same initials. I suppose you know who is the silly ass?" Of course I do. And I thank you for the compliment, and congratulate you on being so candid concerning your own shortcomings, old man.

EDWARD OSWALD.

THE WHIP HAND!

(Continued from page 24.)

into Study H and had put some damp shavings on the fire. Nobody had seen him do this, for it had only taken him a moment.

Outside, Gulliver and Bell had been watching, and they had easily marked the chimney which had emitted a sudden cloud of dense smoke.

Gulliver was at this chimney now. He wasn't at all happy in this task, but it was quite a simple one, and it would be soon over. He produced from his pocket a small cocoa tin, and he handled it very gingerly.

Attached to the tin was a long length of string, and sticking out of one end of the tin was a little fuse. Gulliver crouched low against the chimney, struck a match, shielded it against the wind, and applied the flame to the end of the fuse. It sizzled at once.

Then, without wasting any time, Gulliver gently tossed the cocoa tin upwards, and it dropped into the mouth of the chimney. He paid out the string, lowering that tin farther and farther down the chimney—until, perhaps, it was half-way between the roof and the fireplace of Study H.

Then Gulliver waited.

Suddenly there came a sort of puff. It was hardly audible, and he might not have noticed it unless he had been waiting and listening and watching. A burst of soot

came shooting upwards, to go forth on the wind. There was a certain amount of acrid smoke, too, but beyond this nothing at all alarming had happened.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" muttered Gulliver. "Easier than I thought."

He rapidly pulled the cocoa tin up, and when he examined it he found that the lid had been completely blown off—although it was still attached to the tin by a piece of wire, and hanging loose.

Bernard Forrest was no bungler, and he had no intention of leaving any clue behind in the shape of a loose tin lid. By the time Gulliver got down and sneaked out by the back way, there was nothing to indicate what he had been up to.

"HERE he is—at last!" said Bell eagerly.

A figure approached the Ancient House steps. It was Albert Gulliver, and he was wearing his overcoat and cap, and he had a parcel under his arm. Forrest eyed him with complete satisfaction.

"Everything O.K.?" he asked calmly.

"Yes, of course," replied Gulliver. "I was delayed a bit—"

"Well, never mind," said Forrest. "Let's be getting along to the study. I can just do with some tea now? Did you get those special cakes from the village?"

"You bet I did," replied Gulliver.

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They leisurely strolled off, but paused at the other end of the lobby. Forrest had no intention of leaving the other juniors until Phyllis and her friends had arrived. He had a very special object in this—for he wished to establish a cast-iron alibi for himself and his own pals.

"Here they are!" said Jimmy Potts. "There can't be any mistake this time, Travers."

Three other girls had appeared, and Vivian Travers caught his breath in and turned pale. On the second, he recognised one of the girls as Phyllis Palmer. She was slightly in advance of the others, and her wavy hair was blowing about in the October wind. Travers was quite certain that no other girl in the world had such a dainty, graceful figure. Tessa Love and Betty Barlowe were all right, but they couldn't even be mentioned in the same breath as Phyllis.

"Keep your pecker up, old man!" whispered Potts.

Travers clenched his fists, and tried to fight down the wave of nervousness which had attacked him. It was really extraordinary how feeble and weak he became whenever Phyllis approached. It was all the more remarkable because Travers was such a cool customer with everybody else.

Stanley Waldo was there, of course, and he eagerly went forward to meet Betty and to shake hands with her. He set Travers a good example. Not that Travers took advantage of it. He stood there, hot and flustered.

"Sorry we're a bit late," apologised Phyllis, as she came up. "It's all my fault. Tessa and Betty was ready, but I kept them waiting while I made an alteration to my frock."

She glanced from Jimmy Potts to Travers, and then she nodded cheerily to Handforth and the other juniors who were in the lobby.

"You've just come at the right time," declared Jimmy. "Isn't that so, Travers?"

"Eh? For the love of— Oh, rather!" stammered Travers. "It's awfully nice of you to come, Miss Phyllis."

He looked at her through a kind of mist, and her blue eyes nearly rendered him helpless.

"Shall we leave our coats here, or take them to the study?" asked Phyllis.

"Glorious weather, isn't it?" said Travers enthusiastically, having apparently forgotten that the wind was cold, the skies grey, and that a few drops of rain had been falling. "If you'll come with us, dear old fellow—I mean, dear old— That is, of course—I mean—"

He broke off, more bewildered than ever. All his good resolutions were forgotten. In Phyllis's presence he was as jellified as ever.

It was Jimmy Potts who saved the situation.

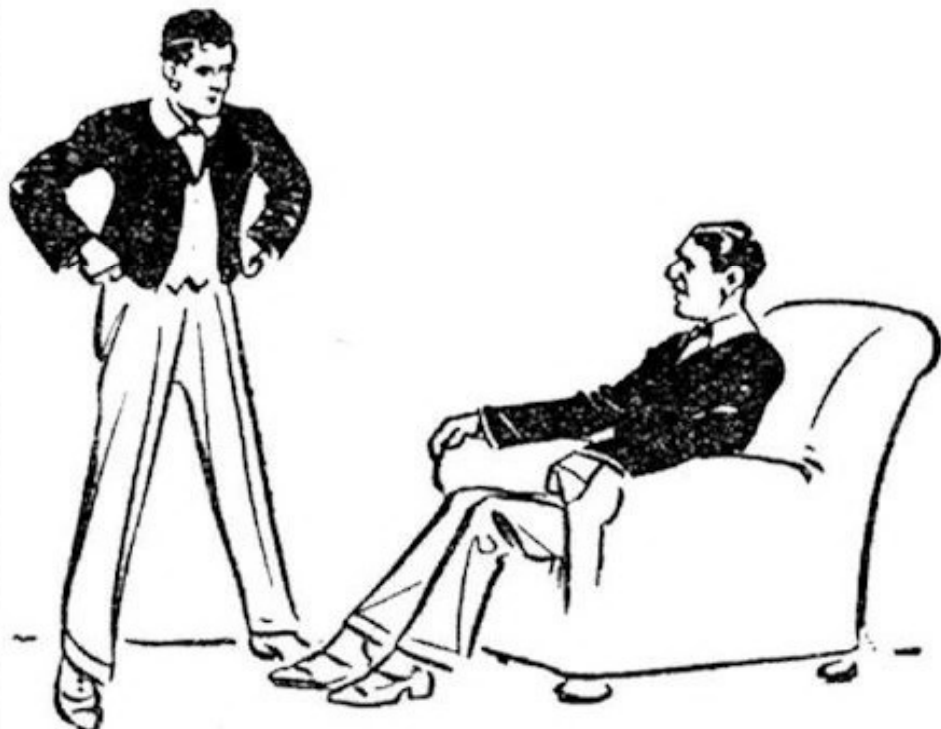
"Well, come along," he said briskly. "Tea's all ready. At least, nearly ready.

We want you girls to superintend the frying of the sausages—"

"Sausages!" said Phyllis with relish. "How glorious!"

"Lead me to them!" said Tessa firmly.

They all went across the lobby, and Jimmy Potts only subconsciously noticed that Forrest & Co. were just ahead of them in the Remove passage. Forrest, curiously enough, made no attempt to come forward and make himself pleasant to Phyllis. He waved to



her, it was true, and shouted a cheery greeting, but that was all.

Study H was reached. Jimmy hastily put the key in the lock and turned it. Then he flung the door wide open and stood aside.

"Walk in, ladies," he invited with a bow. "And if the look of this groaning board doesn't surprise you, it ought to!"

Without doubt the groaning board surprised the fair visitors. They stood in the doorway, gazing at it in bewilderment and consternation.

"Why, whatever's happened?" asked Betty Barlowe, turning a horrified face to the two juniors.

"Cheese it!" grinned Jimmy. "We've fixed the study up like this especially for your benefit. Aren't you pleased?"

He was referring to the flowers, and to the other little decorations which had been expressly provided for the feminine company. But Betty Barlowe was not thinking of the flowers.

She and the other two girls were gazing at a table that was smothered in black masses of soot—they were gazing at a study which was equally smothered in black masses of soot!

CHAPTER 8.

Gore-Pearce's Opportunity!

"IS anything wrong?" asked Jimmy Potts in wonder.

"I—I think so," said Phyllis gently. "I'm sure you couldn't have prepared the study for us—like *this!*"

"But we did," said Travers, forcing himself to speak. "We thought you'd be rather

pleased— Eh? Why, what the— Great Samson! Something's happened!"

He was staring in, and he was so startled that he completely recovered his normal composure in a flash.

"Everything's ruined!" he ejaculated in alarm. "Jimmy! Look here! The whole place is smothered with soot! I've never seen such a mess in all my life!"

Jimmy Potts gazed at the scene, and he groaned.

"After all the trouble we took, too!" he said regretfully. "My only sainted aunt! How in the name of all that's marvellous did it happen?"

The study was in a shocking condition. Not only was the feed ruined, but it was impossible to venture into the room at all. The soot was all over the floor, on the chairs, and the rest of the furniture. There was a black film smothering everything.

"Must have been an accident!" said Jimmy indignantly. "It's a pity they can't keep the chimneys properly swept. When we left the study everything was all right. And nobody could have been in, because the door was locked."

"I expect a sudden gust of wind went down the chimney and dislodged a big collection of soot," said Travers. "Just our luck, of course, when we had the study so smart."

"What a pity!" said Phyllis, with real concern.

Never for one moment did any of them suspect that the condition of Study H was due to a trick on the part of Bernard Forrest. Hadn't Forrest been in the lobby all the time? Bell had been with him, and Gulliver had only just come in from the village. At least, all the appearances went to prove that he had just come in from the village.

Nobody would guess that Gulliver, by Forrest's instigation, had lowered a special kind of "bomb" down the chimney of Study H. The sudden bursting of that home-made bomb had caused the soot to go tumbling down the chimney, to spread out all over the room, ruining the feast and making the apartment uninhabitable.

"Anything wrong here?"

It was Forrest who spoke. He lounged up with an expression of concern on his face. Apparently he had arrived quite by chance. Yet in reality he had selected this moment deliberately.

"Something's happened to our beastly chimney," said Jimmy Potts, with a snort. "There must have been about a ton of soot in it, and it's suddenly fallen. Our study's in a hopeless mess now."

"Oh, I say!" ejaculated Forrest, as he glanced in. "What a rotten disappointment, you fellows. Rather rough on the girls, too."

"Never mind," said Betty Barlowe. "Accidents will happen, you know."

"I don't know what we're going to do about tea," said Travers, worried. "We had everything prepared—"

"Can't keep the young ladies waiting, of course," put in Forrest. "As it happens, tea's all ready in my study. What about it, girls? You're perfectly welcome to come along, you know. I shall be delighted."

"Thanks very much, but we couldn't think of it," said Phyllis coldly.

"But you can't have your tea here—"

"We were invited to come by these boys, and we shall leave it to them to entertain us," said Phyllis. "We shan't worry much if we don't get any tea at all."

"What about it, you chaps?" asked Forrest, glancing at Jimmy Potts and Travers. "You're not going to let these girls go hungry, are you? Everything's ready in Study A. I think it would be only right if you released them and handed them over to me. You can't have tea ready for a long time yet. Besides, you haven't any study now."

Jimmy breathed hard. Forrest's suggestion, on the face of it, was reasonable enough. If he, Jimmy, refused to release the girls, and if Travers supported him, it would look boorish. But Jimmy Potts knew well enough that Forrest was seizing this opportunity to "bag" the fair guests.

"Oh, well—" began Jimmy.

But just at that moment Claude Gore-Pearce came along, and he quickly grasped the difficulties of the situation. He saw the sooted study, and he had heard Forrest's invitation. He was cool and calm. Here was a chance for him to exert his newly-found power.

"Just a minute, Forrest," he said briskly. "Sorry about you girls being diddled out of your tea. Why not come to Study B? There's something really extra-special there. You're welcome—"

"Confound your nerve!" broke in Forrest. "I've already invited these girls into my study."

"Please don't quarrel about it," said Phyllis.

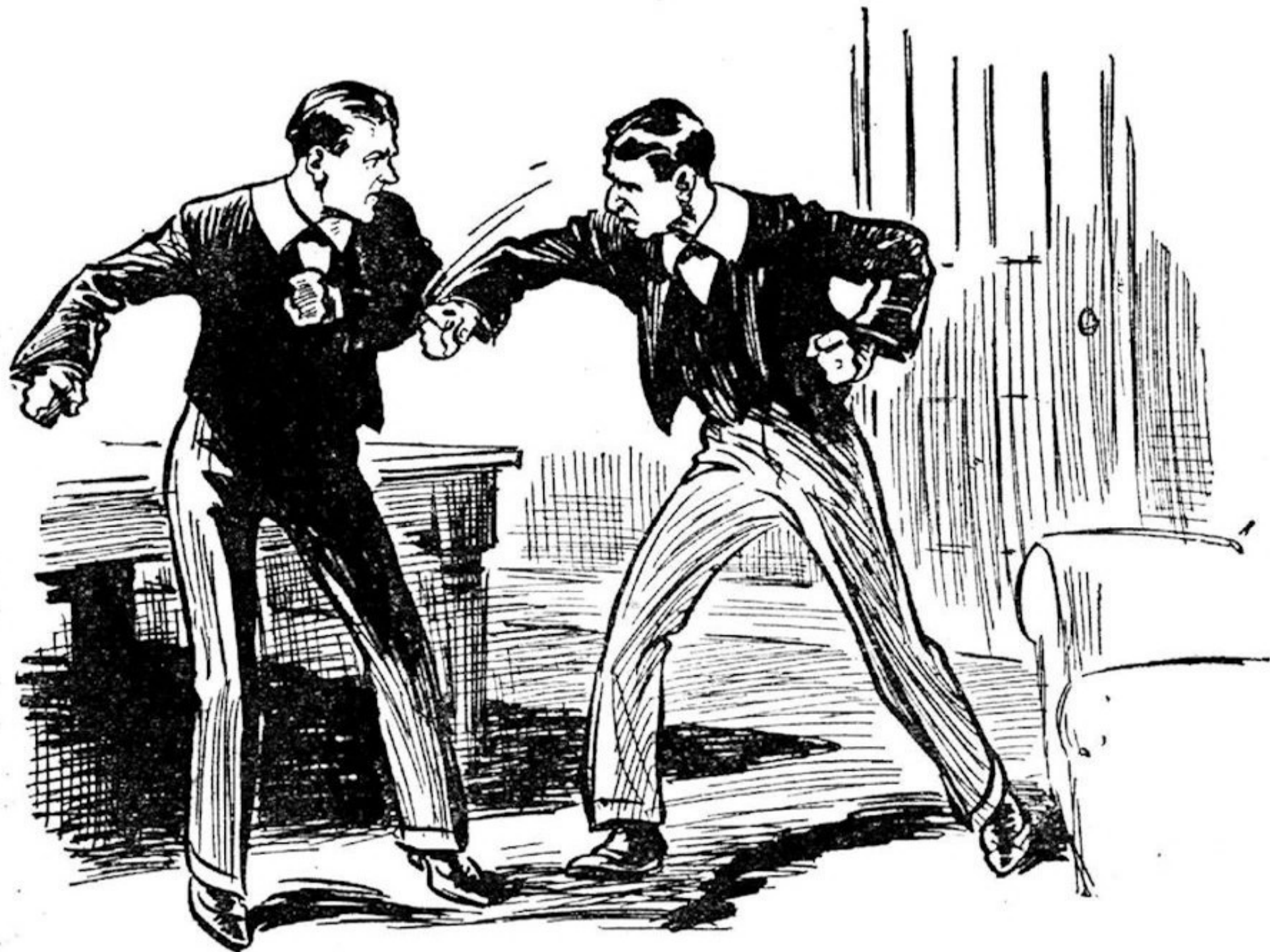
"Well, this fellow shouldn't push himself forward!" snapped Forrest. "It's like his infernal cheek—"

"No cheek intended," broke in Gore-Pearce. "I'm perfectly willing to leave it to the girls. I'm having a party in my study, in any case. Joan Tarrant and her friends are there already. The feed is a tip-top one, specially supplied by a big Bannington caterer. There's heaps more than we can eat, and you're perfectly welcome to join in, girls."

Phyllis and her friends hardly knew what to say.

"Let's make a jolly party of it," went on Claude, with a triumphant glance at Forrest. "The more the merrier, eh?"

"Thanks all the same, Gore-Pearce, but we can look after our own guests," said Travers deliberately. "I'll admit there'll be a delay, and we shall have to conjure up



Gore-Pearce brought his arm round and delivered a blow which Forrest had no difficulty in warding off. "So you want to fight, do you?" snarled Forrest. "All right!" And next moment the two were fighting furiously.

some more grub, but it won't take very long——"

"Why bother?" asked Gore-Pearce. "The girls are perfectly welcome to come to my spread. You fellows can come, too. I invite you all, of course."

"Oh, I see!" said Phyllis, glancing at her hosts.

"Thanks, Gore-Pearce," said Jimmy awkwardly. "But we really don't want to barge in on your own party——"

"I'll admit it'll be a bit of a squash, but who cares?" said Gore-Pearce. "I'm sure that Forrest won't mind. I'd invite him, only I'm afraid there won't be room. Everything all right?"

"No, it isn't all right," said Forrest, striving hard to keep his voice level. "I was the first with this invitation——"

"But I'm quite sure that you won't mind if I take this little crowd to my study," said Gore-Pearce, looking Forrest straight in the eye. "It's hard luck on them to have their own tea-party ruined. So why shouldn't I come to the rescue?"

Bernard Forrest writhed. That look of Claude's had been full of meaning. He intended to convey that he held the whip hand, and that he was prepared to use it!

OF course, there was not much hesitation. And Claude Gore-Pearce soon went off with his added guests. Neither Jimmy Potts nor Vivian Travers could think of any valid excuse for refusing the invitation. Since they were included, they could hardly refuse to let Phyllis and her friends go to Study B.

The merry meal, as originally planned, was impossible. So Claude Gore-Pearce's suggestion was really a sensible one, and the chums of Study H were more or less compelled to accept.

Bernard Forrest, to the untold joy of Claude, was baffled. But even Claude did not realise the full extent of Forrest's discomfiture.

For Forrest had deliberately plotted to get these three girls into his own study, so that he could entertain them and make himself very agreeable to Phyllis. All his scheming had been for nothing—owing to Gore-Pearce's unexpected intervention.

The big party in Study B was a roaring success.

Gore-Pearce was on his best behaviour, and Travers and Potts could find no fault with his conduct as host.

There was plenty of food for all, and everybody had a ripping time. Phyllis &

Co. were not particularly keen on Joan Tar-rant and those other two girls; but, after all, this was no occasion for the display of personal dislikes.

Travers got on famously with Phyllis. He found, after the ice was broken, that he could speak to her freely and without any nervousness. In fact, Travers was very grateful to Gore-Pearce—for he realised that things had been made much easier for him all round. That quiet, jolly little party in Study H would have been all very well, but Travers would have been far more nervous. Here, amidst all this noise and laughter, he found himself in possession of all his old assurance.

So, before that party broke up, he was on the friendliest possible terms with Phyllis, and he counted the evening a complete success.

LATER, after the girls had gone, Gore-Pearce strolled along to Study A. Gulliver and Bell were not there, but Bernard Forrest was. Gore-Pearce had left Hubbard and Long hard at work in Study B, clearing up the general litter.

"Hallo, Forrest!" he said, as he went into the little room and closed the door. "Something on your mind? You look a bit seedy."

Forrest crossed to the door and put his back to it. An expression of concentrated malevolence had come into his eyes.

"What have you come here for?" he demanded, speaking in a low, tense tone. "There's nobody else within earshot, so we can speak to one another straight from the shoulder. You low-down cad! What is it this time?"

"Not so much abuse, please," said Gore-Pearce, frowning. "Don't forget, my dear Forrest, that I hold the whip hand. I believe you're feeling peeved because I had those girls in my study——"

"I suppose you thought it was very smart, eh?" put in Forrest. "You thought you'd done a very clever thing."

"Well, it wasn't so bad," said Claude, grinning. "I used your money for that feed, and then barred you from it. It might not have been clever, but it was very satisfactory to me."

"You—you blackguard——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Gore-Pearce curtly. "If we're going to have a slanging match, I can say a few things, Forrest! What kind of a hero do you call yourself? If I'm a blackguard, what are you? Why, you're not fit to lick my boots! You're pretending to be a mighty fine fellow, and yet all the time you're a snake in the grass. Scheming and plotting and laughing up your sleeve. Setting haystacks on fire!"

"Shut up, confound you!"

"I'll shut up when I please," said Gore-Pearce contemptuously. "Oh, you're a mighty fine footballer, I know! So fine that you get your place in the Junior Eleven by crocking Nipper in about the dirtiest manner anybody could think of! The other fellows

are fooled, but I'm not. And as I know your little game, I'm going to make you pay. Fortunately, I'm not thin-skinned."

He lounged over to the easy-chair and sprawled in it. He did not quite understand the dangerous light in Bernard Forrest's eyes. He took it for granted that he had this fellow under his thumb, and he was not hesitating to apply the pressure. It never occurred to him that his victim might possibly turn on him.

Gore-Pearce felt that he was on velvet. His father had stopped his supplies of pocket-money, but that didn't matter now.

COMING NEXT WEEK! ~~~~~



Here was another supply. Forrest would be compelled to shell out—again and again. Claude looked upon Forrest as an unprincipled young scoundrel. He certainly did not realise that his own conduct was unscrupulous and wicked.

"No reason why we shouldn't be pals," he remarked leisurely. "At least, we can pretend to be pals. I hate arguments, Forrest. Oh, by the way, I'd like another fiver, if you don't mind."

Forrest laughed harshly.

"You'll get no more money out of me!" he retorted grimly.

"You'd better be sensible——"

"That's just what I am going to be!" said Forrest. "I haven't any money, bar a few shillings. You've already skinned me."

Gore-Pearce sat up, rather startled.

"Don't tell lies!" he snapped. "You've got plenty of money, Forrest, and I'm going to have some. Before I leave this study you'll hand me a fiver."

"If you get a fiver out of me this evening you'll be a magician," said Forrest, between his teeth. "There's one other thing I want to say, Gore-Pearce. Get out of this place before I kick you out!"

Something in his tone brought Claude to his feet.

"Oh, so you're jibbing, are you?" he said savagely.

"Yes, I am jibbing," said Forrest. "I

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ought to have jibbed at first. The only way to treat a blackmailer is to defy him. I was an arrant fool to give way to you yesterday. I'm not giving way any more."

He spoke bitterly, and Gore-Pearce took a step nearer to him.

"Do you want me to go to the Head?" he asked ominously. "Do you want me to tell Dr. Nicholls that it was you who set fire to that haystack the other night?"

Forrest did not move a hair.

"Go to the Head!" he said defiantly. "Go on—I dare you! There's no proof against me—only your rotten word. And who'll take that?"

"If there's an inquiry, you won't be able to save yourself," said Gore-Pearce fiercely. "You know it, Forrest! And then there's

that affair of the golf ball. Everything will come out if you compel me to go to the Head."

Bernard Forrest nodded.

"Yes—everything," he said significantly. "That's why you daren't go."

"What do you mean, confound you?"

"I mean that if I get the sack, you'll get the sack," said Forrest. "You had ten quid from me yesterday—for keeping your dirty mouth shut. Oh, I've got you in a corner now, Gore-Pearce! You daren't peach against me, and I daren't peach against you. We're quits."

"Why, you silly fool—"

"And you won't get another cent out of me, either," went on Forrest. "My word's as good as yours. You tell the Head all you know—and I'll tell him all I know."

Claude Gore-Pearce was startled—staggered. He had never anticipated any such stand as this. His victim was defying him.

"What about Gulliver and Bell?" demanded Claude, playing what he felt to be a trump card. "Do you think they'll stand up against the Head's cross-examination? Do you think they will, Forrest? Why, you idiot, they'll collapse at once! They won't last five minutes!"

"Their word is no better than mine—not so good!"

"What does that matter?" sneered Claude. "As soon as the Head gets them on the carpet they'll blab. Gulliver will admit that he helped you in that golf ball affair, when Nipper was injured. And both of them will give you away about that haystack. As for me, I don't care a rap what you say. How can you prove that I took ten quid from you?"

It was the crucial moment. Undoubtedly Claude Gore-Pearce held the whip hand. If it ever did come to a crisis, Forrest would be lost. He knew it, and he had no misconceptions about the loyalty of Gulliver and Bell. At the first sign of trouble they would betray him without compunction.

But it was now that Bernard Forrest proved his strength. Gore-Pearce was weaker than he, and in this tussle Forrest had all the advantage.

He set his teeth. Perilous though the situation was, he grimly made up his mind to stand firm. If he knuckled under again, he would never be free from Gore-Pearce's clutches. It was now or never!

CHAPTER 9.

When Rogues Fall Out!

SOMETHING in Bernard Forrest's expression made Gore-Pearce uneasy. The leader of Study A was looking quietly confident; there was no alarm in his eyes. He seemed to know instinctively that he was safe.

"It's no good, Gore-Pearce—you haven't scared me," he said contemptuously. "I'll give you just ten seconds to get out of this

study. If you haven't gone by then, I'll kick you out!"

"If I go out of this study without that five quid, I'll go straight to the Head!" threatened Gore-Pearce.

"Bunkum!"

"I tell you——"

"Rot!" sneered Forrest. "You wouldn't dare to go to the Head. And I'll tell you straight out that you won't get another penny out of me. I'm finished with you!"

"I'll tell all the fellows what a fraud you are!"

"Tell them!" panted Forrest, clenching his fists. "Do you think they'll believe you? What kind of a standing have you in the Remove? Nobody will take any notice of your rotten word!"

"We'll see about that!" roared Gore-Pearce, alarm and consternation in his eyes. "By gad! You'll wish you hadn't resisted me!"

He was thunderstruck. Until this hour he had taken it for granted that his supply of pocket-money was assured for the rest of the term. He would share Bernard Forrest's! But Forrest, having foolishly parted with ten pounds, had no intention of parting with any further sums. He had made that definitely clear. And Gore-Pearce, of course, was thoroughly alarmed. He had an idea that Forrest was bluffing, and that if he only persisted the bluff would fail. Yet there was something remarkably significant about Forrest's movements when he went to the door, flung it open, and pointed out into the corridor.

"Time's up!" he said curtly.

"Shut that door, you idiot!" gasped Gore-Pearce. "Everybody will hear us talking——"

"I don't care who hears us talking!" interrupted Forrest. "We're not going to do any talking, anyhow. You're going out of this room on your feet—or on your neck! You can make your own choice!"

He did not look particularly dangerous, but he was boiling with inward fury. Gore-Pearce, on the other hand, was outwardly and palpably in a rage. He advanced menacingly, his fists clenched.

"You'll put me out, will you?" he jeered. "Try it! And as soon as you lay your filthy hands on me, I'll let everybody know what you really are! I'll show you up in your true colours!"

Forrest reached forward. He seized Gore-Pearce by the shoulder and propelled him towards the door, but Claude slammed it to. The next second he brought his right fist round and delivered a clumsy blow which Forrest had no difficulty in warding off.

"So you want to fight, do you?" snarled Forrest. "All right! We'll fight! You've brought things to a head, my beauty, and now you'll get something you don't relish!"

Crash!

With deadly effect he brought his left into play, and Gore-Pearce received it on the point of the chin. He went back howling, staggering against the table which crashed over on to its side.

"Come on!" said Forrest with relish.

He whipped off his jacket, and in the same second Gore-Pearce leapt forward, hoping to take advantage of the fact that his adversary was momentarily helpless.

He nearly succeeded, too. Only in the nick of time did Forrest wrench his arm free from his coat sleeve. He put it up to protect himself, and he succeeded in warding off the blow.

"I'll give you one more chance!" panted Gore-Pearce. "If you'll hand over that fiver——"

"I've decided to hand over something else!" broke in Forrest coolly. "Something you won't like, Gore-Pearce!"

He felt completely at ease now. He knew exactly what he should do, and he had no fear of the consequences. In his desperation, an idea had come to him, and he marvelled that he had not thought of it earlier.

And when it came to fighting, Forrest was a much better man than Gore-Pearce. He was quite good at the noble art, and he possessed plenty of determination and pluck. Rascal though Forrest was, he was no coward.

Gore-Pearce rushed at him blindly, half-crazy with rage and disappointment. The next moment the pair were fighting like tigers in the middle of the study. Forrest deliberately held his hand. He felt that he could have delivered a knock-out blow during the first minute; but he did not do so. He had no desire to finish the scrap so tamely.

"You're mad—absolutely mad!" gasped Gore-Pearce as he backed away, one of his eyes already swelling. "All this din will attract the fellows!"

"Good!"

"They'll come in here, and they'll want to know what's happening!"

"I'll tell them quickly enough," said Forrest. "I'm waiting for them to come. I want them to come!"

"If they do come, I'll tell them——"

"Tell them what you like!" broke in Forrest serenely. "You needn't think they'll interfere. And I'm going to have the satisfaction of thrashing you."

"I tell you you're mad!" said the millionaire's son, aghast.

"Perhaps I am—but time will show," said Forrest. "Now then, look out for squalls! That other eye of yours needs closing, I think."

Crash! Biff! Slam!

Forrest leapt forward, and his fists did tremendous damage. Gore-Pearce, backing away, found it impossible to stand against that onslaught. He clutched at the table, and in doing so pulled off the cloth, sending a pile of crockery crashing to the floor.

"WHAT'S all that noise?" asked Nipper, pausing at the end of the Remove passage.

"Sounds like a bit of trouble somewhere," said Harry Gresham. "Probably coming from Study D."

"Poor old Church and McClure!" said Nipper, shaking his head. "They're going through the mill again! Handy's a good chap, but he's inclined to be violent."

At that moment, however, the door of Study D opened, and Handforth himself came out, with Church and McClure in his immediate rear. They did not look in the least warlike.

"Who's being slaughtered?" asked Handforth with interest.

"Oh, it's not you, then?" asked Nipper, coming along the passage. "We thought you were having a little argument with Church and Mac."

Thud! Crash! Clatter!

"It's coming from Study A!" said Gresham in astonishment.

"Come on!" sang out Handforth.

A crowd had collected by this time, and Handforth was the first to reach Study A. He flung open the door, and stood there staring.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "Look at this, you chaps! Forrest's having a mill with Gore-Pearce!"

"Sounds like a battle scene in a talkie!" grinned Jimmy Potts.

"Look out, Gore-Pearce!" yelled Handforth. "You silly ass! Why didn't you dodge? Whoa! You've got a chance to get in with your right— No, not like that, you idiot!"

Gore-Pearce was fighting desperately, swaying from one side of the study to the other. Half the furniture was already upset, and the whole place was in a state of hopeless confusion.

"Here, hold my coat!" said Handforth excitedly.

"No fear!" ejaculated Church. "Grab him, Mac!"

Handy was grabbed.

"Let me go!" roared Handforth. "What's the idea, you fatheads?"

"This is not your fight, Handy—and you mustn't join in," said Nipper. "Whose side are you going to take, anyhow?"

"Gore-Pearce's, of course!"

"There's nothing to choose between them," put in Nipper. "In any case, Handy, you can't interfere."

"But Gore-Pearce is getting the worst of it!" protested Handforth. "Forrest's a rotter, and this proves it! I expect these fatheads have been gambling, or something, and they're scrapping over the result of the game."

Nipper groaned.

"What a fellow you are, Handy, for jumping to conclusions—without the slightest evidence," he said. "It's nothing to do with us what the quarrel is about. All the same,

I think we ought to stop it. There'll be some prefects along soon—"

"Give me two minutes more!" put in Forrest, half-turning his head. "I haven't finished with this cad yet!"

"It's a jolly good thing that the girls have gone," said Jimmy Potts. "My only hat! It would have been awkward if they had been on the premises still."

"Why?" asked Handforth, staring. "Don't you think the girls know that we have fights every now and again? They're not so blind!"

"All the same, it's just as well that they have gone back to their own school," said Nipper. "By Jove! This scrap is a pretty tough one! I'm not sure that we oughtn't to separate these chumps! They'll do themselves some serious damage!"

"The more, the better," said Handforth promptly.

He was disappointed because he could not join in himself. There was nothing that Edward Oswald liked better than a good, hearty fight. He would join in one at the least provocation.

"They evidently mean to have it out," said Nipper. "Some of you chaps had better scout up and down the passage. If any prefects come along, pass the word down, and we'll be ready."

"Don't trouble," said Forrest. "I've just finished."

Gore-Pearce was fighting frantically now—for he knew that he was beaten. Forrest had been playing with him; deliberately leading him on until this crowd of fellows appeared. Incredibly enough, it seemed that Bernard Forrest was anxious to have the audience.

In a last despairing effort, Gore-Pearce pulled himself together, rushed in, and aimed at Forrest's face. Forrest contemptuously swept the blow aside, steadied himself, and sent his own left fist crashing upon Claude's nose.

"Ow!" howled the millionaire's son, sitting down with great violence. The blood streamed from his nose, and he looked a battered wreck. His collar had vanished, his waistcoat was torn and tattered. He sat on the floor, groaning.

"Had enough?" asked Forrest scornfully.

Forrest himself was hardly marked. He had delivered heavy punishment, but had escaped any himself. Few of Gore-Pearce's wildly aimed blows had got home. On the other hand, Forrest had hit just when and where he pleased.

"Sorry to have caused all this disturbance, you fellows," said Bernard, looking round. "But I really had to give Gore-Pearce a hiding. He asked for it. If I had allowed him to escape punishment, I should never have forgiven myself."

"What's he done, anyway?" asked Hubbard hotly. "Gore-Pearce is in my study, and you've no right to batter him about like this!"

"Don't take any notice of Forrest!" panted Gore-Pearce wildly. "He's a fraud! He's a trickster! He's been fooling you ever since he came back."

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Handforth, looking round at the crowd.

"Yes, and Gore-Pearce has evidently been taking notice of you," said Forrest quietly. "I don't blame him—he's too big a fool to know any better."

"Look here, Forrest——" began Handforth.

"We don't want another quarrel, do we?" asked Bernard Forrest steadily. "Gore-Pearce came into this study, and he attempted to blackmail me."

"Wha-a-a-at!" gurgled Gore-Pearce, staggered.

"I was bound to fight him—and to thrash him!" continued Forrest. "He thought he would get some money out of me, but he was wrong."

Claude Gore-Pearce felt weak. In his wildest moments he had never imagined that Bernard Forrest would come out so bluntly and so boldly with the actual truth!

CHAPTER 10.

Nerve!

THERE was an excited buzz from the crowd. The fellows came pressing into Study A, and others took their places in the doorway.

"He's a liar!" panted Gore-Pearce, struggling to his feet and dabbing his nose. "He's a swindler, too. He's been trying to make you fellows think that he's a sportsman, and all the time he's——"

"Just a minute!" broke in Forrest, as cool as ice. "Listen to me, you chaps! I hate dragging you into the quarrel like this, but, in justice to myself, I feel that you ought to hear the full truth. You've seen me giving Gore-Pearce a thrashing, and I want you to know why I did it. I know that I'm more or less under suspicion—especially by Handforth and one or two of his friends. If you're sports, you'll listen to me."

"We don't really want any explanation, Forrest," said Nipper. "If you choose to quarrel with Gore-Pearce, it's your own affair. We're not making any inquiries."

"I know it," said Forrest. "All the same. I want you to know the full facts. This fellow is a toad—a contemptible reptile. And when you've heard what I've got to say, you'll agree with me."

Gore-Pearce's jaw sagged; he felt trapped. What was Forrest about to say?

There was something in Forrest's manner which inspired confidence. He was cool; he was so obviously the injured party. His voice contained a vibrant note of indignation, mingled with contempt. He seemed to be seething with righteous anger.

In a corner like this Forrest was at his best. He could brazen out anything. It would need every atom of his nerve to come

through this present ordeal with flying colours. Not that he had the slightest doubt as to the result.

He knew that it was up to him.

Any slip on his part now would mean exposure. Perhaps the fellows would keep it to themselves, and he would be allowed to remain at the school; but he would lose every atom of that popularity which he had gained. He didn't want to lose it. He hadn't half-finished his campaign yet.

"I'm not a fool," he said quietly. "And I know perfectly well that in the old days I was several kinds of a rotter. I'm changed now, and I've been doing my best to show you fellows that I am changed. I've taken up football, and I've——"

"No need to go into a long list of your merits, my lad!" said Handforth gruffly.

"Well, you see, Gore-Pearce has taken advantage of the general situation," continued Forrest. "He knows that I'm tremendously anxious to show up well. And he thought, perhaps, that he could get some money out of me. Do you know what he had the impudence to accuse me of?"

"Why ask riddles?" said Handforth.

"He demanded a fiver from me, and said that if I didn't shell out he'd tell the Head that it was I who set fire to that haystack the other night," went on Forrest with burning indignation. "He said that he had proof of it——"

"So I have!" panted Gore-Pearce. "I heard Forrest talking with Gulliver and Bell——"

"Is it necessary for me to point out that I was in bed when that haystack was set on fire?" said Forrest, looking round. "Lots of you fellows remember the night. Somebody even came into my bed-room and woke me up. And by that time the haystack was ablaze. I knew nothing about it until——"

"That's right, you fellows," said one of the juniors. "Forrest was indoors, in his dormitory, when that haystack was set on fire."

"But how did he get indoors?" yelled Gore-Pearce. "He set that stack on fire because Mr. Lee was after him—and he sneaked in before the alarm happened. He fooled you all—just as he's trying to fool you now!"

Forrest shrugged his shoulders.

"If there was any truth in Gore-Pearce's yarn I should have paid him his money—to keep his mouth shut," he said. "Do you think I should have dared to speak so boldly of the matter in any other circumstances? I don't know anything about that haystack fire. But Gore-Pearce thought he could scare me—knowing my old reputation. He came in here demanding money, and said that if I didn't pay him he'd go straight to the Head. It was only a bluff, but I didn't fall for it. I gave him the thrashing he deserved."

There was an excited buzz. Forrest was so glib, so smooth, that nobody could doubt his

story. Gore-Pearce, on the other hand, was red with rage and alarm.

"Ask him about his motor-bike!" he croaked. "I found it in the wood—hidden! He hid it there on the night of the fire, and he daren't fetch it out until yesterday!"

"Draw it mild!" protested Gresham. "Yesterday evening Forrest and Gulliver went to Bannington to collect the motor-bike from the garage. I saw them go out."

"That was only a yarn—to spoof you!" said Gore-Pearce. "He didn't go to Bannington at all! The bike was hidden in the wood!"

This certainly sounded a bit too "thick." On the face of it, Gore-Pearce's story was utterly incredible. Forrest laughed with utter scorn.

"Do you think I should leave my motor-bike in the wood?" he asked, looking round. "Supposing I was out on that night? Do you suppose I should leave my bike there until yesterday? Why, it might have been found at any moment, and then I should have been called upon to explain. If you don't believe me, ring up the garage in Bannington and ask the manager! He'll tell you the truth!"

"Yes, ring up the garage!" urged Gore-Pearce.

But Forrest's bluff succeeded. If anybody had insisted upon ringing up the garage, the fat would have been in the fire. But Forrest was quite certain, in his own mind, that nobody would go to such a length.

"It's not our business to conduct an investigation, Forrest," said Nipper. "We don't want to ring up the garage—or make any inquiries at all. As far as I can see, the best thing we can do is to forget this affair altogether."

"What about your knee, Nipper?" asked Gore-Pearce, pushing forward. "Ask Forrest about your knee."

"My knee?" said the Junior skipper, in wonder.

"It's injured, isn't it?"

"Not now," said Nipper. "At least, it's practically well. I shall be fit for footer again by to-morrow."

"Forrest played in your place against the Grammar School!" said Claude quickly.

"Ask him why he played in your place!"

"No need to ask him that," said Handforth, with a sniff. "He played centre-forward because Nipper put him there. And he played well, too. Give the fellow his due!"

"Do you remember that incident on Little Side?" shouted Gore-Pearce. "You thought that that golf ball which crooked Nipper was driven by Gulliver from the meadow. But it wasn't! Forrest was hiding behind the hedge, close by, and he aimed the ball at you with a catapult!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's a good one, anyhow!"

"Cheese it, Gore-Pearce!"

"It's true!" howled Claude.

"That's the kind of yarn he came to me with!" said Forrest angrily. "Did you ever hear such nonsense? If I had been behind the hedge with a catapult, somebody would have seen me. And I can prove that I was indoors at the time——"

"No need to prove it," put in Hubbard. "We're not lunatics, Forrest! Hang it, Gore-Pearce is my own study-mate, but he must be crazy to say a thing like that! I'm ashamed of him!"

"I tell you it's true!" shrieked Claude.

"He threatened to take that mad story to the headmaster—unless I paid him five pounds!" continued Forrest. "What would any of you fellows have done? Paid up—or given him a hiding?"

"Given him a hiding, of course!" said Handforth promptly.

"Well, that's what I did!"

"Good luck to you!" said Nipper. "Any fellow who descends to blackmail is worse than a blackguard. Even supposing the whole thing were true, Gore-Pearce would still be a blackguard—for trying to get money for his silence."

There was a general outburst of indignation. Claude Gore-Pearce's manner was eloquent of guilt. And everybody took it for granted that he had earned his hiding. Forrest was so cool, so self-possessed, that none could doubt the truth of what he had been saying.

And the very fact that he was brazening out the affair by telling the actual facts robbed Gore-Pearce of his breath. Forrest had taken the bull by the horns—and the ruse had succeeded!

LATER, in the wind-swept gloom of the Triangle, Claude Gore-Pearce was pacing up and down. He looked a sorry figure. His stunt had failed. He could no longer go to Bernard Forrest for money. If he had hated Forrest before, he now loathed him with a terrible intensity. He knew that Forrest was in a stronger position than ever. None of the juniors would take the slightest notice of his—Claude's—accusations.

He had not one shred of evidence to support his word.

But Claude Gore-Pearce, although beaten for the time being, was a vindictive, dangerous enemy. Bernard Forrest might think that he had got the better of Claude—but that was where he was making a big mistake!

THE END.

(Another grand story in this fine series will appear next Wednesday, chums. In it you will read how Claude Gore-Pearce sets out to be revenged against his enemy. Make sure you don't miss this yarn, which is entitled: "The Thief!"

Gossip ABOUT St. FRANK'S



Things Heard and Seen By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

READERS mustn't forget that I'm always pleased to hear from them, and if they address their letters as follows: Edwy Searles Brooks, Editorial Office, "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4—they will reach me via the Editor, who obligingly sends them on to my home address. And while I'm on this subject I'll repeat a few words from a recent letter from Leslie H. A. Rickson, of London, S.E.17: "I must apologise for not keeping a promise I made some time ago—to write to you regularly. But it is really your own fault, for you never acknowledged my letters in any way, and I got a bit fed up." Well, I think I've always made it clear that while I welcome letters from readers, I cannot always guarantee to reply. I cannot even promise that their letters will be referred to in these columns. All I can definitely promise is that I will personally read every letter that is sent to me. After all, my space in this Gossip feature is fairly restricted, and it would be quite impossible for me to reply to every letter. And if I were to reply by post, I should scarcely have time for writing the weekly story—even if I employed half a dozen secretaries to assist me with the correspondence. So all readers must necessarily take a bit of chance. And they must remember, too, that while they are sending me letters from all parts of the world, I receive *the lot*. It's easy for many to write to one, but it's a very different thing when one sits down to reply to the many. Of course, all readers who send me their photographs are certain of getting a reply from me by post, even if it's only my autographed photo in exchange.

ALEXANDER PATTERSON, of Toronto—whose photo you see this week—is evidently a fellow with the courage of his convictions. He says: "I have been reading the Old Paper for some time now, and also get a good chaffing from some of my friends. They call it 'cheap literature,' and such like. But I don't pay any attention to them. In fact, just to get them peeved, I read it in front of them all the time, and you can bet it gets their goat." And why shouldn't our Canadian reader brandish the Old Paper in front of his friends? Quite rightly, he pays no attention to them. They are correct, no doubt, in calling the St. Frank's stories cheap literature; but because the Old Paper is only twopence, it doesn't necessarily follow that its contents are "cheap and nasty." I wish that lots of other readers would take a tip from Al, and brazenly read our paper in front of all their friends who sneer at it. Before long, perhaps, they would start reading it themselves, and then they would stop their sneering. I don't want to boast, but I do maintain that these yarns of mine are fit to be taken into any home, and that their main aim is to provide wholesome entertainment.

OUR READERS' PORTRAIT GALLERY



A. Patterson

* * *

FRANCIS H. BURROW, of Tooting, has very kindly put me on the track of a bookseller who makes a speciality of supplying ancient copies of the Old Paper. I have obtained many back numbers that I required for my own files, and it has occurred to me that readers in general might like to know of this storehouse. So in the next paragraph I am going

to give this bookseller's name and address, with a few more details.

* * *

CURIOSLY enough, his name is Lee—although no relation to Nelson of that ilk. The gentleman's full name and address is: W. J. Lee, 357, Lillie Road, Fulham Cross, London, S.W.6. He writes me that he is able to supply the following: "NELSON LEE LIBRARY," "Union Jack" (Pink covers), "Marvel," and the new twopenny series of "Magnet" and "Gem," "Boys' Friend Library," "Popular," "Sexton Blake Library," "Triumph," "Champion," etc. I know for a fact that Mr. Lee has an extraordinary large stock of old issues—in lots of cases many repeats of each issue—and he is willing to pay postage on six numbers or more, his sole charge being the full published price. Any would-be customers who require information from Mr. Lee must, of course, send him a stamped and addressed envelope, when he will be pleased to answer any and every inquiry.

* * *

OUR old friend, George Seaman Hunnab, of Mistley, has evidently been affected by the weather, for in his latest letter to me he makes full confession that he is guilty of the following lines:

"I've read your yarns for years and years,
And dropped you many a line.
But never have I told you yet
That I think old Browne is fine.
He is my favourite character,
For he's never known to frown
And if one wants a real good yarn
Then read of Napoleon Browne.
I have a favourite 'midst the fags,
To me there is none finer:
That little nuisance in the Third—
Cheeky Handforth minor.
Although he's young, he's very sharp,
And he's keen on any job;
His major knows this is the truth
When bang goes his five bob."

* * *

IN a letter from a New Zealand reader—"Wahlstrom Wanganui," New Zealand—I find the word "frigan" used a number of times. This is a new one to me. He refers to the "frigan shops," and the "frigan earth," and says that the town was "frigan well flooded." If this catches his eye, or the eye of any other New Zealand reader, I should like to know the origin of the word.

* * *

McCLURE, of the firm of Handforth & Co., is somehow different these days. Handy isn't having such an easy time with him, and it really dates from the day, I believe, when Mac

discovered that he is a hundred per cent Scottish. It isn't that being Scotch gives him more hardihood, or that the mere fact that he is Scotch makes him superior to Handforth, but simply that he is always being chipped about his "new" nationality, particularly by Handy, who thinks up all the old Scotch jokes imaginable. And Mac, in consequence, feels the need to assert himself. It's had a subtle effect on his whole character, and he sticks up for Scotland and everything Scottish until he's blue in the face. This naturally gets Handy's rag out, and the arguments that take place in Study D regarding the respective merits of the English and Scottish are sometimes too hectic for words. Our old friend, Julius Herman, of Tarkastad, South Africa, has raised this point in a recent letter, and he has an idea that the English readers won't care for the suggestion that McClure is now stronger than of yore. After this little word of explanation, I'm sure that all our English readers will know that the change in Mac has only come about because he finds himself one Scot amongst many English, and this naturally calls for greater strength on his part. According to all that I can hear, he easily holds his own.

* * *

WILLIAM MARSDEN PROCTOR, of Blackburn, wants me to bring a new chap to St. Frank's who is a funk, and who, through the influence of the other Removites, finds his courage, and fights down his weakness. Well, that's all very well, but I can't describe the adventures of such a fellow until he arrives. Lots of new boys might come who are not funks at all. But sooner or later, I dare say, there'll be one of the type that our Blackburn reader requires. If he proves sufficiently interesting, I've no doubt I shall feel called upon to describe all his adventures, and his fights against his funkiness in a future story, or perhaps in a series. Meanwhile, I can't go about searching for a funk on purpose to get him at St. Frank's, so that the other chaps can "unfunk" him.

* * *

J. S. LE MAIR, of West Croydon, South Australia, wants me to get the Editor to publish complete lists of batting and bowling averages for the whole school after each season, and the same with football. I believe some other readers would like the same sort of thing, but I'm afraid that it would be rather a long and complicated business. I could, of course, get all the details from Fenton and Nipper, the respective senior and junior captains; but these facts would take up a lot of space, and would only interest a comparatively few enthusiasts. The majority would much prefer to have the space filled with something of a lighter nature.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Thrills Galore in This Week's Grand Long Instalment, Chums!

The ISLAND CASTAWAYS!

by ARTHUR S. HARDY



(Introduction on page 40)

A Tragic Discovery!

SELLWOOD came running down, and set his broad shoulder to the timber. As the boat jolted from its resting-place, Brutus tumbled from its perch upon the gunwale and circled above them, screaming with indignation as they rushed it down towards the sea. They literally hurled the boat into the water, and swung themselves aboard. Dave lifted the mast, and Tom ran the rudder home in its sockets. The sail was cleated home, and a moment later they were speeding towards the swimming girl.

The racing current had borne her far away, but she saw what they were doing, and raised her arm to show that she was all right.

Sellwod's face was set in a fierce scowl as he scanned the sea eagerly. He was searching for the dark triangular fin that would denote the presence of a shark, but there was none.

Heeling right over, and spurning a feather of spray at her fore-foot, the little boat, which had already served them so splendidly, gained hand-over-hand upon the now resting swimmer. Eva had instinctively swum out wide of the swirl and was safely past it. She had ceased to try to reach the shore, and was

now merely floating, drifting with the racing current.

Tom's fear for her safety gradually eased, for he knew that she could not drown, and the risk of sharks was fast vanishing.

They gained upon the girl still more rapidly, and at last they sailed past her. Tom half-lowered the sail, and Dave cleverly brought the boat around. The girl swam with swift strokes to the stern and clambered into the boat.

Eagerly Tom Perry and his two companions surveyed the fast approaching island, which was to be their new home, completely unaware of the awful tragedy that awaited them there.

"Tom, it was glorious. I don't think I ever enjoyed such a swim," she said.

"Don't you realise," said Tom, indignantly, "that if we hadn't come after you in this boat you might have been drowned?"

"Nonsense, Tom," Eva answered.

"I could have swum for hours and hours, and I would have kept on round the island until the current helped me in."

"Which it might not have done, missy," said David Sellwood.

"Oh, I'm sure it would!" Eva persisted.

"But what about the sharks?"

"David Sellwood," said the girl, "I don't believe there are any sharks around here."

Dave scanned the sea, then pointed. She turned and looked, and there, not a hundred yards away, a dark triangle raced in the

wake of the sailing-boat. Behind it came another. Dave's hand shook as he spoke.

"Missy," he asked, "what be they?"

The girl's smile vanished as she watched the race between the dreaded fins, but she did not answer Dave.

Arrived back at the landing place by the reef, the three had breakfast. They divided what little bread they had left and drank a little water; but they were still hungry when they had finished.

"It's no use staying here," said Dave Sellwood, "for it's a place of birds and weeds. Unless there's edible shellfish to be found in some of the shallow pools, a man might starve for all he'd find here."

Far away in the distance could be seen the dim low streak of another island, and Tom cast a wistful look in that direction. Here was the place to make for, and they might strike better luck on this other island.

So after a time, the castaways put to sea again, making straight for that island. Under easy sail after three hours, they were about two hundred yards from the shore, when Tom uttered a gasp of amazement.

"Dave—Eve," he cried, "look, there's a wreck!"

It was the wreck of a steamship, and even from a distance they could tell that she was badly damaged. There was something familiar in the size and shape of her, and she was painted white. She had no smoke stack and her masts were gone. Part of the deck superstructure remained, but it was broken and blackened. She had possessed a bridge and look-out cabin, Tom could see as they drew nearer, but the sea had swept all clear, cut it away as if a knife-blade had shorn it from the deck.

Tom was eagerly eyeing the wreck, when Eva voiced the fear that was forming in his mind.

"TOM, IT'S THE *ESMERALDA*!"

The Message!

As they sailed closer to her, Tom knew that the girl was right. There was no mistaking the craft which lay shattered and broken upon this unknown coral reef.

She was the *Esmeralda*, wrecked, battered and abandoned. Her presence alone explained why a search party had not been sent from the yacht to find Tom and Eva. Owner, captain, guests, and crew must have been forced to abandon her, and could only have got away in the ship's boats.

Tom's eyes met Eva's. It was the girl's turn to be afraid.

"Tom," she said, speaking very quietly, "do you think they came ashore here? Are they still upon the island?"

If the ill-fated party were still upon the island, Tom knew they must all be dead. Otherwise, surely they would have shown themselves on the beach by now. As he looked at Dave, Tom realised that Dave thought that also.

"Dave," he said, "there's the yacht I spoke to you about; once as fine a vessel as you could wish to see, now she lies on this wind-swept waste with her back broken."

Sellwood eyed the wreck, and nodded.

Her bows were driven hard into sand and reef, and her stern was sunk deep down in the lapping sea, with its deck slanting upwards. Doubtless heavy seas had broken her after she had struck.

"Ay, lad," said Dave, with a shake of the head, "and there's more than that amiss with her, too. She's been afire. See how the paint's all scorched about her portholes. Look at the charred remains of them deck houses. And her funnel's gone—been blown clean out of her. She's no more than a shell."

Tom did not answer, for his heart was very heavy. What had become of those who had lived aboard the *Esmeralda*?

The girl's eyes widened in wonder as she picked out the name of the yacht, now clearly visible.

"It's fate that has drawn us here, Tom," she cried. "If it had been possible to live on that other island, we should never have come here. It is just pure chance, for we might easily have taken another direction."

"Maybe," said Dave, "for we sure would have missed it had we gone another way. Steady, Master Tom. Now down with the sail and let me run her in close."

Tom let the sail down with a run. Cleverly Dave steered the boat close in to the side of the yacht, and with a swing of his powerful arm sent the anchor clattering aboard. He pulled upon the rope, staying the boat, and drawing her up against the side of the *Esmeralda*.

"Up with you, sir," he said.

Tom climbed up the rope like a cat and swung a leg aboard. His swift glance round showed him the great gaping hole in the middle of the *Esmeralda*, and the water that gurgled greedily around the charred hole.

The yacht's stern lay in deep water where-in fishes swam in the shadows, but her bow was driven hard into the sand. She was just a shell, and Tom trod the deck gingerly, afraid lest it should give way beneath his weight.

"Help me up, Tom, please," called Eva from the boat.

Bending over the twisted deck rail, he gave the girl a hand and pulled her beside him.

"I'm acomin', too, mister!" sang out David Sellwood, and a moment or so later he swung his heavy body beside them, and with arms akimbo, glanced around.

"This is the first time I've set foot aboard a ship, messmates," he cried, "since that night o' the storm when I lost my balance and tumbled overboard from my own whaler; and I must say, my lad, and missy, that I'm not quite as pleased about it as I thought I'd be."

The deck boards were starting from the seams and had commenced to rot in places. For'ard there was not so much amiss, but the stern half of the yacht was in complete ruin.

The boats had all gone, and it looked as if they must have been lowered away.

"When the Rosita lasted so long in that terrific sea, the ship's boats must have weathered it all right, don't you think?" said Tom.

One of them was thrown up on our island, Tom," the girl pointed out.

"Oh, yes, of course, but somehow I don't think she could ever have had anybody in her. The mast, sail, and fittings were all lashed in place, remember."

They were walking cautiously along the deck, Dave Sellwood purposely urging his bulky figure ahead of them, knowing that wherever he might go with safety they could follow without fear.

It was strange to see that one or two of the deck cabins had been left almost intact where so much had been totally destroyed, but it was so. The doors were even there, gaping open and wedged from swelling.

A glimpse of the engine-room showed Sellwood some of the machinery, all twisted and broken and red with rust. He turned away from the depressing sight, and saw the girl beckoning Tom forward excitedly.

"Tom," she cried, "there's my cabin, and I believe I shall find a lot of my things there."

She was right, for as she pulled drawers open and slid panels back she found each receptacle thus exposed to view crammed with flimsy and costly articles of feminine attire. Then another thought struck her.

"My jewels, Tom! The things daddy gave

me on my birthday, and all the rest. I wonder if they are where I put them?"

She found the secret hiding-place at the back of one of the cupboards, and as she touched a spring, a panel rolled slowly back, exposing a metal-lined compartment. It was full of leather-covered jewel-cases, and as the girl opened one of these after another she revealed necklaces, brooches, hairpins, and headdresses of gold or of platinum, whose jewels flashed and glistened in the sun.

There were precious diamond studded wrist-watches fit for a princess, and a lovely gold cabinet clock which began to tick the moment she started to wind it.

Dave, bewildered by the sight of such extravagant jewels, began to scratch and pull at his long straggly hair.

"Well, I'm darned!" he murmured.

They ransacked the cabin, finding many and many an article which would prove useful to the girl. Then they went into the cabin next door. It had belonged to Thornton Hanway. Here the wood paneling was blistered, warped, and burned, and they found a store of men's clothes and boots, socks and underwear, most of which was charred and useless. They found a set of golf clubs in a bag, an automatic, two sporting rifles, and a revolver.

"Rum this place should be so badly burned when the cabin next door isn't," mused Sellwood, as he nosed around. "Looks like as if it had been wilfully set on fire, and I believe it was. Hallo, look at this!"

There was a piece of folded notepaper jammed in the door of a cupboard.

Dave Sellwood pulled it free and opened it, to find it covered with pencilled writing. There were just a few boldly-written words.

Sellwood read them, blinked, then quietly handed the paper to the boy.

"Read that, Master Tom," he said, "and tell me what it says."

"This rotten place is a death trap," the boy read aloud. "They all left in the boats and there's none for me. Going ashore. Daniel Kemish."

THE OPENING CHAPTERS IN BRIEF.

THORNTON HANWAY, American millionaire and business magnate, is the owner of the yacht *Esmeralda*, which is touring among a number of unknown islands in the Southern Pacific. He is accompanied by

EVA HANWAY, his pretty daughter, and her chum,

TOM PERRY, a plucky, adventure-loving English boy. Tom's father,

GEORGE PERRY, a lifelong friend of Hanway's, is also on board. At the moment there is great anxiety on the yacht owing to the pilot,

DANIEL KEMISH, having developed a sudden illness. In years past Dan and his partner, David Sellwood, had owned a small vessel, which traded in these parts. Dan had been the cause of Sellwood losing his life—or so he thought—and since then the former has never forgiven himself. Sailing these seas once more has brought back old memories, and this fact, combined with the heat, has turned his head. Tom and Eva decide to visit a nearby island, but they are caught in a terrible storm, and the motor-boat is swamped. They are plunged into the mountainous seas, and finally are cast upon an unknown island, on which they meet David Sellwood. Later, unknown to the two chums, Hanway's yacht is set on fire by Kemish. The three castaways have many exciting adventures together before sailing for a neighbouring island. One morning Eva goes for a swim. Tom, watching her, sees that she is in difficulties. A strong current is running, and she is being drawn towards a whirlpool. The boy fetches Sellwood, and together they rush down to the beach and prepare to board their sailing boat. Will they be in time to rescue Eva?

(Now read on.)

flare up and then darkness that we saw soon after we were cast away? The light must have been the Esmeralda burning, and the sudden glare marked her blowing up. And Kemish was on board."



Madly Tom raced down the sloping hollow. At the bottom lay a motionless figure. It was Daniel Kemish!

The Finding of Kemish!

AS Tom read the letter, every word echoed like strokes upon a drum, and when he finished and gave the written message back to David Sellwood his boyish face was strained.

They moved to the bent rail and stared across the barren island as if they half expected to see Daniel Kemish top the rise and hail them.

"It seems odd, doesn't it," murmured Sellwood, after a long silence, "that Dan Kemish should have stayed aboard this ship while the others got away in the boats?"

"There's a whole lot about it I don't understand, Dave," the boy replied. "But you remember I told you about that bright flickering light across the sea, the sudden

"How dreadful for them to have left him there, Tom," said the girl in a tone of horror.

"Your father would never have left him there. Neither would Captain Stanton. Kemish must have had every chance to go with the others. Perhaps they thought he was dead." Tom stared about the shattered hull of the once beautiful yacht. "Eve, I'd like to know how she caught fire."

The girl cut a grotesque figure as she leant against the deck rail, the matted dress she wore contrasting oddly with the luxurious raiment she clutched in her arms. A pair of dainty shoes dangled from her finger by their straps. A circlet of diamonds was clasped about her neck. Setting his head back, Tom burst into a bellow of laughter.

"For goodness' sake put those things down, Eve," he said. "They're of no use to you until you get back to civilisation. We can come back and fetch them, you know. Dave, we'll load the jolly old boat up with a lot of stuff we need before we sail for another island. But just now I think we had better go ashore."

Sellwood gazed towards the island. Daniel Kemish had said he was going ashore. What had happened to him since?

"Master Tom—"

"Yes, Dave?"

"I believe you said Dan was almost out of his mind the day you got wrecked?"

"He had been strange for weeks, Dave. It started after we reached the Solomons. We just cruised about any old how, avoiding the ports as much as we could. And though Kemish came as pilot he seemed to hate it; he was always wanting to get back, always grumbling, and we had trouble with him on the eve of Miss Hanway's birthday, as I told you."

"And all on my account," sighed Sellwood. "That's just like old Dan. We were like brothers. He'd have given his life for me, boy. I can just imagine how my being lost overboard must have preyed upon his mind."

"But it didn't prevent him from keeping at sea for years and unloading a cargo worth a fortune. He did jolly well out of it, Dave."

"And you mustn't blame Dan for that. He had to keep on. There was the crew to consider. And Dan came back here to try and find me—I can't forget that." Sellwood set his cupped hands to his mouth and emitted a series of booming cries that scattered the scared seabirds and sent them whirling and swirling from the reef. "If Dan hears that he'll come running," laughed Sellwood. "There isn't another man in the wide, wide world who could give that call, Master Tom."

Tom could well believe it, since he had never heard anything to equal it. But the only response came from the boat alongside, in the shape of a weird cawing. Tom laughed as he looked over the side and saw Sellwood's parrot perched on the gunwale blinking up at them.

"Let's go ashore, Dave."

They swarmed down the rope and into the boat, David first, the girl second, Tom last. Tom's method of going was primitive. Throwing the anchor overboard and leaving Dan to retrieve it he dropped down feet foremost into the crystal sea, gained the boat in two or three strokes and hauled himself aboard as easily as if he were pulling himself astride a horizontal bar.

They pulled the boat up safely on the reef and anchored her. Then Tom led the way with nimble strides, Dave following more heavily, Eva straying to pick up some wonderful shells. In this manner they went on, until looking backward they found the wrecked yacht far below them. The barren

island was of considerable size and cone-like in shape, but very broken. On the higher ground they found clean rainwater lying in the holes. Hereabouts they saw the start of that vegetation which was soon to cover the island with a tropical growth of wonderful flowering shrubs and plants and trees.

Already some of the trees were half as high again as a man. But look where they would, they could find no sign of a habitation, no trace of a man.

Yet Daniel Kemish had gone ashore, to this desolate, depressing, awesome island. Tom already wished they were in the boat and sailing away from it.

As they trudged along, David Sellwood studied the message Dan had written, persuading himself that the writing was just as Dan had always written. Again and again he read it, and at intervals, as they made their search, he stopped and let forth his loud and startling shout. The only answer was an echo accompanied by the screeching of the startled birds.

"Daniel Kemish must have left the island," said Eva, as they gained the very highest point of the rise and saw the sea all round them. "It's quite plain he isn't here."

"There was no boat for him, missie," answered Sellwood gravely. "Don't you forget that. No boat for him. And it's certain he couldn't fly away in one o' they airyplane flying-machines that Master Tom's so fond of talking about, for there are none about here."

They were descending a slope now, and as Tom looked ahead he saw something lying on the ground. One long look he gave, and then he started off as hard as he could run.

"Stay with Dave a minute, Eve," he cried. "Dave, don't let her come down here just yet."

Tom's tone sobered the girl and killed the laugh on the old seaman's lips. He, too, had seen the object that lay down there in the hollow, and he quickly turned the girl the other way.

Tom raced on, and as he neared the object he could make out that it was the figure of a man!

The body that lay there was all huddled up. It wore a dark blue reefer coat, much discoloured by the sun and rain—a heavy coat for a man to have worn in that tropic clime.

Going down upon his knee, Tom gently pulled away the hat. It was Daniel Kemish lying there! And a clean-cut hole in his forehead told the boy, even before he saw the revolver, how Kemish had died.

Quickly he replaced the hat, and then he began to search through the dead man's pockets. In the breast-pocket of the coat he found a bundle of papers and a letter. The letter was in an envelope and neatly sealed.

(Don't fail to read next week's thrilling instalment of this fine serial, chums!)

The ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE CORNER!



The Chief Officer Chats
with his Chums.

Here's his address if you want to
write to him: The Chief Officer, "The
Nelson Lee Library," Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Stick it!

MY postbag this week contains a letter from a very disconsolate reader living in Manchester, who, for the purposes of this paragraph, I will call "Fed-up." A very sad letter it is, too. In it my correspondent informs me that he has been at his job for some time now, and has never been promoted; that all his efforts have been unappreciated by a boss who seems to take no interest in him at all. The result is that my Manchester chum is feeling heartily fed up. He's done his work conscientiously and without any serious mistake; and while he hasn't been hauled over the coals, his labours have not been rewarded.

And this does not suit my chum. He's full of ambition to get on in life, but sees no chance of doing so in his present situation. So he's very seriously thinking of chucking up his job and "seeking fresh pastures."

Well, of course, it's all very sad, and one cannot help feeling sorry for "Fed-up." To know that one is doing one's work well and to receive no praise for doing it well is disheartening. Yet I cannot help thinking that

"Fed-up" is being unduly pessimistic; I certainly feel that he will make a grave mistake if he leaves his job. He may think that his boss is not taking an interest in his work, but he can be jolly well sure that such is not the case. If my chum had been doing his work badly he would soon have discovered that his boss was keeping an eye on him!

My advice to "Fed-up" is to stick it. Continue to do your work carefully and accurately, and you are bound to be rewarded in the long run.

Footballers Wanted!

GOOD old football is now well under way, and I suppose most junior clubs are "in the thick" of another season. J. Miles, of St. Leonard's-on-Sea, writes telling me that he wants some players for his football club, and that boys between the ages of 15 and 18 are required. Here's a chance for those of you in the St. Leonard's district who are keen to play and

who don't belong to a club. Write now to J. Miles, 59, Springfield Road, St. Leonard's, or to L. Witton, 81, Bexhill Road, St. Leonard's.

My Sussex chum does not mention the

THIS WEEK'S WINNING LETTER

DEAR CHIEF OFFICER,—Many thanks for the certificate and St. Frank's League badge, which I received a few days ago, and of which I am very proud. I have had the certificate framed, and it is now hanging in my room. Many of my friends have seen it, and they all say that it is fine.

Leeds, where I live, does not seem to boast of many St. Frank's League-ites; or, if it does, then the members do not wear their League badges. Needless to say, I shall wear mine.

I wonder which place in England can claim the most League-ites? I suppose London should be well in the running. It would be very interesting to know.

By the way, just recently I have been ill, and to while away the time I used to read my back numbers of the Nelson Lee Library. One day the doctor spotted a pile of these, and asked if he could take them away with him. He told me he intended to put them in his waiting-room. Of course, I let him take them, for I realised that this might result in the Old Paper gaining many new readers.

Wishing the League the best of success.

(Signed) ALFRED W. SMITH (S.F.L. No. 9945)

(For this interesting letter, Alfred W. Smith, of Leeds, has been awarded a useful penknife.)

All members of the St. Frank's League are invited to send to the Chief Officer letters of interest concerning the League. The most interesting will be published week by week, and the senders will receive pocket wallets or penknives. If you don't belong to the League, look for the entry form which will appear next week—and then join immediately.

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE CORNER

(Continued from page 43.)

question of fixtures, but no doubt his club will not be averse to arranging some. If any other clubs in the St. Leonard's district have any blank spaces in their fixture list, they will be well advised to write to one of the aforementioned addresses.

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

Fred Whittingham, 18, Moss-way, Rochdale Road, Nr. Blackley, Manchester, wants correspondents, 16-17, interested in tennis and cricket.

Edwin F. Ebborn, Mount Leyshon, Charters Towers, Queensland, Australia, wants correspondents anywhere; ages 16-19; also to hear from Bert Leong, Chas. Towers and Clarence Cahill.

Brendan Moran, Shannon View, Carrick-on-Shannon, Ireland, wants a correspondent in England interested in football and athletics; ages 16-17.

Miss Annie Botma, 23-25, Caledon Street, Cape Town, South Africa, wants girl correspondents.

Patrick Joseph Roche, Dublin, 14, Mary Street, Coburg, N.13, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wants N.L.L., old series; also correspondents keen on athletics. He would like to join a club.

Dennis Senior, Aiverstoke, Linden Road, Swanage, Dorset, wants N.L.L., new series 1-19; also 21, 25, 33, 35, 50, 54, 81, 96.

Sid Smith, 2, Cavendish Hall, Billyard Avenue, Elizabeth Bay, Sydney, Australia, wants correspondents in Canada and New Zealand.

Fred Sheldon, 187, Russell Road, Nottingham, wants correspondents keen on camping.

S. G. Cheesman, 181, Saleram Crescent, Paddington, London, W.9, wants correspondents.

S. Fletcher, Grange House, St. Mary's Street, Kidderminster, offers N.L.L., new series.

Edmund Whitham, 27, Snow Hill, Dodworth, Nr. Barnsley, Yorks, wants Scout correspondents.

L. N. Williams, 7, Woodberry Down, Finsbury Park, London, N.4, wants correspondents.

Miss Kathleen Cox, St. George's Place, Alberton, Adelaide, South Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers interested in the movies.

W. Fox, 41, Everingham Crescent, Longley, Sheffield, would like to hear from readers who are Boy Scouts.

A. F. Thompson, 16, Barkstone Street, Harpurhey, Manchester, wants correspondents.

Wilfred Kirkbride, 42, Orme Street, Beswick, Manchester, wants correspondents in the British Isles, also wishes to hear from the International Club of Holland.

Ernest Kohler, Copley Street, Kilkenny, South Australia, wants correspondents in the British Empire and the States.



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