SUPERB STORIES OF SCHOOL & ADVENTURE

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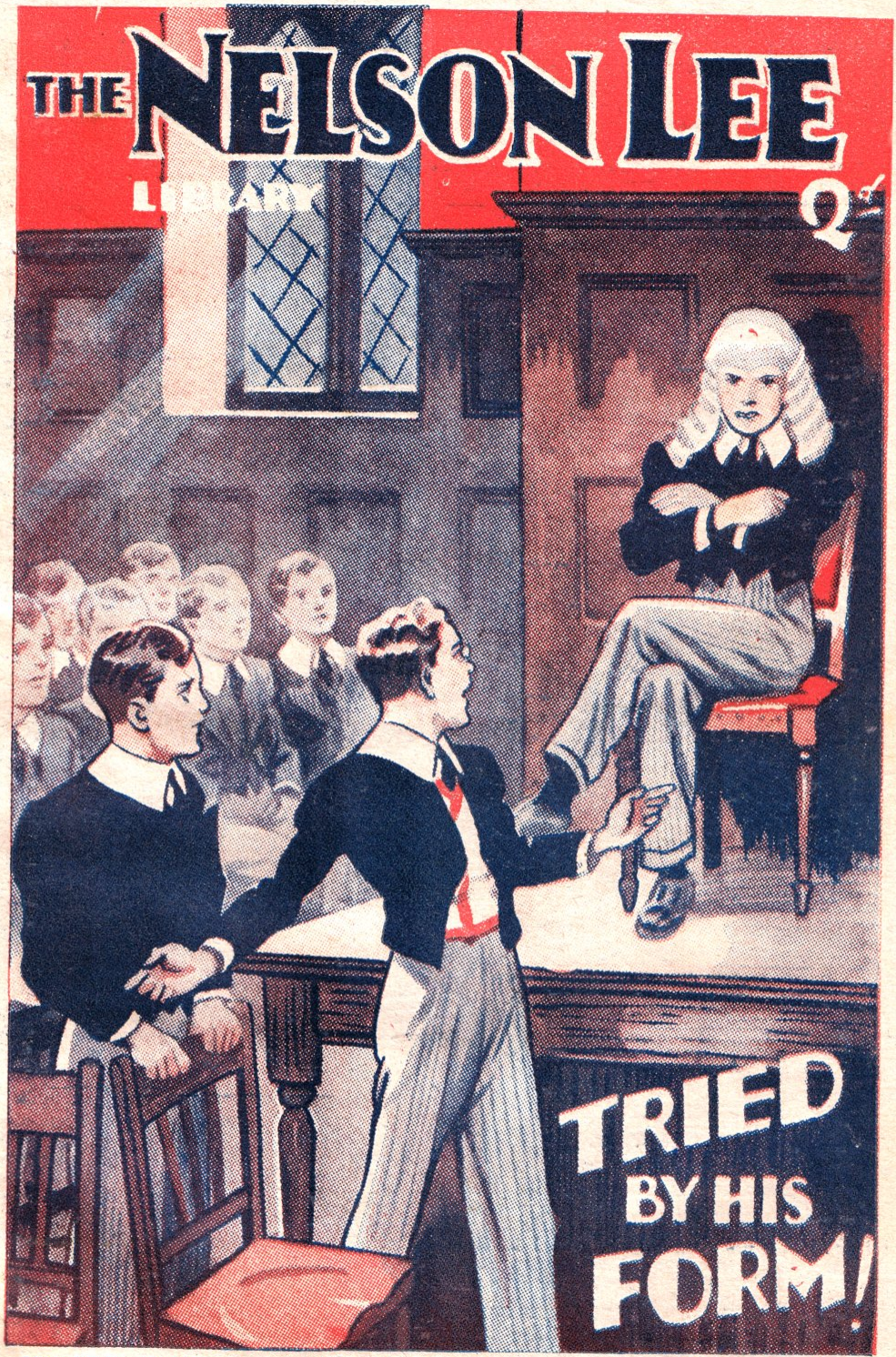

New Series No. 3. OUT ON WEDNESDAY. March 11th, 1933.

Nipper Sent To Coventry! The Triumph Of The Knuts!—

TRIED BY HIS FORM!

CHAPTER 1.

A Caddish Trick.

"SOMEBODY is speaking!"

Mr. Crowell uttered that sharp remark in an irritable, angry tone.

I looked up from my work for a moment. I wasn't the culprit, and I fancied that the murmur of voices had come from the corner of the Remove Form-room occupied by Fullwood & Co., the knuts of St. Frank's.

"If there is any more talking, I shall punish the offenders severely," said Mr. Crowell tartly. "I will have silence in my class. Fullwood, sit up straight! I have told you more than once that I detest lounging!"

Ralph Leslie Fullwood sat up with a grunt, and the Remove settled to work again.

Mr. Crowell, our esteemed Form-master, was in a bad temper that afternoon. Perhaps the heat affected him. The blinds were down, but the windows were open. The blazing sunshine was streaming down outside, and the Form-room was hot and stuffy.

—You'll Enjoy This Stirring Long Complete Story Of St. Frank's.

Accused of a brutal attack on a new boy—a trial by the Form—found guilty and sentenced! These are but a few of the dramatic situations of which Nipper has to tell—with himself in the role of the accused! There's not a dull moment in this vivid school yarn, which is set down for publication by popular EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

I—that is, Dick Bennett, otherwise known as Nipper—was quite contented, however. The work of the Remove was easy enough for me. Since the arrival of Nelson Lee and myself at the great school, we had led a lazy, easy life. After the strenuous strain of detective work, our days at St. Frank's were just one continuous holiday.

Not a soul at St. Frank's excepting the headmaster himself knew that "Mr. Alvington" was Nelson Lee or that "Dick Bennett" was Nipper. Our identities were completely hidden, and for the time we were master and pupil. Only the Head knew, too, why we had come to St. Frank's. A sinister Chinese tong—the Fu Chang Tong—were seeking vengeance on Nelson Lee, and the guv'nor had decided that we should "disappear" for a time. Hence our appearance at St. Frank's under assumed names.

I had been getting on famously in the Remove. I was captain of the Ancient House Remove already, having licked Fullwood in a memorable fight behind the gym. Fullwood's

power had ebbed considerably, and the knuts of St. Frank's no longer swayed junior opinion in the Ancient House.

Naturally Fullwood and his pals were sore, and they hated me like poison; but I much preferred their hatred to their friendship, for they were young blackguards, every one of them. The knuts consisted of Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell, of Study A, and Merrell and Marriott and Noys, of Study G. Merrell & Co. were just a shade less disreputable than Fullwood & Co., but only a shade. They were all tarred with the same brush. They were all smoky, gambling rotters.

When I had come to St. Frank's, I had found the Ancient House in a disgraceful state. The College House was clean and decent, but the Ancient House had been rapidly going "to seed." The Junior School especially was in a bad condition. This was because Mr. Thorne, the Housemaster, had favoured Fullwood & Co., and had winked at their many shady doings. Fullwood had been the self-constituted leader of the Fossils, as the Ancient House juniors were called. In the College House the juniors, known as Monks, were under the leadership of a first-class fellow named Bob Christine. And, consequently, the College House led the way in all things.

I had lost no time in making an alteration, and now, only a week or two after my arrival, the Fossils were forging into line with the Monks. Bob Christine & Co. were beginning to realise that the Ancient House would soon be a formidable rival.

The St. Frank's Junior Cricket Eleven was composed entirely of College House Removites, except when an extra man was wanted. Then, perhaps, Tregellis-West or Watson or Hubbard would be included in the team. Tregellis-West and Watson were my own study-mates, and they were good chaps, both.

For some little time now I had been getting an eleven together of my own—an Ancient House Eleven, and the fellows were shaping splendidly. A new boy named Justin B. Farman, an American, was a miracle at bowling, and he would be a tower of strength to the new eleven.

Farman was an easy-going, good-tempered junior, and he had come from California. He spoke in a rough-and-ready manner as a rule, and he was popular; but his weak, easy nature had landed him into several holes already. Farman was the son of a millionaire, and he always had piles of money.

Fullwood & Co. had attempted to "take up" Farman, to make him a member of the select order of knuts, and at first Farman had almost succumbed. He had even broken bounds on his first night at St. Frank's, persuaded by the rascally Fullwood. But I had taken a hand, and Farman was now on his guard. He would have nothing to do with the knuts. And the knuts, in consequence, were very bitter against him. They hated him nearly as much as they hated me, and that worried Farman more than a little, for he was very anxious to be on good terms with everybody.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood was still hopeful of gathering Farman into the fold. He still affected friendship for the new boy. But on that first night the American junior had learned a lesson.

He had been kidnapped by two strange men—an American and a Chinaman. Nelson Lee and I and some other fellows had rescued Farman, but the two strangers had escaped; and Farman had refused to say a word, although he obviously knew a lot. His queer reticence was mysterious. It was all the more mysterious because of an incident which had occurred at the school just previous to the arrival of Nelson Lee and myself.

Mr. Thorne, the Housemaster of the Ancient House, had been forced down to a cave in Caistowe Bay, three miles away, and had been left there by two men. Lee had discovered him in a bad state, and Mr. Thorne was still in a nursing-home, and he was still unable to give any details of the strange affair.

The unfortunate Housemaster had only muttered the name "Justin Farman"; nothing more could be got out of him. And then the American boy had arrived, only to be attacked by night by two unknown men.

But the incident was over and done with now, and most of the fellows had forgotten it. But the guv'nor and I had not forgotten. We were both anxious to get to the bottom of the business. It was no good questioning Farman, for he wouldn't say anything.

I glanced over at him as we sat in the hot Form-room. He was working industriously, and his sunny, rugged face was earnest. And just then a tiny, trivial incident occurred which was to lead to the most astounding consequences.

Teddy Long sat next to Farman, and Long was the sneak of the Remove. He wasn't long by any means, although his nickname was "Lanky." Teddy Long was a squat, snub-nosed junior, with a water-mark round his neck and an inky collar. He was always untidy, and he was undoubtedly the laziest fellow in the Remove.

As I looked across the Form-room, I saw Long bend over towards Farman. They weren't far from me, and I heard Long's whisper.

"I say, Farman, how do you spell 'adequate'?" he asked anxiously.

"Guess you'd best be quiet now," whispered Farman.

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know!" protested Long. "I must know how to spell."

Mr. Crowell looked up sharply.

"Talking again!" he rapped out. "Who was speaking?"

Silence.

"The boy who was speaking will stand up!" said Mr. Crowell angrily.

Justin B. Farman looked a little uncomfortable. He had been talking, it was true, but the few words he had uttered had been

merely a warning to Long to keep quiet. Teddy Long was shivering in his shoes.

Mr. Crowell's eyes shifted, and his gaze rested upon Long.

"Were you talking, Long?" asked the master sharply.

"Pup-pup-please, sir, it—it was Farman!" gasped Teddy Long.

There was a murmur from the Form.

"Silence!" rapped out Mr. Crowell. "Were you talking, Farman?"

The American junior stood up, looking flushed.

"I guess I said a few words, sir," he replied quietly. "I——"

"That is enough, Farman," interjected the master. "You must understand that talking in class is forbidden. You will write me a hundred lines. Had the offence been committed by any other boy I should have caned him. You may sit down."

But Farman remained standing.

"If that's the case, sir, I guess I'd like to be caned," he said. "I ain't hankering to be favoured any."

Mr. Crowell frowned.

"Your speech is not only lacking in refinement, Farman, it is positively coarse," he said. "Writing lines will be of more service to you than a caning. Sit down! And if there is any more talking the whole Form will be detained."

Farman sat down, and he bestowed an angry glare upon the grinning Long, for the sneak of the Remove was very pleased with himself. He considered that he had escaped punishment very neatly.

There were a lot of other fellows glaring, too. Handforth, of Study D, looked as though he could eat somebody. Sneaking in the Form-room was regarded as a crime, and Long had sneaked in the most bare-faced manner. More, he had been the culprit himself.

Farman resented the young bounder's action, I could see; but he showed no sign except for that one eloquent glare.

The Remove was very silent during the remainder of afternoon lessons.

When dismissal-time came, most of the fellows had forgotten the little incident, and Teddy Long scuttled off hurriedly. Apparently he hadn't forgotten, and he feared Farman's wrath.

But the good-natured American junior was smiling now. He came out into the lobby with Canham and Owen major, his study-mates. Fullwood bore down upon him. Fullwood was looking as sweet as honey, and his eyeglass was in his eye.

"Comin' to tea, Farman, old chap?" he asked cordially.

I was just going off with Tregellis-West, but I paused.

"At it again!" I muttered. "Fullwood seems determined to drag Farman into his rotten circle. Hold on Montie!"

Sir Lancelot Montgomery Tregellis-West held on.

"Anythin' you like, old boy," he yawned. "Dear Fullwood is persistent. He's a sticker, begad. Surprisin' what lurin' properties money has—what? Farman's rollin' in money, you know. He fairly wallows in it. An' the genial Fullwood wants some of it. Ain't it disgustin'?"

I was quite prepared to chip in if necessary, but, as it happened, my chipping-in wasn't necessary at all. Justin B. Farman had a pretty clear idea by this time that the knut-leader's overtures were not sincere. And Farman was a thoroughly decent fellow at heart.

"Am I coming to tea, Fullwood?" he asked. "Why, sure!"

"Good man!" said Fullwood heartily. "We've got ham and ——"

"Say, I guess you're off-tracked," smiled Farman. "You're guessin' that I'm toting along to your shack? I'd smile, Fullwood. I'm going right along with my own pards to Study H."

"Rot! I want you to come to tea with me."

"With cigarettes and cards afterwards, mebbe?"

Fullwood laughed.

"Just a little sport, perhaps," he said. "Come on, Farman!"

"I'd be really sorry to offend you," said Farman deliberately. "Guess I'm a feller who just loves to please everybody. Say, if it ain't too much trouble, I'd like you to shift. You're kinder filling the passage, and I want to go."

Ralph Leslie Fullwood scowled.

"That means you don't accept my invitation—eh?"

"Guess you're sure as keen as a razor," said Farman calmly. "You've been trying to fix me for days, Fullwood—fix me good 'n proper. Say, I ain't such an all-fired guy. There's sense—hoss-sense—running around in my head, and that hoss-sense sorter tells me that Study A ain't the place for a decent feller."

And Justin B. Farman calmly pushed past with Canham and Owen. Fullwood was left biting his lip furiously. In very polite language, Fullwood had been "told off." And the Removites who had overheard the little exchange of words, grinned and chuckled.

"You asked for it, Fully, and you got it," grinned Hubbard.

"Perhaps he won't pester Farman any more," I said. "I was going to put my

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Fullwood & Co. snorted, and were about to walk away towards the gates when there was a commotion within the House. Fullwood paused, and looked back. Then Long, of the Remove, came pelting out, his face red with rage.

"Look at this!" he roared. "Just look at it!"

The sneak of the Remove was panting heavily, and he waved before our eyes an Eton jacket which looked as though it had been through a chaff machine. It was ripped to rags and shreds.

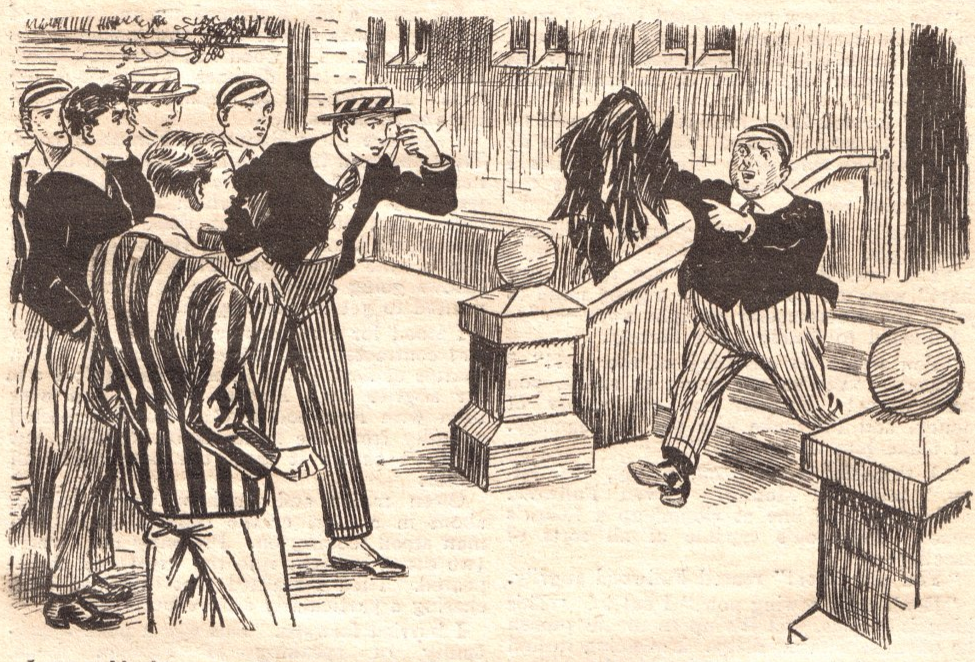
"He did, I tell you!" shrieked Long, nearly beside himself. "Just now, up in the dormitory! I—I saw him. I was up there just a minute after he'd gone out! He did this out of revenge."

"Revenge!" echoed Tommy Watson.

"Yes. Because I sneaked in the Form-room this afternoon!" gasped Long. "What a filthy trick! Pretended to take no notice of me after lessons, and then goes and does this caddish thing!"

I looked very grim.

Deliberately ripping up a fellow's jacket



Long suddenly came pelting out of the House, his face red with rage. "Look at this!" he roared. "Just look at it!" The sneak of the Remove waved before us an Eton jacket that had been ripped to rags and shreds.

"Look at it, you chaps!" he shouted, almost tearfully.

"Is that the latest fashion in jackets?" asked Fullwood, jamming his monocle into his eye.

"Begad! It's a ragtime coat!" smiled Sir Montie.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at!" howled Long. "This jacket's ruined—absolutely ruined! You can see that, can't you?"

"Well, it seems to be the worse for wear," grinned Handforth. "What made you do that, Lanky?"

"I didn't do it!" bellowed Long. "That cad, Farman, did it!"

I suddenly became serious.

"What's that?" I said sharply. "You'd better be careful of what you say, Long. Farman didn't cut that jacket up——"

was, indeed, a mean action—a rascally trick—and if Justin B. Farman had got his own back on Teddy Long by such a method, he would reckon with me!

CHAPTER 2.

An Amazing Attack!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH snorted wrathfully.

"Farman ripped up that coat!" he said. "What a beastly bounder! I believe in punching a fellow's nose, but to maliciously ruin a good Eton jacket behind his back is the limit! The worst cad wouldn't do that!"

"Farman couldn't have done it," said Watson.

Teddy Long nearly choked with excitement.

"I tell you Farman did do it!" he panted. "Wasn't he in the dormitory five minutes ago? Did he say what he was going up for when he left you?"

"No," I replied. "He didn't——"

Then I paused suddenly, and started.

"I say," I added, "this looks straight enough, you know. Farman didn't say why he was going to the dormitory, but when he came down he was closing his pocket-knife!"

"By Cæsar! So he was!" said Watson, with a whistle.

"We don't know much about him," I went on. "He seems good-tempered and decent, but we haven't had time to get to know his real character. By Jove! If he did actually slit up——"

"If!" howled Long furiously. "There's no if about it, you silly ass! Farman did do it! If he didn't, who did? You don't think I ruined my own clobber, do you? It's my best jacket, too!"

"Awfully hard lines!" grinned Fullwood unfeelingly.

"The beast'll have to pay for it—I know that!" went on Long. "I've a good mind to go to the Housemaster straight away——"

I turned to Teddy Long fiercely.

"You won't do anything of the sort!" I snapped. "You're not going to sneak, you little worm! Farman has got plenty of money, and I'll make him pay the damage. I'll make him sit up, too!"

"A thrashin' is too good, Benny, dear fellow," said Sir Montie. "Even Fullwood would draw the line at rippin' up a fellow's jacket. Fullwood's capable of all sorts of rascality——"

"You silly idiot!" roared Fullwood angrily.

"Don't start rowing now," I cut in. "This thing is serious, and it's up to me to punish the offender without delay. I'm going to find Farman, and I'm going to give him the hiding of his life."

"That's right—smash him!" chortled Gulliver.

For once Gulliver's advice was good. I certainly meant to smash Justin B. Farman. I was furious. I had never thought Farman capable of such utter caddishness. There couldn't be any doubt about the matter; Teddy Long would never have cut up his own jacket, and the fact that Farman had been in the dormitory only a few minutes before was strikingly significant.

On the surface Farman was genial and easy going. It appeared, however, that, instead of punching a fellow's nose in a straightforward manner, he preferred to adopt a mean, underhand subterfuge. To perform such an act as this, out of sheer spite, was a real eye-opener.

I didn't like to believe it of him. But how could I doubt it? I should give Farman a chance to explain, of course; and, if he had nothing to say, well, he'd have something to feel!

Without a word, I turned on my heel and strode across the Triangle.

"Hallo! Where are you off to?" shouted Tommy Watson.

"I'm going to find Farman," I called back, without pausing. "I'll be back again before six. You chaps had better get down to Little Side. I'll deal with Farman. And keep that little rotter's tongue still!"

I heard a snort from Teddy Long, but then I passed out through the gateway and struck off through Bellton Wood. I wasn't exactly sure which part of the wood the chums of Study H had made for.

So, after a bit, I jumped up on to one of the high banks of the lane and looked across the meadows. The wood was dense and thick, and for a certain distance it bordered the road. But it could be reached also by crossing the meadows.

I saw the three Removites almost at once. They emerged from behind a clump of bushes near the wood, and quite close to the roadway—not the roadway which led to the village. Just at that point there was a side lane which joined the main Bannington Road half a mile farther on. That lane saved the fellows going through the village when they wanted to get to Bannington.

I stood for a moment watching. My brow was contracted, and my eyes gleamed. As a matter of fact, I was thundering wild; I was far angrier with Farman than I had ever been with Fullwood & Co. For I expected rascality from the knuts of St. Frank's, but I didn't expect it from the new American junior.

Owen major and Canham were dodging about in a most erratic fashion, while Farman stood looking on. Presently the former two dived straight into the wood and disappeared. Then I realised that they had been chasing a particularly elusive butterfly.

I hurried forward. This was a good opportunity of speaking to Farman alone. Apparently he took no interest in butterflies, for he sat down on the bank and idly whittled a piece of stick.

But I had hardly moved forward a couple of yards before a most extraordinary thing happened. The whole extent of the meadow separated me from Farman. I had a vague notion that a motor-car was buzzing somewhere behind me, and I subconsciously realised that Fullwood & Co. had started off on their jaunt. Their hired car must have arrived immediately after my departure.

But there was nothing extraordinary in that. The amazing thing happened to Farman himself. Quite suddenly two men burst through the hedge behind him and dragged him backwards!

I stood stock still.

Instantly a flood of thoughts crowded through my mind. Justin B. Farman was being attacked by two strangers! Obviously, they were the same two men who had attempted to kidnap him only a week previously! But, on that occasion, they had done their work by night. Now, apparently

in desperation, they had seized a sudden opportunity, and had acted again.

I rushed to the rescue; but, as usually happens in such cases, disaster overtook me. My foot caught in a hole, and I fell headlong, knocking every ounce of wind out of myself. For quite a minute I lay on the ground, dazed.

Then, when I looked up, I heard the sound of a motor-car down the lane; it seemed to me as though the automobile was taking the short cut to the Bannington Road. Farman's attackers apparently heard the sound, too.

For, as I rose to my feet, I saw them both turn scared faces in the direction of the road. Then, with one accord they dashed away and plunged into the depths of the wood. I knew, in a moment, that they had been frightened by the unexpected approach of the car, which, passing along that lane, would be upon the scoundrels in next to no time. They had not reckoned on such an interruption, and did not think it worth while to remain on the spot and court capture.

Accordingly, they had abandoned their victim, leaving him lying upon the grass beside the road. I reached the spot very quickly, and with my heart beating fast. Justin B. Farman was huddled on the grass, still and silent.

I knew that he had struggled—that he had attempted to break away from his would-be captors. And they, resenting his attitude, had dealt drastically with him. It had been their intention to drag Farman into the wood, where they would have been lost. But this idea had been rendered incapable of fulfilment because of the rapid approach of the motor-car.

And it was not the unknown scoundrels who were caught with Farman—it was me! At the moment I was altogether too concerned to realise the significance of the fact. I just rushed forward impulsively, and bent over Farman.

He was lying quite still, and his face was in a shocking condition. It was only too plain that some heavy instrument had crashed right upon his forehead. An ominous bruise showed there, and the skin was cut.

"Farman!" I exclaimed huskily.

He didn't answer, but his eyes opened for a second.

"The scoundrels!" I panted hotly. "They—they might have killed him!"

My gaze rested upon a stout piece of stick which lay beside the nearly unconscious junior. It was a cudgel made from a thick chunk of heavy beechwood, and there were a couple of ugly knots on the fat end of it.

I picked it up mechanically.

I suppose, just at that second, my attitude must have been very sinister. Justin B. Farman was lying on the grass, face upwards; and I was bending over him with a weapon in my hand. And I had left St. Frank's with the avowed intention of smashing Farman!

Such a piece of circumstantial evidence is by no means uncommon; the guv'nor and I had come across such cases many a time. But this was the very first occasion on which I had been the victim of a terrible misunderstanding.

For, even as I bent over the injured boy, a big motor-car glided round the bend and came into full view. For a moment I didn't turn, for I had again seen a sign of life in Farman. But he just shifted a trifle and groaned.

Then I heard a sudden cry—in Gulliver's voice.

"Great Scott! Look there! Bennett's knocked that kid down with a stick!" roared Gulliver. "The frightful young scoundrel!"

I started.

The knuts thought that I had knocked Farman down!

I turned swiftly, and dropped the cudgel to the grass. The motor-car came to a halt, and I saw that it contained Fullwood & Co. and their followers of Study G—Merrell and Marriott and Noys.

"You've just come in time!" I shouted. "Help me to get the poor chap into the car, and then drive back to the school——"

"What have you done to him?" panted Fullwood, horrified.

I gritted my teeth.

"Don't ask silly questions!" I rapped out. "You don't think I did this, do you? Two scoundrels sprang upon Farman and cudgelled him. I couldn't get here in time to stop them, and Owen major and Canham are fooling about after a butterfly. Oh, here they are!" I added as Farman's chums emerged from the wood, hot, ruffled, and triumphant.

"We collared the blighter!" shouted Owen cheerily. "A real beauty, too—— Hallo! What's up! What are you cads doing here!"

"Bennett's nearly killed Farman—that's all!" panted George Bell fearfully.

"Nearly killed—— What rot!"

Canham and Owen looked very startled. And the later suddenly gave a wild cry and dropped down into the grass. He had just seen Farman, and the American junior was a terrible sight. The blood had streamed down his face now, and the rich red of it stood out in striking contrast to the deathly pallor of his skin.

"He's dead!" gasped Owen major.

"No, he's not—only stunned," I said sharply. "It's nothing much, anyhow. Let's get him to the school!"

But, although Farman's injuries did not seem terrible to me, the other juniors were dumb with horror for a moment. In many of Nelson Lee's detective cases I had seen men battered about far worse than this—and perhaps I was case-hardened. I had, indeed, been several times smashed up myself. And so Farman's injury did not appal me as it appalled the others.

My attitude, however, was misunderstood. The fellows thought that I had struck Farman down, and I was therefore callous.

"You fearful scoundrel!" panted Owen savagely.

"Don't be a fool!" I snapped. "I didn't touch Farman! He was attacked by two men while you and Canham were chasing

that butterfly. I tried to get here in time, but I couldn't manage it."

Ralph Leslie Fullwood sneered.

"We didn't see any men!" he said nastily.

"There weren't any men, either!" added Merrell. "It's as clear as daylight. Why, you beast, you went out on purpose to smash Farman! You told the fellows you were going to find him——"

"I was going to lick him—that's all!" I interjected angrily. "I don't knock chaps down with a cudgel. Don't jaw so much, for goodness' sake! Help me to get the poor kid into the car!"

Fullwood grinned maliciously.

"Lucky thing we came along when we did!" he sneered. "You might have killed Farman outright! We're not such idiots as to accept your cock-and-bull story of two men. You didn't see any men, did you, Owen?"

"Of course not," said Owen huskily. "Look here, Bennett, why don't you confess? I suppose you did it by accident——"

"I didn't do it at all!"

"Liar!" said Gulliver hotly.

I clenched my fists, but didn't punch Gulliver's nose. After all, these fellows weren't so much to blame. The facts looked terribly significant to them. Nobody but myself had seen the strangers; and Fullwood and Co. had burst into view just at the moment when I had been bending over Farman.

They had heard me say that I had intended punishing Farman, and the obvious conclusion was that I had come across the American junior, and that I had attacked him with the stick. Owen and Canham believed the worst of me, too. The rotten part of the whole business was the fact that the real attackers hadn't been seen by a soul—except me! And how could I expect these juniors to take my word?

Fullwood & Co. were by no means sorry. They hated Farman and they hated me. In one stroke their bitter enemies were punished. Farman was injured, and I—they thought—would undoubtedly be sacked from St. Frank's.

The position was a terrible one.

And the after-consequences of misunderstanding were to prove overwhelming.

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CHAPTER 3.

The Finger of Scorn.

ST. FRANK'S was horrified.

Juniors and seniors alike were thunderstruck by the startling news which ran through the school like a gust of choking wind. Fellows stood in groups, talking in low tones. Fags of the Second and Third chattered excitedly, and with bated breath. Owen minor and Heath and Lemon, of the Third, openly jeered at me when I appeared in the lobby.

Seniors like Morrow and Starke and Phillips were very stern. Even the College House fellows could think, or talk, of nothing else but the shocking attack which had been made on Farman by—Dick Bennett, of the Remove!

For St. Frank's as a whole took it for granted that I was guilty.

The boys were hasty and excitable; they didn't pause to consider. The facts all pointed to me as the culprit—and I was condemned.

It was a blow to me—a terrible blow.

My only consolation was the certain knowledge that, in a very short time, I should be vindicated. For, of course, Farman would make it known, as soon as he was able to speak, that I hadn't touched him.

At the same time, it was rotten for me. I had been popular in the Ancient House; it was galling to realise that the boys believed so badly of me. But boys are hasty; they do not stop to consider.

Farman had been taken to the school in Fullwood's hired car, and he had been packed straight off to the school hospital—a little building standing by itself in the rear of the College House.

Nelson Lee himself (Mr. Alvington), had taken Farman in, but the guv'nor had not questioned me much. I simply told him that Farman had been attacked by two strangers, and that I had found him. Fullwood had attempted to accuse me, but the guv'nor had curtly shut him up.

Then Farman had vanished into the school hospital; and Fullwood & Co. set about their task of making St. Frank's ring with the story of the assault. Needless to say, Fullwood & Co. stated positively that I was the culprit.

And the finger of scorn was pointed at me from all sides.

This was something new for me—and the sensation was not pleasant. But I remained calm and cheerful. The juniors would take on a different tune when they knew the actual truth! My popularity, now dropped to zero in less than ten minutes, would soar higher than ever—later on.

That was a consoling thought, at all events.

But Fullwood was making hay while the sun shone. He and his fellow knuts soon spread the yarn about my brutality. The fellows were amazed and disgusted. How could I blame them? The story was terribly convincing—and my own defence was terribly weak.

As soon as ever Nelson Lee had taken the injured boy off, I walked indoors and went straight to Study C. Tregellis-West and Watson were not there. I glanced out of the window. Fullwood & Co. had divided, and they were busily imparting their news to little groups of Fossils. The Monks, too, soon heard the story. St. Frank's was humming with it.

I smiled bitterly, and sat on the edge of the table.

"This is a fine thing, anyhow!" I muttered. "Accused of bashing Farman with a cudgel! Thank goodness the asses will know the truth before bed-time. Farman wasn't badly hurt—he'll be on his feet within an hour."

I reviewed the situation.

First of all, how did I stand—exactly?

I had stated in the hearing of several Fossils my intention of finding Justin B. Farman and walloping him. The affair of the ripped jacket of Long's was forgotten now; it was completely overshadowed by this new sensation.

Well, I had sallied forth—alone. What an ass I had been not to take Sir Montie and Watson with me! But there it was—I hadn't. I had gone alone. Then I had spotted the Study H trio.

Canham and Owen major had gone off into the wood—and the two lurking scoundrels had seized the chance that Fate had placed before them. I had dashed to the rescue, but couldn't reach Farman in time.

Then Fullwood's car had been heard by the attackers, and they had both fled. When the knuts arrived on the scene I was alone with Farman. And Farman was lying on the grass, his head battered, and I held a cudgel in my fist!

And I had left St. Frank's on purpose to smash the American junior!

The affair was as clear as daylight—on the face of it.

The juniors didn't trouble to get beyond the face; they accepted the story as it was told to them. And I could only say that I hadn't done the deed. I couldn't produce a shred of proof which would convince the juniors of my innocence.

"Phew! It's warm—thundering warm!" I muttered anxiously.

I wasn't referring to the temperature; I meant the situation. I could see myself going through a pile of trouble within the next hour. After that, the truth would come out, and the fellows would be sorry.

And I decided that my best plan was to go down and mix with the others. If I remained skulking in the study, it would be assumed that I was ashamed to face my schoolfellows.

I slipped off the edge of the table, and at that moment the study door opened, and Tommy Watson and Sir Lancelot Montgomery Tregellis-West entered. They were both looking serious. I hadn't seen a frown on Sir Montie's brow before; and even now there was a lurking suggestion of lazy urbanity about his eyes. His pince-nez were fixed on tightly.

"Oh, here you are, dear fellow," he said languidly. "We've been lookin' for you."

"Well, you've found me," I smiled. "Heard anything about Farman?"

Watson regarded me queerly.

"We've heard that Dr. Banham has been sent for," he replied in a grim tone.

"Phew! I didn't think the poor chap was so badly knocked about!"

"You ought to know, anyhow," said Watson.

My eyes flashed.

"Oh! So you think I did that rotten thing, do you?" I asked bitterly.

"Do you deny it?"

"I suppose it's no use denying it," I replied. "You seem to take it for granted that I'm a blackguardly ruffian——"

"Oh, come off it!" interrupted Tommy uneasily. "Hang it all, Bennett, we must believe our own senses, I suppose? Didn't you leave us at the House steps, saying that you were going to find Farman—to pitch into him?"

"I did," I said quietly.

"And weren't you found by Fullwood & Co. bending over Farman with a chunk of wood in your hand?"

"That's true enough."

"Well, then," said Watson angrily, "what's the good of denying the thing?"

"I don't deny it!"

"You ass! You just said——"

"I don't deny going out to find Farman, and I don't deny that I was found by the knuts bending over him!" I said smoothly. "But I do deny striking the poor chap. He was attacked by two men—the two men who tried to kidnap him a week ago. You helped to rescue him on that occasion, so you ought to have more sense than to believe this rotten yarn."

Tommy Watson shifted his feet uneasily.

"Dear fellow, we're with you," said Sir Montie quietly. "Tommy's an ass, you know—he is really. He doesn't believe you struck poor Farman. We're sure that everything is all serene. Don't worry, Benny boy. We're your pals!"

"Thanks, Montie," I said softly. "And you, Tommy?"

"I was a bit knocked over at first," said Watson slowly. "But, of course, it must be as you say, Bennett. I'd forgotten about those two rotters. Farman was attacked by somebody else—not you. All the same, it—it looks——"

"It looks jolly serious," I interrupted. "I know that as well as you do, old scout. But don't worry. Farman'll be himself again by to-morrow at the latest. Then the other kids will look small. Farman'll say who went for him."

Watson looked relieved.

"What an ass I am!" he grinned. "Why, of course! Farman will say in a tick that you didn't hit him. Come on downstairs, Dicky. The fellows are in the Common-room—most of 'em—and they are saying that you are afraid to show your dial."

"I was just going down when you came in," I replied.

"Fullwood's in his element," said Sir Montie. "Fullwood's in his glory, dear boy. He's so pleased that he can't pull his face straight, begad! He's wearing a fixed smile of happiness. Fullwood's always happy when somebody's in trouble."

We went down to the Common-room.

I say "down," although the studies were on the ground floor. But the Common-room was situated in a kind of semi-basement, and we had to go down several steps to get into it.

Half the Remove was there; practically every Ancient House Removite to a man. They had gathered together to discuss the exciting affair, and Fullwood was holding forth loudly and cheerfully.

He was being listened to, and that made him feel "good." The knut-leader had been quick to see that his star was on the ascendency again, and he was grasping this opportunity to regain power in the Remove—and, incidentally, to knock me off my perch. Fullwood's intentions were quite sweet.

"I tell you Bennett did it!" declared Ralph Leslie emphatically. "Isn't it as clear as daylight? Bennett's a ruffianly hooligan——"

"Thanks!" I said, strolling into the Common-room.

"Oh, here he is," sneered Gulliver. "It's a wonder he isn't afraid to show his face!"

"Rotter!"

"Yah! Hooligan!"

"Who nearly killed Farman?"

These and many other insulting cries were flung at me. I bit my lip, but kept the smile on my face. I remembered that the juniors were sincere in their beliefs; they really thought me guilty, and they had good cause.

"I suppose Fullwood's been jawing?" I asked quietly.

"He told us what happened, anyhow," replied Handforth. "Fullwood's every kind of a rotter—we all know that. And so is Gulliver, and so is Bell, and so is Merrell, and so——"

"Oh, cut it out, you idiot!" howled Watson. "You don't believe what those rotters say, do you? You admit they're worms——"

"If you want a thick ear, Watson——" began Fullwood furiously.

"I'll take all the thick ears you can give me!" said Watson disdainfully. "I say that Bennett ain't guilty. You've only got Fullwood's word——"

"What about mine?" roared Owen major.

"Do you think Bennett did it?"

"Why, you ass, it's as plain as day!" declared Owen major. "Canham and I went into the wood after a butterfly. When we came back we found Farman lying on the ground, unconscious, and Bennett standing over him——"

"That's no proof," interjected Watson tartly.

"Proof enough for me!"

"Smilers"

Jokes from readers wanted for this feature. If you know a good rib-tickler, send it along to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4. Splendid pocket wallets, penknives, and grand prizes are awarded for all efforts published.

ONCE AGAIN.

Teacher: "Jones, how many more times have I got to tell you about eating sweets during lessons?"

Jones: "Only once more, sir. I've just got one left!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to R. Noakes, Park Farm, Aldingbourne, Chichester.

RECKLESS DRIVING.

First Gent (with badly damaged hand): "I got this through reckless driving."

Second Gent: "Motor-car or motor-cycle?"

First Gent: "Neither—a nail!"

A penknife has been awarded to D. Isted, 65, Kidmore Road, Reading.

EEL AND TOE.

Boy Angler (to farmer): "I've just caught one of your big eels."

Farmer: "And now you're going to catch one of my big toes!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to J. Dobbs, 125, Ripon Road, Winton, Bournemouth.

WINDY!

Sergeant: "Hallo, another raw 'un! Where have you blown from?"

Recruit: "Came in with the last draft, sir!"

A penknife has been awarded to E. Rodway, 6, Oriel Cottages, Tiverton.

ASKED FOR IT.

Bill: "That half crown you lent me was counterfeit."

Sam: "Well, you said you wanted it bad!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to G. Munford, 14, Cherry Lane, Norwich.

"Of course there's proof!" shouted Fullwood. "Any chap who believes Bennett innocent is a lunatic!"

Sir Montie beamed.

"I believe Bennett's innocent!" he said urbanely.

"Then you're a lunatic—a babblin' idiot!" said Fullwood.

"You're awfully polite," said Tregellis-West, without being ruffled in the least. "I believe in Bennett's innocence, because I've got cause. If it wasn't such a jolly fag, I'd make a speech—I would really!"

"Go it, Montie!" roared Watson. "Speech—speech!"

Tregellis-West sighed, and got on to a chair. Then he surveyed the excited Removites through his pince-nez.

"Dear fellows, you're all wrong," he said lazily. "Bennett's as harmless as a kitten. He wouldn't knock a fellow about. Have you forgotten that affair eight or nine days ago? Wasn't Farman collared by two unknown bounders, an' carried through Bellton Wood? An' didn't Mr. Alvington lead the way through the wood, and didn't we rescue Farman?"

"That's got nothing to do with this business!" said Fullwood angrily.

"Dear Fullwood, you're off the rails—you are, really!" drawled Sir Montie. "Benny went out to give Farman a talkin' to. Suppose I'd gone instead? Suppose I'd seen a couple of ruffians attackin' Farman——"

"Bennett attacked him!" shouted Hubbard impatiently.

"Did he? That's the question—the burnin' question," said Montie. "Supposin' I saw two awful bounders goin' for Farman? What should I do? I should rush to his rescue. And supposin' those same two awful bounders heard a motor-car comin' along? What would they do? They'd slither away, dear fellows. What would be the result? I should be found with Farman—alone! And, as likely as not, I should be ass enough to pick up the cudgel which had been used. Bennett did that. He was an ass. But I don't blame him."

Tregellis-West beamed round amiably.

And the Removites were certainly impressed.

"Well, I'm blessed if I know what to think," said Handforth. "Bennett's a good sort—at least, I always thought he was. And it doesn't seem to fit, you know. Bennett ain't the chap to use a cudgel!"

Fullwood glared round angrily.

"Oh, so you're takin' notice of this fashion-plate—what?" he asked.

"No; we're not taking any notice of you, Fullwood!" said Watson sweetly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was talking about Tregellis-West!" roared Fullwood.

"Oh, I see!" grinned Watson. "You should be more explicit. You're a fashion-plate, you know—a freak one. That waistcoat of yours is good enough to do duty for a loud-speaker—it's so giddy loud!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This isn't a time for rotting!" snarled Fullwood. "I say that Bennett's guilty! He's a crawling, loathsome hooligan! He

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THE REASON.

Old Lady (who has pestered zoo-keeper with many questions): "Why do giraffes have such long necks?"

Zoo-keeper: "So that they can't hear the silly questions that some people ask!"

A penknife has been awarded to T. Thorpe, 4, Bolton Road, Wednesfield.

NOTHING TO BOAST ABOUT.

A certain firm had the following advice printed on its salary receipt forms: "Your salary is your personal business and should not be disclosed to anyone."

The new employee, in signing the receipt, added: "I won't mention it to anybody. I'm just as much ashamed of it as you are!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to S. Elliott, 16, Orchard Street, Drayton, Northants.

THE BIG PUSH.

With perspiring face and shortness of breath, the wealthy motorist, who had run out of petrol, entered a country garage, only to find the sole occupant was a lazy-looking youth.

"Here, boy," he barked, "I want some petrol—quick. Get a move on!"

The youth regarded the motorist with a smile, but made no movement.

"You'll never get anywhere like that,' went on the motorist. "Push is essential in this world. When I was young I pushed, and it got me where I am to-day."

"Well, guv'nor," drawled the youth, "I reckon you'll have to start pushing again, 'cos we haven't got a drop of petrol in the place!"

A penknife has been awarded to K. Lampard, "Mayfields," High Street, Pewsey, Wilts.

WHAT A DUNCE!

Father (to son who is shaking a rabbit and saying: "Come on, now; what is seven and seven?"): "What are you doing that for?"

Son: "Teacher said rabbits multiply rapidly, but this fellow can't even add!"

A grand prize has been awarded to W. Davis, 227, Donald Street, Winnipeg, Canada.

EASY.

"Well," said the limousine owner condescendingly to the owner of a baby car, "there's one advantage about your car—if it catches fire you can easily blow it out!"

A penknife has been awarded to D. Blows, 36, Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames.

ought to be kicked out of St. Frank's! If he ain't sacked, I'm going to write to my pater to complain to the governors! We're not goin' to have murderers and ruffians——"

"Fullwood!"

Everybody stood stock still. Unnoticed, Mr. Alvington had entered the Common-room, and he had heard most of Fullwood's remarks. And Nelson Lee, in his grey-whiskered disguise, was looking very stern.

"Fullwood!" he repeated sharply.

"I didn't know you were here, sir!" said Fullwood boldly. "Masters don't usually come into the junior Common-rooms without lettin' the fellows know——"

"Silence, you insolent boy!" rapped out the guv'nor curtly. "The words you were giving utterance to were wild and disgraceful. You were referring, I presume, to Bennett when you mentioned murderers and ruffians?"

"Bennett tried to kill Farman, anyhow, sir!" said Fullwood impudently.

Nelson Lee's eyes flashed.

"I will not deal with you now, Fullwood," he said quietly. "But if you make any such remarks in my hearing again I shall take you straight before the headmaster. As a punishment for what you have already said, you will write me five hundred lines. And you will come to my study before lessons in the morning."

"What for?" shouted Fullwood.

"To receive a caning," replied Mr. Alvington tartly. "And remember, Fullwood, that I will not allow you to shout when you address me. You appear to think that you are a person of some importance—while, as a matter of fact, you are merely a particularly ignorant and impertinent upstart!"

Fullwood glared, but he didn't say anything further.

"I had decided that two cuts with the cane would be sufficient, Fullwood," went on the guv'nor. "Under the circumstances, you will receive four. And you will bring those lines to me to-morrow evening. If they are badly written, I shall order you to write them again."

"Serve him jolly well right!" whispered Handforth.

"Hear, hear!"

Ralph Leslie Fullwood scowled, and turned his back. Nelson Lee looked at me, and smiled.

"Bennett, you are wanted in Dr. Stafford's study," he said. "Follow me."

"Yes, sir," I said quietly.

And we left the Common-room together. We left it in a buzz.

CHAPTER 4.

Farman Clears Me.

NELSON LEE did not say a word until we were in the Head's study, and the door was tightly closed. There were two doors—an ordinary door, and one covered with green baize a little distance from it. Thus the Head was completely shut off from all school sounds. And his study was absolutely private.

The only occupants of the book-lined, sombre apartment were Nelson Lee, Dr. Stafford, and me. Dr. Stafford knew the actual truth about the identities of the guv'nor and me, but nobody else at St. Frank's did. In fact, the only other individual in the world who knew the truth was Sir Rupert Manderley, one of the school governors. But I'm wrong. I've just remembered that the guv'nor let old Detective-Inspector Morley, of Scotland Yard, into the secret.

"How's Farman, sir?" I asked anxiously.

Nelson Lee sat down and lit a cigarette.

"Farman is not seriously hurt, Nipper," he replied easily, using my own name with freedom in this private sanctum. "Dr. Banham is with him now, and it seems that the only damage is a bad bruise, and very slight concussion."

"That's good, anyhow," I said, with relief.

Dr. Stafford coughed.

"I am very worried—er—Bennett," he said. "I—I suppose I had better call you Bennett, since that is your name in the school." The Head smiled. "I haven't quite accustomed myself to the fact that you are not one of my pupils at all——"

"But I am, sir!" I put in. "While I'm at St. Frank's, I'm just a junior schoolboy. I'm enjoying myself, too! But this affair seems to have jarred everything badly. I'm rather awkwardly placed, sir."

The Head nodded.

"I was speaking to Morrow a few minutes ago," he said. "Morrow tells me that the boys—particularly the juniors—are openly accusing you of attacking Farman. That is ridiculous. How can the boys think such a thing?"

"Well, the facts look a bit black on the face, sir," I replied. "You see, I was found with Farman just after the attack—and I had the cudgel in my hand. I'd picked it up mechanically. You don't think I——"

Dr. Stafford laughed.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "My dear lad, as if I should suspect you of committing such a deed! Upon my soul, what a thought! You are Mr. Nelson Lee's assistant—you are quite above suspicion!"

"You mustn't look so serious, young 'un," smiled Nelson Lee. "Farman isn't much hurt—you have been knocked about far more severely on more than one occasion. At the same time, the whole affair is disagreeable. Tell us exactly what happened."

"Right you are, sir," I said, sitting on the edge of the Head's desk without thinking. Then I saw him smiling. "Oh, I'm sorry, sir——"

"That's all right, my boy, you are privileged!" said Dr. Stafford genially.

I could tell by his tone, and by the guv'nor's tone, that there was very little the matter with Justin B. Farman. As the guv'nor had said, just a bad bruise.

Just for a moment I hesitated. I couldn't tell the Head about my suspicions regarding

Farman and the slashed Eton jacket; so I slurred over that bit.

"I went to look for Farman, sir," I said. "I was a bit wild with him over something, and I told the other fellows that I was going to knock him into the middle of next week—or words to that effect. He had just gone out with Canham and Owen, his study-mates."

As briefly as possible, but without any omissions, I related the events that had taken place. Nelson Lee and the Head listened with interest, and they both looked somewhat grave when I had finished.

"H'm! The facts, as you have told them, seem rather awkward," said Nelson Lee musingly. "I can quite understand the boys assuming that you inflicted Farman's injury, Nipper. Dr. Stafford and I, of course, accept your story without question; we know only too well that there is some mystery connected with Farman which, at the moment, I confess, I cannot fathom. But we cannot allow you to be under such a terrible cloud."

"Most of the fellows are against me," I said slowly.

"Boys are hot-headed—they do not take into consideration an alternative," said the Head. "The circumstantial evidence against you is strong, Bennett, and the boys have not paused to probe deeply into the matter. We shall have to put that right. I shall, if necessary, publicly exonerate you from all blame——"

"But you'll have to prove my innocence, sir," I put in quickly. "The fellows will want proof, you know. If you don't provide any proof, they'll think that you're just hushing the matter up, and favouring me."

Nelson Lee threw his cigarette end into the fireplace.

"Farman will provide the proof, Nipper," he said easily. "Farman will, of course, clear you in a moment. We will visit him in a few minutes, and hear his own story. Now, tell me, did you see the two strangers clearly?"

I shook my head.

"They were right on the other side of the meadow, sir," I replied. "I couldn't say who they were, but it's obvious that they're the same two rotters who tried to spirit Farman away on that other occasion."

"And Farman wouldn't speak," murmured Nelson Lee. "Dear me! Supposing he refuses to speak now? That will be awkward—very awkward, Nipper."

"I was thinking of that, guv'nor," I said.

"But what is this mystery concerning the boy?" went on the detective. "Why is he attacked? Why won't he speak? It's an infernal bother, Dr. Stafford. If Farman is still obstinate, I shall certainly take measures of my own—measures which will bring the truth to light."

"It seems to me that the unknown attackers are desperate, sir," I remarked. "Just fancy them trying to kidnap Farman in the open daylight. That's because they knew they'll never have another chance at night, of course. They realised, of course, that the game was impossible; when they heard Fullwood's motor-car coming along they abandoned their victim. If they'd had the spot to themselves they would have carried Farman through the wood—or they would have waited in the wood, I dare say, until darkness came on."

Nelson Lee rose to his feet.

"We will go to Farman," he said. "We will hear his version of the story."

Dr. Stafford came with us, and we reached the school hospital by a rear route. The local medico, Dr. Banham, a cheery little fat man, met us at the door. He was smiling.

"The boy is all right," he said. "Getting along famously. But I shall have to keep him in bed for a week, at least. We don't want complications, eh? The cut on his forehead wasn't much—a mere graze."

"Is he conscious?" asked the Head.

"Conscious? Bless my soul, of course he is!" declared the doctor. "He has been conscious all the time. He was knocked over a bit—that's all. Dazed, you know. Can you go up to him? Why, certainly—certainly! I'll look in again to-morrow, although it's not really necessary."

And Dr. Banham bustled off to his car, which was waiting in the Triangle.

We went into the neat little hospital, and found Justin B. Farman in one of the wards, all by himself. The school nurse was preparing a meal for him. The American junior smiled cheerfully as we all went in.

"I'm really sorry, sir," he said, addressing Dr. Stafford. "I guess this'll cause you a heap of trouble, and I just hate to cause people trouble. Say I'm all right. Guess I'll be able to take lessons to-morrow."

The Head smilingly shook his grey locks.

"Oh, no. You'll have to remain in bed for several days, Farman," he replied. "Are you comfortable? How is your head?"

"Why, I guess it's aching a heap," smiled Farman. "There's a kind of brass band playing ragtime tunes inside my skull, sir. They're all playing out of tune, and I'm real fuddled. Say, it's queer."

Nelson Lee stepped to Farman's bedside.

"Tell me, Farman," he said quietly. "Who attacked you?"

The American boy became very grave.

"I guess I was hit so quick that I couldn't properly see——"

"Come, come, Farman!" interjected Lee sharply. "That won't do!"

"It don't matter a darn who hit me, does it, sir?" asked Farman. "Say, I'm not hurt; they didn't do any real damage. I'm a whole lot worried, and I guess I'll be more worried still if I let loose all that's in my mind."

"Look here, Farman, these men have attacked you on two separate and distinct occasions," said Nelson Lee. "They will attack you again, in all probability. Don't you see that the position is an impossible one? The men must be traced and arrested."

"Arrested!" said Farman quickly. "Guess that'll mean—penitentiary!"

"It will mean prison, Farman," said the guv'nor. "You are not safe while these enemies of yours are at liberty."

"Say, they're not—enemies, sir!"

"Friends do not commit a brutal assault ——"

"That was a mistake, sure," said Farman. "I kinder wriggled, and my head got round where it shouldn't. Say, I'm real anxious to let the whole matter drop. If I don't choose to speak, you can't force me, sir—can you?"

"Of course not, Farman," put in the Head. "But why are you not straightforward? I warn you that if another affair of this sort happens, you will have to leave the school. I really cannot have St. Frank's dragged into disrepute. Good gracious me! Parents will be nervous of entrusting me with their sons!"

Farman looked very pained.

"Snakes! I hadn't thought of that, sir!" he said frankly. "Why, say, there'll be no more of it. But I just can't say anything more."

"You will not tell us who attacked you?" asked Lee.

"No, sir."

The guv'nor bit his lip.

"Then perhaps you will tell us who did not attack you?" he asked.

"I don't quite get you, sir."

"The fellows are saying that I bowled you over, Farman," I put in. "They think that I hit you with that cudgel—and I'm in a bit of a fix."

Justin B. Farman stared at me in astonishment.

"Waal, you surprise me!" he ejaculated. "The fellers think that you knocked me over? Say, the fellers are sure—loony. You, Bennett? You didn't touch me with your little finger!"

"Bennett is exonerated, then," smiled Nelson Lee.

"Why, sure!" said Farman. "Bennett's a friend of mine!"

I was, of course, vindicated—I had reckoned on this, and the chaps would feel rather sorry for themselves when the Head stated the facts.

But Farman would not say any more.

As to who his attackers were, or why they were persecuting him, we were left to imagine for ourselves. Upon the whole, the matter was not so serious as I had supposed. The assault upon Farman had been brutal, but not grave.

We left the hospital, Nelson Lee very thoughtful, and went back to the Head's study. Then the guv'nor and I were left alone while Dr. Stafford went out and called a general assembly of the school in Big Hall.

When the Head came back he smiled at me.

"You had better go now, my boy," he said. "Take your usual place in the Remove. I shall soon remove all stigma from your name. It is a pity Farman was so obstinate; but he said sufficient, at all events, to clear your name completely."

Two minutes later I was in the wide passage leading to Big Hall. It was thronged with fellows—seniors and juniors.

"Hallo! Here's the little bounder!" said Grayson, of the Fifth. "Going to be sacked—eh? You deserve it, you bloodthirsty young rascal!"

"Rats!" I said cheerfully.

"Of course he's going to be sacked," said Gulliver. "That's what the school's called together for. Nothing else, I suppose?"

"A flogging as well, I should say," grinned Fullwood. "Look at the way he's brazening it out! You might think he was innocent!"

Handforth grabbed my arm.

"Now then, own up!" he commanded magisterially. "Might as well, now that you're to get the sack!"

"Who's going to get the sack?" I asked.

"You are, ain't you?"

"First I've heard of it!"

"Oh, you'll hear all about it in a minute or two!" chuckled Fullwood. "By Jove! You don't mean to say that the Head's goin' to let you off with a public flogging!"

"I don't mean to say anything—to you!" I retorted.

Tregellis-West and Watson hurried along the passage and grabbed me. They were both looking a little anxious.

"What's the verdict, dear Benny?" asked Sir Montie.

"All serene!" I replied. "I'm exonerated!"

"Oh, rippin'—really rippin'," beamed Montie. "Dear boy, I knew it. I could tell by your face that you were innocent. I'm a wonder at readin' faces. Now I can read all sorts of guilt on Fullwood's face!"

Ralph Leslie Fullwood didn't hear that, or there might have been trouble in the passage; not that Sir Montie would have minded.

I went to my place with the rest of the Remove. The Head, I saw, was standing on the raised platform at the end of the great hall, talking with Mr. Alvington and Mr. Crowell.

And as the Head stepped forward, facing the great throng of boys, there was an expectant hush.

CHAPTER 5.

Trouble Brewing!

DR. STAFFORD cleared his throat.

"I have called the school together," he began in grave tones, "because it is necessary for me to make a public statement concerning a certain boy in the Fourth Form. As you all know, Farman, of the Fourth Form, has been brutally attacked, and injured. Happily, his injury is not at all serious."

There was a murmur of relief.

"That fact, however, does not lessen the guilt of the ruffians who assaulted him," went on the Head. "Word has come to my ears of a preposterous rumour which, I believe, has been circulating throughout the whole

I was amazed to see two men burst through the hedge behind where Farman was sitting, and drag him backwards! Instantly I realised that the new boy was being kidnapped, and I rushed to the rescue.

school. I am referring to the rumour concerning Bennett, of the Fourth Form."

Fullwood & Co. looked astonished.

"Rumour—what?" whispered Fullwood. "It's a dead cert—not a rumour!"

"Certain boys have maliciously declared that Bennett committed the attack upon Farman," continued Dr. Stafford. "That statement is not only untrue, but grossly unfair to the lad in question. Bennett did his utmost to rescue Farman from the clutches of the men who assailed him, but, unfortunately, Bennett was unable to reach the spot in time. I now wish to state—I do state, emphatically—that Bennett is entirely and absolutely innocent of the suspicion which has been circulated throughout the school."

The Head paused, and I saw scores of fellows looking at me, most of them with surprised expressions. Fullwood & Co. were frankly disappointed.

"Rot!" muttered Fullwood. "It's a hush-up—that's what it is!"

"You rotter!" hissed Handforth. "Bennett's exonerated!"

The Head cleared his throat again.

"Unfortunately, Farman does not know—or declines to state—who attacked him," he went on. "He has positively declared, however, that Bennett had no hand in the affair. Farman has assured me that Bennett is innocent, and that assurance from the victim himself is, I imagine, sufficient evidence of Bennett's innocence.

"Bennett's story is that he saw two men fall upon Farman and knock him to the ground," said Dr. Stafford. "By an unlucky chance, Farman's own companions had gone into the wood for some reason of their own, and so they are quite unable to bear out any portion of Bennett's statement. However, the lad is quite exonerated, and I have felt it my duty to make that statement publicly. Needless to say, every effort will be made to trace the ruffians who were actually responsible. That is all, my boys. You may dismiss."

And the school dismissed.

Grayson, of the Fifth, passed me, grinning.

"I called you a bloodthirsty young scoundrel, didn't I?" he said. "I was wrong, kid—and I'm glad. As a matter of fact, I didn't believe the yarn from the first!"

"Oh, no!" I said sarcastically. "We all know that!"

Grayson went off, and I was surrounded by a crowd of Removites.

"Sorry I doubted you, old son," said Handforth genially. "But the thing was a bit thick, wasn't it? But if you didn't whack Farman, who did?"

"No good asking me," I replied. "Farman knows, but he won't speak."

"Why won't he speak?" sneered Fullwood.

"Because he chooses to keep silent, I suppose," I replied. "Old Alvy tried to make him tell us everything, but he wouldn't."

"Of course not!" grinned Fullwood.

"What are you getting at, you cad?" demanded Hubbard.

"Oh, nothing!" replied Fullwood. "But it's queer—that's all I say. If Farman had told the Head who the men were, or what they were like, it would have been a different thing. But he didn't describe the men, because there weren't any men to describe!"

"That means you still think Bennett guilty?" bawled Handforth.

"It means—what it does mean!" said Fullwood enigmatically.

And he went off with his chums.

I went to Study C with Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West. It was still daylight, but too late for cricket. So we went to our study for prep.

"Well, I'm glad that's over," I said with a laugh. "It was rather rotten, being suspected of such a beastly act. And, now I'm calm, I can't believe Farman slit up Long's coat at all."

"Who did, then?" asked Tommy.

"Fullwood, I expect—or else Long himself," I replied. "Don't you remember the rebuff Farman gave Fullwood just after lessons? Farman declined to go to tea with the knuts, and said a few home truths at the same time."

"Begad! You're right, dear fellow," said Sir Montie lazily. "You are always right, if we come to that. Fullwood's a vindictive merchant, you know. He remembers things. He lets 'em stew. Then he opens a safety valve, and something mean and caddish is the result."

I nodded.

"He wanted to get his own back on Farman, and so arranged things with Long. He knew that I should be down on Farman like a hundred of bricks," I said. "He was cunning enough to realise that he'd caused a rupture between Farman and me. And that's just what he wanted. I dare say it was all done on the spur of the moment, when he saw Farman going up to the dormitory. Fullwood wouldn't mind handing Long a quid for the damage to his coat."

"Anyhow, we'll ask Farman about it when he comes out of the hospital," said Watson. "If he says he didn't do it, I'll take his word."

We settled down to our prep. I was quite elated now, for I knew that my position in the Remove hadn't been shaken. But I was soon—very soon—to receive a rude shock.

I didn't get on with my prep. very well. I was thinking. And I determined to have a few words with the guv'nor before going to bed. I wanted to discuss the affair with him. Why hadn't Farman spoken? It was very strange, to say the least. And I was just a little annoyed. It was silly of the fellow to make a mystery over nothing.

"Dreamin'—what?" drawled Tregellis-West.

I looked up, and grinned. I'd been chewing my penholder.

"No, I wasn't dreaming, Montie," I replied. "Just thinking, that's all. But I suppose I shall have to get on with prep.——"

There was a thump at the door, and then a head came in. The head belonged to Timothy Griffith, of the Remove—a denizen of Study J.

"You fellows are wanted in the Common-room," he said, with a curious look at me.

"We can be wanted, then," said Watson, "Clear off, Griff—we're busy."

"It's a House meeting of the Remove," said Griffith. "Every fellow's got to be there. I'm just rounding up the stragglers."

"A House meeting!" said Tommy. "What the dickens for?"

"Something on," replied Griffith. "You'd better go."

And the head disappeared, and we heard its owner rounding up some more stragglers from Study B, next door. I looked at my two chums curiously. Somehow, I guessed that I was the chief figure of that Form meeting.

"Shall we go?" I asked.

"I s'pose we'd better," said Tommy Watson. "If it's a House meeting, we may be wanted to vote for something. Every chap's supposed to turn up at a House meeting. Of course, it's only the Remove."

Sir Montie sighed.

"More exertion," he yawned. "It's gettin' wearisome, dear fellows. I shall go on strike—I shall, really. Form meetin's ain't the thing after all the excitement we've had. But there's no rest for the wicked; that's why Fullwood's always busy, I s'pose!"

We left our prep and went along to the Common-room. It was really the time of the evening when every fellow ought to have been busy at prep, but work was put completely aside for the time being.

The Common-room was crowded with Ancient House Removites. They were there to a man. And Ralph Leslie Fullwood was standing on the table, holding forth loudly and excitedly.

Fullwood was eloquent, and he was receiving a great amount of attention. True, Handforth was bawling out a speech on his own account in one corner, but his audience seemed to consist solely of Church and McClure.

"Here he is!" said Fullwood, as I came in. "Here's the hooligan!"

I flushed angrily.

"You'd better not say that again, Fullwood," I said quietly. "I've licked you once, and I'll lick you again for two pins. You know jolly well that the Head cleared me of that rotten charge——"

"Did he clear you?" sneered Fullwood.

"Yes, he did!"

"I'm not so sure of that," went on Fullwood calmly. "This is a Form meetin' to discuss the subject. It looks to me as if you deceived the Head. Anyhow, we're goin' to thrash the subject out—now!"

"Begad! He's goin' as strong as ever!" murmured Tregellis-West. "And we fondly imagined that it was all over! Have you got some fresh evidence, Fullwood, dear bounder? Have you found the bloodstained knife, or the dented revolver bullet? I'll wire to Scotland Yard——"

"Make that ass quiet, for goodness' sake!" growled Fullwood. "We don't want any fresh evidence—we've got all the evidence we need. Bennett knocked Farman down, and I'm going to prove it! I'm goin' to prove that Bennett's a lyin' cad, and a beastly hooligan!"

Tommy Watson strode forward.

"Look here, I protest against this!" he shouted "I suppose you're not going to let that cad Fullwood influence you? You know he hates Bennett, and he's doing this out of sheer spite. Don't listen to him!"

"Rag him, I say," drawled Montie. "Give him the giddy frog's-march. I'll stand an' laugh. I'm willin' to do my share!"

The Removites were uncertain for a moment.

"Give him a fair hearing—give 'em both a fair hearing," said Armstrong. "Let's have Fullwood first, and then Bennett. Bennett'll have to answer the charge. If he can't do it satisfactorily, we'll have a trial!"

"That's it—a trial!" yelled Teddy Long. "I'll be judge!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be silly asses!" said Long. "I'll make a fine judge—— Yow—ow! Oh, you beast, Handforth!"

"Shut up, then!" said Handforth, glaring. "You're the cause of the whole trouble, anyhow—you with your ragtime jacket!"

"Who votes for a trial?" shouted Gulliver.

A great number of hands went up, and I looked on grimly.

"It's all tommy rot!" declared Watson hotly. "What's the good of a trial? Hasn't the Head publicly stated that Bennett's innocent? You're not going to doubt the Head's word, are you, you fatheads? Ain't Dr. Stafford's decision good enough for you?"

"A trial! A trial!" yelled a score of voices.

"It's rottenly unfair, giving a fellow a trial after he's proved innocent!" roared Watson furiously. "The whole thing's thin, anyhow. Bennett only meant to give Farman a jawing. Do you think he'd smash him with a cudgel just because he ruined one of Long's measly jackets?"

"Bennett lost his temper," said Fullwood. "He an' Farman had a fight, I expect, and then Bennett, in a savage mood, picked up that stick——"

"Rot!"

"Utter rot, dear lads!" said Sir Montie.

"Well, a trial won't do any harm if Bennett's innocent," remarked Handforth.

"If!" bellowed Watson. "There's no 'if'! We all know——"

I stepped forward calmly.

"I'm not afraid of a trial," I said. "Why should I be? If the fellows want a trial, let 'em have it. But Fullwood's not going to be the judge! I'll be firm on that point. The judge has got to be a disinterested party."

"That's me!" said Edward Oswald Handforth promptly.

"No, it isn't!" cut in Watson, who had stood by me nobly, and was now hot with anger at the injustice of the whole proceeding. "If there's going to be a trial—and the whole idea is rotten—we'll have a College House chap as judge. That's only fair. And we're not going to have any of the knuts on the jury!"

"That's reasonable enough," said Hubbard.

There was considerable excitement for a few moments. The majority of the fellows believed in my innocence. I knew that. But the idea of a Form trial appealed to them, and they were anxious to have it, just for the novelty and the excitement. The jury, too, would be all in my favour from the start. So what did it matter?

"Oh, get on with it!" I said impatiently. "I'm willing!"

Fullwood gave me a malicious glance. Even Fullwood knew that I was innocent, but he meant to blacken me if he could. He meant to convince the Removites that I was guilty. The fact that I was innocent didn't worry Fullwood in the least. If he had seen the whole affair, if he had witnessed the actual attack by the two men, he would have done just the same as he was doing now. He saw a chance of regaining his old power in the Remove, and he had seized that chance. Fullwood wanted a victory.

"I don't see why we should go outside of our own House for a judge," he exclaimed warmly. "That's rot! Merrell can be judge, or Bell——"

"One of your own pals!" snapped Hubbard. "No fear! We're going to have a proper trial if we have one at all. I suggest Christine or Oldfield. Christine'll be best, as he's the junior skipper in the College House."

"He'll do!" said Watson. "Canham, cut across and fetch Bob Christine over here, and bring half a dozen other fellows for the jury. It's only fair that the jury should be disinterested, too."

There was a buzz of approval, and Fullwood didn't utter the protest which was on his lips. But he'd got his way about the trial, and he meant to bring in a verdict of "guilty" if he could possibly manage it.

Events promised to be interesting!

CHAPTER 6.

Tried by the Form.

BOB CHRISTINE & CO., of Study Q, in the College House, strolled into the Remove Common-room in the Ancient House. Bob Christine and Roddy Yorke and Charlie Talmadge were looking amused.

There were several other Monks, too—Harry Oldfield, and Len Clapson, and Billy Nation, of Study Z. Then came Turner and Page and

Harron, the Study X trio. The Common-room was pretty well packed.

"What's the trouble over here?" asked Bob Christine genially. "Can't you manage your own little affairs?"

"Easily enough," replied Tommy Watson promptly. "But you chaps are disinterested. Dick Bennett's going to be tried for assaulting Farman——"

"Why, the Head cleared him of that charge!" said Talmadge.

"Of course he did! But these asses have been listening to Fullwood, and they want a Form trial," said Watson bitterly. "Bennett's agreeable, and so we're going to have it. The whole thing's rotten!"

"Sure to be, if Fullwood suggested it," observed Oldfield.

Fullwood scowled.

"I knew what it would be if we had these beastly Monkeys here!" he said savagely. "Clear 'em all out! We can manage a trial on our own, I suppose?"

"Rats!"

"Stay here, you Monks! You're the jury."

"Oh, we're the jury!" grinned Clapson. "Who's the judge? Not Fullwood? He'll pass sentence before there's any evidence given! Can't expect any sort of justice from Fullwood, you know."

"If any of the masters came here and found this going on," I exclaimed, "he'd punish the whole Form. So you'd better get it over as quickly as possible. I've been publicly cleared by the Head himself, and I've got nothing to be afraid of. Pile in as soon as you like!"

"We want you to be judge, Christine," said Watson.

"Any old thing!" grinned Bob Christine. "Where do I sit?"

There were lots of tables and chairs in the Common-room, and one of the tables was dragged against the wall and a chair placed upon it. Somebody got a wig from the property box of the Remove Dramatic Society, and with this on his head Bob Christine mounted the table and sat down.

Other chairs were placed for the jury. The jury was composed of the eight Monks and four Fossils—Hubbard, McClure, Church, and Handforth. Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West preferred to stand out.

"Hold on!" said Handforth. "What about counsel?"

"Who's going to prosecute?" grinned Oldfield from the jury-box.

"I am," said Fullwood. "I'm counsel for the prosecution."

"Who's going to defend the prisoner?" asked Christine.

Nobody answered for a moment; then Tregellis-West lounged forward.

"I'll be counsel for the defence," he yawned. "It's a fag and a bore, but I don't mind. Better than lookin' on. Lookin' on makes me tired. I'll make the openin' speech, if you like——"

"Ass! Counsel for the defence doesn't jaw first!" said Handforth.

"That's a pity," sighed Sir Montie. "I wanted to get it over, you know."

"Where's the bar?" inquired Hubbard, grinning. "Must have a bar for the prisoner, you know, and a witness-box, too. If you're going to have a trial, let's do it properly."

I was placed between a couple of chairs, and the witness-box was composed of a square made out of chairs, placed back to back. One side was left empty for the witness to enter.

"Now we're ready!" said Fullwood, with relish. "Prisoner at the bar, do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"Oughtn't I to ask that?" grinned Christine, from his elevated seat.

"This ain't a proper court," said Fullwood. "The main thing is to prove the prisoner's guilt——"

"That's what the prosecuting counsel's for," said Watson. "He tries to get a conviction even if he knows the prisoner's innocent. That's justice. Anyhow, it's supposed to be justice. Pay counsel a big enough fee, and he'll get you off all right. That's the other side."

"Shut up, Watson!" said Fullwood, jamming his eyeglass into his eye. "Prisoner at the bar——"

"Oh, get on with it!" I interrupted. "I plead not guilty."

"What is your name?" asked Fullwood.

"I suppose you've never heard it?" I asked sarcastically.

"You must refrain from making irrelevant remarks," said the prosecuting counsel. "Answer the question!"

"Bill Brown," I said calmly.

"Oh, this is rot!" said Fullwood, looking round. "What's the good of trying to hold a trial if the prisoner acts the goat? We'll pass over that point. The prisoner's name is Richard Bennett, and he stands in the dock accused of causing serious bodily injury to Justin B. Farman. I call Thomas Watson as my first witness."

"Rats! I'm a witness for the defence," said Watson tartly.

"All right! I'll cross-examine you later," said counsel. "Owen major!"

"Hallo!" said Owen major. "I'm not going to give evidence——"

"Yes, you are. Get into the witness-box."

Owen major did so.

"Now, Owen major, you were with Farman just before the assault," said Fullwood. "How long were you away from him?"

"Only about five minutes."

"You plunged into the wood with Canham?"

"Yes, we were after a butterfly."

"Never mind that!" said counsel. "Did you hear any suspicious sounds while you were in the wood? Did you hear anybody in the wood with you?"

"Yes."

"Eh?" Fullwood started. "You did hear somebody?"

"Of course I did!"

There's Grand News For You In—

CHEERIO, CHUMS!

First of all, I must thank very much the hundreds of readers who have written in to me during the last few days. A week ago I told you my post-bag had been trebled. I little knew what was coming! I have been inundated with letters of congratulation of our new programme. Every letter has been full of praise for it, and it has given me unbounded pleasure to learn that my choice of stories has proved so vastly successful with you all. I was quietly confident that the request programme would be popular, but I never dreamed that it would be received with such delight as expressed in readers' letters.

Well, chums, I am not resting on my laurels, so to speak. I am out for better things still. I have been looking round for a new super series to follow up Mr. Hope's excellent stories, and you will all be pleased to know that a really tip-top author is the writer of this new series. For thrills, humour, and nerve-tingling adventure these coming yarns cannot be beaten. That's all I shall tell you for the present, but in next week's issue you'll learn all about this new super series.

You'll learn, too, about another new feature which will commence in the same issue. It is a humorous feature, calculated even to make a cat smile.

Tell all your pals the good news, and see that you don't miss next week's splendid number. It contains another grand story programme which is much too good to miss. The St. Frank's school story is entitled:

"NIPPER'S TRIUMPH!"

It is the final story in the series about Justin B. Farman, the new boy from America. There has been a strange mystery connected with Farman ever since he came to St. Frank's, and in the next thrilling yarn this is cleared up by Nipper and Nelson Lee. Nipper also clears himself of the serious charge against him, and Fullwood & Co. receive a nasty set-back from Nipper's triumph. You will enjoy this topping tale, chums, more than you have enjoyed any of the others, good as they have been.

The next thrill-packed story of the menace of the yellow races in 1943, entitled, "The Phantom Fleet!" concludes Mr. Hope's stirring series. Val, Mike, and Pompey, with the Allied Fleets, get to grips with the almost invisible fleet of the Mongolians. This gripping story is a winner all the way.

More rousing chapters of "Open Throttle!" "Smilers," and another "talk" with your Editor complete our next bumper number. Be on the safe side—place a regular order for the NELSON LEE with your newsagent to-day!

GRAND FILM STAR DANCE.

I have received a very interesting letter from Mr. F. W. Minde, who is a member of the St. Frank's League. He is the secretary of the Imperial Film Club, and the object of this club is to further the interests of British films. Many of the members, who number over 1,000 throughout the world, were obtained by "Pen Pal" notices appearing in the Old Paper. Mr. Minde informs me that the I.F.C. is running a Grand Film Star Dance at the Portman Rooms, Baker Street, London, W.1, next Saturday, March 11th. London readers who are interested should write to Mr. Minde, 100, Dalston Lane, London, E.3.

"Ah! You must have fancied——"

"I heard Canham," said Owen major calmly. "He was with me."

The court grinned, and Fullwood snorted and looked relieved. He had begun to fear that Owen's evidence would upset things, for, if Owen had heard sounds of somebody else, it would have shown that strangers were in the wood. Fullwood didn't want evidence of that kind.

"Witnesses are supposed to answer questions—not play the fool!" said Fullwood acidly. "You didn't hear anybody except Canham?"

"No."

"What did you see when you emerged from the wood?"

Owen major reflected.

"I saw a horrible sight," he said—"a frightful sight, in fact!"

"Ah! You mean Farman's face——"

"No, I don't," said Owen. "I mean your face. That's a horrible sight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The judge and jury and everybody else roared.

"I suppose you think that's funny!" snarled Fullwood savagely. "What's the good of this rot? Get on with the business! You saw Farman lyin' on the ground, didn't you? And you saw Bennett standing over him?"

"Bennett wasn't standing over him. He was close by."

"And you hadn't heard a sound, or seen a sign, of a stranger?"

"No."

"That points to the fact that there were no strangers—what?"

"No, it doesn't," said Owen major. "It points to the fact that the wood is jolly dense, and I shouldn't have heard any strangers if they'd numbered a dozen. It's quite possible that there were a couple of men there."

"That's enough! You can stand down."

Owen major looked across at Sir Montie.

"Don't you want to cross-examine me?" he asked.

"Too much fag, dear fellow," yawned Tregellis-West. "I shouldn't get any more out of you. Your evidence is in favour of the defence, anyhow."

There was a momentary lull, and I suppressed a yawn. I was getting fed up with the trial already. It was a silly business, anyhow. Yet somehow I had an idea that Fullwood was going to triumph. I wasn't afraid, but I was inwardly angry.

"Albert Gulliver!" said Fullwood.

"Hallo!" said Albert Gulliver.

"You're wanted in the witness-box, ass!"

"Oh, right-ho! I'm ready."

Gulliver stepped into the witness-box and looked round smilingly.

"Where were you just after five o'clock this evening?" asked counsel.

"Where was I? Lemme see!" said Gulliver. "Just finishing tea, wasn't I?"

"No, you weren't!" snapped Fullwood. "You were just outside the House, and Bennett and Tregellis-West and Watson were there, too."

"Yes, that's right," said Gulliver.

"That won't do!" put in the judge severely. "Counsel mustn't tell the witness what to say. If the witness doesn't know things, he can't answer questions. It's no good your putting things to the witness just so he'll agree with them, Fullwood."

"Well, Gulliver shouldn't be such an ass!" snorted Fullwood.

"Look here——"

"Oh, dry up! We want to get on," said counsel. "You were outside the Ancient House? Very well! Tell the jury what happened there."

"Why, that little cad, Long, came down, and showed us a jacket—an Eton jacket—all ripped to shreds! Farman had ripped it up like that——"

"How do you know that?" asked Christine.

"Long said that Farman did it, anyhow," said Gulliver. "And Bennett flew into a fury, and swore that he'd smash Farman. Bennett went off ravin', his face as black as thunder. He knew that Farman and Owen and Canham had gone to Bellton Wood, and he went after 'em to get hold of Farman."

"To give him the hiding of his life?" asked the prosecuting counsel.

"That's what Bennett said."

"Did you say that, Bennett?" asked the judge, looking at me.

"Yes. I was thundering wild at the time," I answered.

"The judge ain't supposed to ask the prisoner questions!" roared Fullwood. "Keep to the rules, Christine! Well, and what happened after that, Gulliver? What happened after Bennett had gone off—with the avowed intention, mind you, of knocking Farman into mincemeat?"

"Oh, here he is," sa
"It's a wonder he isn
hooligan!" "Who

Gulliver thought for a moment.

"Why, the car arrived," he said.

"Which car?" asked one of the jurymen.

"A car Fullwood had hired from Bannington by 'phone," said Gulliver. "It came, and we started off for a spin. We took the short cut on to the Bannington Road. We turned a corner, and saw——"

"That's it!" said Fullwood eagerly. "What did you see?"

"You ought to know! You were there!"

"Ass! You've got to tell the jury!" snapped counsel.

"Oh, I see! We turned the corner, and saw Bennett standing on the grass beside the road," went on Gulliver, warming to his work. "Bennett was bending over somebody—Farman—and he held a thick cudgel. Farman's face was bruised and bleeding."

...eered Gulliver as I strolled into the Common-room. ...'t afraid to show his face!" "Rotter!" "Yah, ... nearly killed Farman?" Many insulting cries were ...flung at me by the angry juniors.

"Do you consider that his injuries were caused by the cudgel?"

"Of course they were!"

"And the cudgel was in Bennett's hand?"

"Yes."

"Bennett was standing right over the stricken fellow?"

"Yes, right over him."

"Was there anybody else in sight?"

"Not a soul," said Gulliver. "Bennett was there alone, except for Farman, and Farman was lying in the grass, badly injured."

"Remembering Bennett's words just before he left the school, you assumed that he had inflicted the injuries upon Farman?"

"I didn't assume it. I knew it," said Gulliver. "Who else would have done it? There wasn't a soul anywhere. Bennett and Farman had the spot to themselves, and Bennett was looking scared and pale."

Fullwood looked round triumphantly. Gulliver's evidence was certainly convincing, and I felt a little uneasy. I could see that the jury was impressed. This was the first time the details of the affair had been stated before the whole Remove. The College House fellows hadn't heard the details at all, as a matter of fact, and the jury was impressed.

Sir Montie stood up.

"I'm goin' to ask the witness a few questions," he said. "It's necessary. He's given the jury a false impression——"

"I've told the truth," said Gulliver.

"Dear boy, I don't doubt it—although you are rather a liar, as a rule," said Tregellis-West lazily. "Bennett himself admits all you've said. There's nothing in it, after all. Now for the questions. Did you see the prisoner actually strike the blow—any blow?"

"No," admitted Gulliver.

"Was he in a threatenin' attitude?"

"Yes, he was."

"Because he was standin' over Farman?"

"Of course."

"I submit to the jury that Bennett's attitude wasn't threatenin' at all," said Sir Montie. "He naturally stood over Farman, because he was finding out how serious his hurts were. Do you suppose he would have stood ten yards off? Any fellow in the same circumstances would have stood over Farman—it was the most natural thing for him to do."

I looked at the judge and jury. They were serious, and, I believe, Montie's shot had told. But the schoolboy baronet had another card up his sleeve—which, I'll admit, I hadn't thought of. Montie was cute.

"Bennett had a cudgel in his hand at the time," said Gulliver seriously. "Was that natural?"

"Yes. He picked it up mechanically."

There was a mocking laugh from Fullwood and Co., and the jury smiled. Even the jury couldn't quite believe that.

"About the cudgel," went on Tregellis-West, adjusting his pince-nez. "What sort of a cudgel was it, Gulliver?"

"A whacking lump of stick, thick at one end and thin at the other."

"It wasn't merely a broken piece of a tree-branch?"

"No; it was a manufactured thing—a proper bludgeon," said Gulliver with relish. "That's it—a bludgeon. A hooligan's bludgeon, in fact."

Gulliver found great satisfaction in pronouncing the word.

"We're getting on fine," said Sir Montie languidly. "A manufactured bludgeon—

what? An' Bennett used it to smash Farman? Now tell me, Gulliver, how long would it take you to make a cudgel like that?"

Gulliver looked at Sir Montie suspiciously.

"How do I know?" he asked. "I should have to find the right piece of wood first, an' then fashion the thing properly, an' trim up the handle an' all that. It couldn't have been made in less than twenty minutes."

"Dear boy, you're quite right," smiled Montie urbanely. "Twenty minutes to make the bludgeon. That's rippin'. Did Bennett have the thing when he was outside the Ancient House—when Long came out with his jacket?"

"Of course he didn't."

"Then he must have made it afterwards?"

"I—I suppose so," said the witness uncertainly.

"An' you an' Fullwood an' the others left the school, I understand, about a couple of minutes after Bennett had left?" went on Montie. "Therefore, the time that elapsed between the departure of Bennett and when you found him bendin' over Farman couldn't have been more than seven or eight minutes?"

"Look here!" shouted Fullwood, "this ain't right——"

"Let the witness answer!" said the judge sharply.

"Yes, about eight minutes, I suppose," said Gulliver. "Not more than ten, anyhow."

"An' the bludgeon took at least twenty minutes to make?" asked Tregellis-West pleasantly. "It couldn't have been done, old boy. I submit to the jury that Bennett couldn't have committed the deed, because he couldn't have made the cudgel. An' the jury will have sense enough to realise that the prisoner didn't carry the thing about with him, up his sleeve or in his waistcoat-pocket."

The fellows were grinning now; Montie's argument was sound, and the jury, at least, nodded among themselves with great solemnity.

Gulliver looked furious.

"Bennett must have made the bludgeon beforehand——" he began.

"You're a witness," put in Bob Christine curtly. "Witnesses ain't allowed to pass any remarks—they're in the box to answer questions."

"I've done, dear fellow," drawled Sir Montie. "Gully can stand down."

Gulliver stood down, and Ralph Leslie Fullwood jumped up again. He was looking angry and almost alarmed. He shot a fierce, venomous glance at me. But I just smiled.

"I'm not going to have the jury bluffed by Tregellis-West," he shouted. "He's twisted——"

"Hold on," said Oldfield, the foreman of the jury, "West ain't twisted anything. He conducted his cross-examination in the right way."

"There's nothing in the argument he put forward—nothing whatever," declared Fullwood hotly. "It's childish to suggest that Bennett didn't do it because he couldn't have made the bludgeon. Of course he didn't make it—then. He either made it beforehand, as Gulliver said, or he found it. Nothing very remarkable in finding a chunk of heavy stick, is there? I submit that Bennett picked it up in the heat of a sudden fury, and used it against Farman before he realised what he was doing."

"Then you don't blame him?" asked the judge.

"Yes, I do! I should think so!" went on Fullwood. "Bennett committed a dastardly assault, and he'll have to pay for it. My lord, and gentlemen of the jury, I could call other witnesses to corroborate Gulliver's statements—but it isn't necessary. Everybody knows the facts. And I am now going to place my arguments before you, clearly and briefly——"

"As briefly as possible, for goodness' sake!" murmured Talmadge.

"You have heard how the attack was committed; you have heard the facts as they stand at present," went on Fullwood, warming to his work. "Well, my lord, and gentlemen of the jury——"

"Get on with it!" bawled Handforth.

"I submit that the Head has been wilfully deceived," said Fullwood boldly. "Dr. Stafford is a bit of a muff, in his way, you know—it's easy enough to stuff him up with a pack of lies——"

"You ought to know," said Christine. "You've practised, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is this a trial or not?" shouted Fullwood, turning red. "I say that the Head has been hoodwinked! In Big Hall, a little while ago, he told the whole school that Bennett was innocent, didn't he?"

"And he is innocent!" shouted Tommy Watson.

"That remains to be seen," sneered Fullwood. "The jury's got to give its verdict. The Head, of course, believed that Bennett was innocent. Why? Because Farman told him that Bennett did not touch him. Farman has stated that Bennett is innocent."

"Well, that clinches the matter, I should say," remarked the judge. "Farman was the chap who got walloped. He wouldn't say Bennett was innocent if he was really guilty, I suppose?"

Fullwood slapped the table hard.

"That's just it!" he exclaimed. "My argument is this: Farman didn't say that Bennett had assaulted him, because he was afraid to! He feared Bennett's wrath afterwards. Farman didn't realise that the rotter would be sacked from the school, and he thought that Bennett would revenge himself upon him for having sneaked. Farman stated that Bennett didn't touch him simply because he daren't say anything else! That's what I submit to the jury!"

The jury looked thoughtful, and there was a hush in the Common-room.

"And has the jury considered another point?" went on the prosecuting counsel, following up his advantage rapidly. "Why

didn't Farman say who had attacked him? Isn't that significant? We've got to look at the facts. Farman simply said that Bennett didn't do it—but Farman didn't say who did! The Head told us that—as you all know. Don't you think it queer that Farman kept secret an important thing like that? Yet it isn't queer at all."

"Why isn't it queer?" asked the judge curiously.

"I will tell you." Fullwood adjusted his eyeglass, and surveyed the judge and the jury with great composure. Fullwood was feeling that he had turned the tide in his favour. "Farman didn't tell the Head who had brutally attacked him because he couldn't do so without giving Bennett away. He was afraid to give Bennett away because Bennett had probably threatened him. And so, as a kind of compromise, he said that Bennett didn't do it—and refused to say anything else. He couldn't say anything else without lying, and he probably jibbed at that."

"That's more than you'd do!" grunted Watson.

"I submit my arguments for what they are worth," concluded Fullwood. "The jury can only come to one decision. Bennett attacked Farman! Bennett is guilty, but he forced Farman, by threats, to tell the Head the opposite. The very fact that Farman was so secretive proves my case up to the hilt. That's all."

Ralph Leslie Fullwood sat down.

The case for the prosecution was at an end. . .

CHAPTER 7.

The Verdict of the Jury!

I LOOKED round the Common-room rather bitterly. I could see, at a glance, that Fullwood's concluding speech had done much to influence the Removites. The knut-leader's argument had gone home.

"Well, what's the verdict?" asked George Bell.

"Rats! We've got to have the other side before the jury give any verdict," said Watson warmly. "Now, Montie, you're counsel for the defence. You've got to prove your case, and put an end to this rot."

Tregellis-West lounged forward.

"It's a bore," he complained. "Still, for Benny's sake, I'm game. I'm game for anything. I want Teddy Long as first witness."

"Me?" said Long nervously. "I ain't going to give evidence——"

"You're called," put in the judge. "Get into the box, ass!"

The sneak of the Remove thumped across the floor, and entered the witness-box. He was looking alarmed and uneasy. His little eyes were restless, and he didn't look at Tregellis-West.

"How much did Fullwood pay you for rippin' up your jacket, Long?" asked Sir Montie calmly.

"A quid—— I—I mean——" Teddy Long gasped. "Farman ripped it up, you ass!"

The sneak of the Remove turned pale as he saw Fullwood glaring at him. Long hadn't realised the significance of Sir Montie's calmly

PEN PALS

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voiced inquiry until too late. I almost grinned.

"You little liar!" hissed Fullwood. "I didn't give you——"

"You shut up, Fullwood!" rapped out Christine sharply.

"Go to the dickens, you rotten Monkey ——"

"You've made me judge, and I'm going to see order kept!" snapped Christine. "This is a court—for the time being—and the prosecuting counsel ain't supposed to interrupt. If you don't be quiet, you'll be chucked out."

"Hear, hear!"

"Chuck him out, anyhow!"

The Removites were enthusiastic for a moment. But Fullwood scowled and sat down again. He didn't want to be chucked out. Tregellis-West was quite cool and composed. He had taken Long off his guard, and had succeeded in making the witness admit something which he would never have admitted otherwise.

"Fullwood paid you a quid for rippin' up the jacket—what?" asked Sir Montie.

"Yes—— That is, no!" panted Long desperately. "Fullwood didn't give me anything. Farman did it——"

"Did you see Farman do it?"

"Yes, of course," replied Teddy eagerly. "He took his knife and simply tore it to shreds. I—I was hiding under one of the beds."

"Begad!" Why were you hidin'?" asked counsel mildly. "Why didn't you jump out and put a stop to it?"

"I—I——". Long floundered. "You see, I was afraid to come out, because I heard somebody coming along the passage. I didn't want to be seen in the dormitory at that time, just after Farman had gone out——"

"Oh, Farman had gone out, had he?"

"No!" said Long. "Of course he hadn't! I never said he had, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the good of puttin' Long into the witness-box?" snarled Fullwood. "You know what a little liar he is——"

"Fullwood, dear fellow, I am conductin' this defence," interrupted Sir Montie quietly. "Long has admitted that you paid him a pound for rippin' up Long's jacket. I am glad the truth of that has come to light. Bennett thought Farman had done that mean trick——"

"So he did!" exclaimed Fullwood hotly. "Long's a confounded little liar!"

"What about you?" roared Teddy Long angrily. "Didn't you promise to give me a quid, you rotter? I haven't seen it yet——"

"Oh, so the dear boy hasn't paid up?" drawled Montie.

"And I bet he won't, now!" roared Long angrily. "If you don't gimme that quid, Fullwood, I'll give you away—see if I don't! You ain't going to play about with me——"

"The witness can stand down," interrupted Tregellis-West. "My lord and gentlemen of the jury, you have heard the witness' unsatisfactory replies. He's been lyin'. It's a speciality of Long's. Caught it from Fullwood, I suppose. These things are catchin', you know. I submit to you that Fullwood worked up a beastly trick on Farman—out of revenge. Fullwood rather enjoys revenge. Farman told him to go an' eat coke, or words to that effect, an' Fullwood's dignity was upset. He did his best to get Farman into a row. And if Fullwood will tell lies over one thing, he'll tell 'em over another. Long ripped up that jacket himself—after Fullwood had promised to pay him for it. Begad, that was a mean trick—what?"

"Rotten!"

"Scrag him!"

There were many angry faces turned towards Fullwood, and it looked for a moment as though he were about to be collared. I was decidedly pleased, for I had always had a kind of idea that Farman hadn't committed that mean trick. His innocence was proved now.

"Look here!" roared Fullwood. "That affair's got nothin' to do with this! Bennett thought that Farman was guilty, didn't he? And he went off with the intention of smashin' Farman."

"That's right enough," said the foreman of the jury. "You Fossils will have to settle with your pet blackguard yourselves. We're here to give a verdict on Bennett's case. Have you got any more witnesses to call?"

Sir Montie looked at me doubtfully.

"I'll put Bennett himself in the box," he exclaimed after a moment. "Benny, dear boy, kindly step over here."

I entered the witness-box.

"Did you assault Justin B. Farman?" asked Sir Montie calmly.

"No, I didn't."

"But you saw who did?"

"Yes, two strange men," I replied. "I was at the other end of the meadow, and I saw Owen and Canham disappear into the wood. Then the men sprang out upon Farman and dragged him back. I tried to rescue him, but I couldn't get there in time. That's all."

"When you got to the spot the men had gone?"

"Yes."

"An' you heard the merry Fullwood & Co. approachin'?"

"I heard a car coming—yes, and I was pleased," I replied. "I could see that Farman was rather badly hit, and he wanted attention."

"You picked up the cudgel, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Why did you pick it up?" asked Sir Montie. "You were rather an ass, you know, Bennett, to pick it up. Fullwood saw it in your hand, and he jumped to a silly conclusion. But perhaps you can throw some light on the matter?"

"I don't think I can," I replied. "I just picked the thing up mechanically, and if the jury doesn't like to believe that it can do the other thing! Farman told the Head in my presence that I didn't touch him. Mr.

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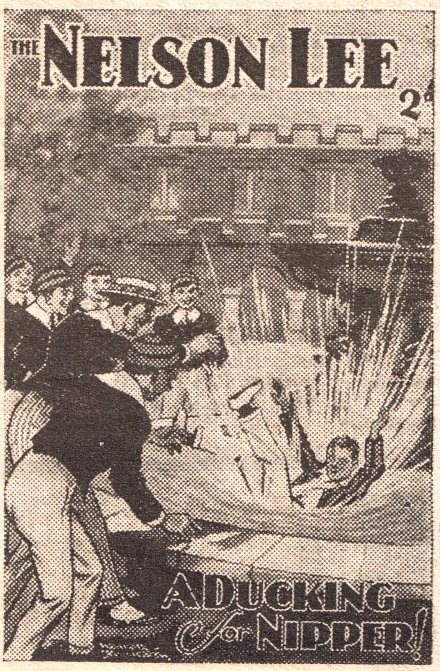


"NIPPER'S TRIUMPH!"

It's a big splash Nipper's making in the small reproduction of next week's cover, shown here. But it's a different "splash" he makes of the difficult task of clearing himself of a serious charge. Nipper's own story will compel your interest throughout. Don't miss this wonderful yarn.

"THE PHANTOM FLEET!"

By STANTON HOPE.

The final fight between Val, Mike and Pompey and Mosaki, the leader of the yellow races, is one continuous thrill. Don't miss it!

"OPEN THROTTLE!"

By DAVID GOODWIN.

Bud gets his first real taste of Brooklands in next week's rousing chapters of this popular serial.

There will also be another batch of laughs from readers, and another chat with your Editor. This grand all-star number will be sure to "sell like hot cakes." Tell all your pals, but

FIRST MAKE SURE OF YOUR OWN COPY!

Alvington was there, too. They both know that I am innocent, and the Head has vindicated my character before the whole school. That ought to be enough."

"Quite right, dear boy. You can stand down."

I left the witness-box, and Tregellis-West turned.

"I think this farce has gone far enough," he said quietly. "You've heard all that's been said, and now you'd better bring your verdict in. Bennett's innocent. An' you'd better show some sense, and bring in a verdict of 'Not guilty!'"

Sir Montie sat down, but Fullwood at once jumped up.

"Yes, we've heard all that's been said for the defence," he exclaimed quickly. "It amounts to nothing—nothing at all. Bennett's practically admitted the whole thing, an' if you're not idiots you'll realise it."

"Look here! This ain't fair!" bawled Handforth. "Personally, I believe Bennett not guilty, but it ain't right for Fullwood to start jawing again, just to influence the jury ——"

"The jury's got more sense than you have, Handforth!" roared Fullwood. "The jury knows jolly well that the prisoner is guilty. He can't describe the attackers, an' he admitted that he had the cudgel in his hand. He's admitted everything. You all know that he left the school with the intention of smashin' Farman, but he smashed him more than he meant to do. Now he's tryin' to get out of it, and somehow or other he forced Farman to hoodwink the Head. That's all. Bennett's guilty, and he ought to be sacked!"

It was absolutely unfair, of course, for Fullwood to make that final speech, but in the excitement no objections were raised, and Fullwood's last word in the matter had due effect.

Looking at it the way he had put it, the case was black against me. The whole trouble arose from the fact that Farman had refused to give the description of the real culprits. I couldn't give that description, either, and there wasn't a single witness to appear in my favour.

The absence of Farman, too, was much against me. If he could have been put in the witness-box, he would soon have convinced the jury of my complete innocence, and the fact that the ripping of Long's Eton jacket had been a put-up job didn't weigh a mite with the jury.

Sir Montie had done his best, but I was afraid he had failed. The Removites had been greatly struck by Fullwood's eloquent condemnation. He had conducted his case cunningly, and had played a trump card by getting in the last word.

The jury consulted together for some moments. They consulted in loud voices, and as the rest of the fellows were holding a similar consultation, the Common-room was filled with a perfect babel of voices.

Harry Oldfield stood up.

"Can't you kids keep quiet?" he bellowed. "We've decided on our verdict."

There was an immediate hush.

"Not guilty, of course?" drawled Sir Montie lazily.

"The jury has come to the conclusion that Bennett committed the deed, and therefore the verdict is—Guilty!" said Oldfield firmly.

"Guilty!"

"But the jury recommends the prisoner to mercy," continued Oldfield rapidly. "We believe that he did it in a fit of anger, and without realising the seriousness of the blow. It's up to the judge, now, to pass the sentence."

I didn't say anything. I stood quite still, and looked on with a grim face. Guilty? Altogether, I didn't blame the jury for bringing in that verdict. Some of the fellows, I believe, were still rather doubtful—Church and Handforth and Hubbard, and one or two others were looking uneasy. But the verdict had been given now, and they couldn't do anything.

"The sentence," said Bob Christine thoughtfully—"now, what's it to be?"

Fullwood grinned triumphantly.

"We'll frog's-march him, and make him run the gauntlet!" he exclaimed viciously. "We'll bump him until he confesses, and then send him to Coventry for the rest of the term, and bar him from all studies. We'll make his life a misery——"

"You ain't the judge!" roared Hubbard furiously.

"Shut up, Fullwood!"

"Let Christine pass the sentence!"

"You've said enough already!"

Fullwood was howled down, and there was a momentary hush as Bob Christine rose from his elevated position and assumed a stern expression.

"Prisoner at the bar," he exclaimed solemnly, "you have been found guilty of committing a rotten attack upon some other ass belonging to this House. Personally, I think you're innocent, but I'm not supposed to say that. It's my job to pass sentence. And if you're sent to Coventry by the Ancient House for one month, I reckon that'll fit the case."

"Hear, hear!"

"Is that the sentence?" howled Fullwood & Co. in chorus.

"Yes. Coventry for one month!"

"You burbling ass!" shouted Fullwood hotly. "What's the good of a sentence like that? You can clear out, you rotten Monkey! We're goin' to rag Bennett until he's skinned——"

"No, we're not!" put in Handforth. "We agreed that the judge's decision should be final, and we're not going back on it. Bennett's in Coventry for a month, and there's going to be no ragging. Let's put it to the vote, anyhow. Hands up for a ragging!"

The hands of Fullwood & Co. and their chums of Study G—Merrell and Marriott and Noys—went up like clockwork. There were three others as well. Then the other side was taken, and it was decided, by an overwhelming majority, that there should be no ragging.

The court broke up, and the affair was finished. Bob Christine & Co. went off to their own House.

I was sent to Coventry!

Somehow or other, I simply couldn't help grinning. The whole thing was so utterly preposterous. Sent to Coventry, just when I'd been getting on so famously.

It was certainly a victory for Fullwood, and he was making the most of it. He was airing his views loudly, and I couldn't intervene. I was barred by the whole Remove! Some fellows, I was sure, were in my favour, but they could not show their real feelings. The sentence had been passed, and they had to abide by it.

I was utterly ignored—left standing quite by myself. Fullwood & Co. were disappointed at the sentence, but there was no doubt that they had triumphed.

Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West were standing by themselves, talking in low tones. With set lips, I marched up to them.

"Are you fellows in this, too?" I asked quietly.

My two study-mates looked at me queerly, but didn't answer.

"You shut up, you rotter!" exclaimed Gulliver.

"Shut up yourself, Gully!" said Fullwood fiercely. "You're not supposed to speak to him. If anybody does speak to the cad, he'll be sent to Coventry, too!"

Tregellis-West adjusted his pince-nez.

"That's rather interestin'," he drawled easily. "Benny, my dear boy, we're sent to Coventry. I'm rather pleased—I am, really! Saves a fearful amount of talkin', you know. Count on me, dear fellow! I'm with you!"

"And so am I!" declared Tommy Watson promptly.

They both gripped my hand, and I felt rather choky for a moment. It was good of these two fellows to stand by me, for they knew what the consequences would be.

"Good for you, my sons!" I said smilingly. "We'll soon set matters straight, won't we?"

We were surrounded by an angry crowd.

"Ain't you going to take any notice of the sentence?" shouted Merrell.

"No notice at all, old scout!" grinned Watson.

"Then you're all three sent to Coventry together!"

"How amusin'!" murmured Tregellis-West lazily. "We're all sent to Coventry together—what? Nobody to speak to but ourselves! What a thrillin' prospect! We had better go an' finish our prep., dear boys."

And arm-in-arm with Tommy and Montie, I left the Common-room.

. . . . . .

Ralph Leslie Fullwood was victorious

There was no doubt about that. True, his victory had not been so complete as he had desired, but it was certainly a triumph. The fact that Tregellis-West and Watson were standing by me was merely a detail.

I attempted to keep up a brave front, but in reality I was very dejected. My sudden fall was a great shock to me. For one thing, I had condemned my two study chums to a miserable existence for a whole month, and I urged them to abide by the Form's sentence.

But they positively refused to desert me. It was ripping of them, and their attitude really made my downfall all the keener. But whereas they were merely avoided, I was positively shunned. The fellows would not come near me, and Fullwood & Co. openly jeered whenever I was within hearing.

Back in Study C, I did not attempt to do any prep., but just lounged about in the easy-chair while Tommy and Sir Montie made a pretence of working.

But there came a revulsion of feeling.

The misery left me, and I jumped to my feet with a fierce exclamation.

"By jingo," I shouted, "I'm not going to stand this!"

Tregellis-West looked round mildly.

"Dear fellow, you startle me!" he exclaimed. "I'm nervous, you know. But what won't you stand? Coventry?"

"I'm not doing to put up with this rot!" I declared grimly. "Somehow or other, the scoundrels who attacked Farman have got to be captured! When that happens, perhaps the Remove will feel sorry for itself."

"How are you going to capture the rotters?" asked Watson curiously. "You don't happen to be a detective, I suppose?"

I grinned cheerfully. Tommy didn't know how near the mark he had got.

"I'll tell you one thing," I replied. "Before a week's out I'll have the whole Remove signing a general apology; and

(*Continued on page* 44.)

It's Impossible Not To Be Thrilled By This Grand Yarn!

The ISLAND INVADERS!

By

STANTON HOPE

With Oriental cunning and secrecy, Mosaki, the leader of the yellow races, is massing his men on Hawaii—in preparation for the first big onslaught against the white races to establish a new empire!

Clock of Death!

MIKE O'HARA tugged at his red beard

"Iverything's shipshape, skipper," he announced.

Val Crichton, the young skipper of the Banshee, looked at a large gunmetal clock fixed by steel clips to the engine-room bulkhead or wall.

"Just in time," he nodded. "The admiral said he'd be on board at three o'clock in the morning, Mike."

The Banshee, which was built of an almost invisible metal named aldurien, was lying in the harbour at Manila, the naval port of the Philippine Islands. It was the queer craft which Val and his crew—Mike, the Irishman, and Pompey, the negro boy—had seized at Fusan from their arch-enemy, Mosaki, the Mongolian.

The Mongolians, eager to win an empire, had built warships and fighting aeroplanes of aldurien, and these ships could be used on land in the manner of armoured tanks. The Banshee combined in itself the functions of aeroplane, speedboat and submarine.

"I've a feelin', sor," Mike remarked, "that this won't be any joy trip. Ut was mighty queer about that pock-marked spalpeen who kept shadowing you?"

"Oh, I threw him off the scent," Val responded. "The admiral thought it might have been a swab named Kichi. If so, he's the most formidable spy in Mosaki's pay, but I don't think he could have found out where the Banshee is lying."

They went forward, mounted a short companion ladder and, emerging in the large cockpit where the controls were situated, looked over the smooth water which reflected the white Pacific stars.

Speeding almost silently from between some anchored shipping came an electric pinnace, the two bow-waves shimmering in phosphorescent foam.

"The admiral's on time," Val exclaimed.

He looked aft to where he had left Pompey, the boy cook, whose idea of acting as sentry consisted of unravelling a Chinese wire puzzle.

"All well, Pompey?" Val demanded.

The darky stowed the puzzle in his pocket.

"Bery well, t'ank you, boss," he answered. "No pussons hab come around here."

He stood up and looked at the smooth water of the harbour. A few patches of drift-weed floated on the surface, and an old reed basket swung in towards the Banshee's stern on the tide.

Pompey yawned and went forward.

The attention of both Val and Mike was taken by the approaching pinnace. It was showing a small yellow lamp in addition to the usual navigation lights, and by this prearranged signal Val knew that Admiral Floyd B. Dwight, of the United States Navy, was on board.

He flashed an electric torch three times, and the steersman of the pinnace, who had been unable to see the Banshee in the darkness, altered course slightly.

No one saw the reed basket under the Banshee's stern rear upward as if possessed of life, and then fall back into the water and go floating away. From under it had appeared an evil-faced Mongolian, wearing only a loincloth on his oiled body, and a small, water-tight pack strapped across his muscular shoulders.

The native had swum slowly out of the harbour under cover of the wide-meshed basket. He had known the general direction of the Banshee and, after difficulty, had located the craft. Now, while the attention of Val, Mike and Pompey was taken by the arrival of the admiral, the Mongolian spy slithered aboard the Banshee and descended through the after cockpit.

"What are the orders, sir?" Val inquired of the admiral.

"Just these," the famous American said, wiping his horn-rimmed glasses. "You will get under way at once, lootenant, and fly all-out on a course due eastward. I'll give you the rest of the orders on the journey."

"Very good, sir."

All was ready for the secret flight, and Val took his seat at the controls. Admiral Dwight insisted on occupying the seat usually reserved for Mike O'Hara, whom Val had been training laboriously for the position of second pilot. The Irishman himself went below to assist Pompey in preparing scrambled eggs and flapjacks—pancakes—for an early breakfast.

To a sound no louder than the humming of a bumble-bee the queer flying-boat moved slowly out of Manila Harbour, unseen and unheard.

Once out on the smooth Pacific, away from any shipping, Val "gave her the gun." The admiral ceased gyrating an unlighted cheroot in his mouth and gripped the sides of the gunmetal seat with both hands. Faster and faster the Banshee raced over the surface, flinging the spray with hurricane force from the streamlined floats.

The needle of the speed indicator quivered swiftly round the dial; the Banshee's snout lifted, and the craft swept upward toward the stars.

The recently overhauled engine worked swiftly and sweetly, pumping and compressing the vapour generated from pure alcohol. And this vapour, ejected rapidly from twin stern tubes, provided the motive power which hurtled the Banshee along at three hundred miles an hour above the darkened Pacific!

"Stoo-pendous!" the admiral gasped. "I'd back this ship of yours, lootenant, to race a ten-inch gun shell!"

A smile wreathed Val's face as he gazed at the night compass, illuminated scientifically by a protected tube containing a particle of radium mixed with phosphorescent zinc sulphide.

"I'll say it doesn't loiter, sir!" he chuckled. "I'll open her full-out when she's warmed up."

At a height of four thousand feet he headed due eastward according to instructions.

So far, he neither knew the destination nor the reason that the admiral had requested him to make this secret flight.

All he knew was what the admiral had told him previously—that the undertaking was of vital urgency, and fraught with deadly danger.

It was the admiral's first experience of the Banshee in flight, and for a time he gripped his chair and exhausted the adjectives of the dictionary in sheer admiration.

Soon the eastern rim of the Pacific began to shimmer as though with gold-dust. It was the hour of dawn, and the sky rapidly lightened until the flaming tropical sun lifted above the sea.

The admiral breakfasted below and returned to his seat. Val waited until Mike and Pompey had eaten, and then handed over the controls to the Irishman.

"Keep her heading due east, Mike," he ordered. "I'll take over again as soon as I've had some chow."

"Go ahead, lootenant," the admiral nodded. "When you're through, there's a deal for me to explain."

Standing on the rungs of the short companion ladder, Val watched Mike, who looked

as if he were trying to think what all the gauges and indicators were for. Then, having satisfied himself that the tough old sailor was managing all right, he went below.

"Ahoy, Pompey!" he called. "Serve the eggs and coffee!"

He strode aft, but no response reached him. He entered the small compartment where they usually took their meals and stopped short with an exclamation of dismay.

Pompey, the negro boy, was lying face downward against the half-open door of a metal locker.

The swift thought occurred to him that the boy must have fallen and struck his head, for there was an ugly bruise near his ear. He stooped towards him, and from the corner of his eye saw a movement in the narrow engine-room where the hidden pumps compressed the vapour for propelling the craft.

Someone had swung open the circular hatch of the after cockpit—a pock-marked native with a pack strapped to his oiled body!

"Belay there!" Val roared.

Astounded though he was by the presence of a stranger aboard the Banshee, he leaped through the engine-room doorway and attempted to clutch the fellow's ankles.

Hurriedly the Mongolian drew himself up and slithered out of the opening.

A shout from Admiral Dwight was borne back on the rushing wind.

"Kichi!"

The memory of the spy who had shadowed him flooded back to Val's mind as he leaped up the metal ladder.

Kichi, the agent of Mosaki, had somehow got aboard the Banshee and remained in hiding. He had killed or injured Pompey, and now was risking his own life by clambering out on the fuselage of the machine. He glimpsed the man's brown fingers clinging to the cockpit coaming, and then saw them released as though the hurricane wind had torn the spy from his hold.

In three upward strides Val gained the after cockpit and was flung heavily to one side as Mike O'Hara, in his excitement, brought the machine zooming round in a heavy bank.

The spy had shot off the smooth metal fuselage, and Val caught a glimpse of him hurtling downward towards the sea. Almost at the same moment a strip of silken fabric shot upward and spread umbrella-like above him.

The man had "cracked" a parachute, but even so, he had made a suicidal leap over an area of ocean devoid of a sail.

The swaying parachute shimmered like silver in the sunshine.

"Mike," Val bawled into a voice-pipe, "keep the old kite wheeling!"

There was no time to wonder how the spy, Kichi, had discovered the whereabouts of the Banshee at Manila, or how he had smuggled himself aboard.

Why had he come?

The question filled Val with a dread that caused him to hurl himself back down to the engine-room and gaze sharply round the compartment.

He knew that the men of the Mongolian races were fatalists and often fanatics as well. A spy such as Kichi—most assuredly a fanatic, would carry out Mosaki's orders, though obedience meant certain death to himself.

The ruthless Mosaki would give the lives of a thousand men like Kichi to bring about the destruction of the Banshee and all at present on board. An Oriental fanatic such as Kichi would think his life well lost if the money reward promised to his surviving relations were big enough!

The Banshee was in deadliest danger! The lives of all of them were to be forfeit. The young skipper deduced that from the fact that Kichi the spy had smuggled himself aboard.

The pumps compressing the alcohol vapour were humming their tuneful song, obliterating the ticking of the gun-metal clock fixed to the bulkhead.

"Boss! Boss!"

The choking voice of Pompey reached him and he darted into the next compartment.

The negro boy was alive! His joy was mingled with the hope that he might learn something from the boy.

But Pompey, who had crawled a few inches on hands and knees, collapsed face downward again, an arm extended toward the locker door, which he had pulled open wider.

The luck was out! Pompey, who might have given him the vital information he sought, was senseless and could not be roused.

The precious seconds were slipping by, and a sense of impending death put the young skipper in a cold sweat.

He had faced death itself too many times to be afraid. But now he was overwhelmed by the belief that the death of himself, his comrades, and the destruction of the Banshee, would bring greater terrors in its train. Mosaki could go ahead more confidently with his sinister plans to seize the British and American possessions in the Pacific, heedless of how many human lives were sacrificed to his ambition.

The locker! Young Pompey had been trying to reach it!

Dragging the door open, he glanced inside, half expecting to see a bomb.

Some tinned food supplies were ranged on a shelf. There was ample room, he saw, for any small man to have hidden himself.

A quick, closer survey revealed another object among the tins. He snatched it from the shelf, thinking it was an infernal machine, and discovered it was merely the works of a clock enclosed in a gun-metal band.

What the blazes did it mean?

For a couple of seconds Val looked at the clock-works in bewilderment, and then dropped the object to the metal deck as though it had been red-hot.

With a flying leap he cleared Pompey's prone figure and dashed into the adjoining compartment that housed the pump engines.

The admiral's voice sounded from the direction of the forward compartment, but Val took no heed of the shout.

He heard the ticking of the engine-room clock above the faint drumming of the pumps—a sound only a trifle more vibrant than usual.

Before even he snatched the gun-metal clock from its clips he knew that, with every metallic tick, the time for the destruction of the Banshee and all on board was drawing nearer!

Kichi, the spy, had left a legacy of death!

By a sudden wrench Val tore the clock from the bulkhead, and an oblong case with a clockwork attachment dropped into the palm of his left hand.

The thing was an infernal machine, and he rightly judged that the case held enough high-explosive to blow the Banshee to fragments in the air!

There was no time to detach the wires. The time-fuse had been set for five minutes, for evidently Kichi had seized the remote chance of escaping with his life. Four minutes, at least, had elapsed since the spy had flung himself into space, and the infernal machine might explode at any moment.

In frenzied haste Val flung himself up the short, metal ladder and reached the after cockpit. The Banshee banked heavily with a wing-tip toward the blue Pacific. Almost Val was flung headlong from the machine, but he saved himself by gripping the coaming with his right hand, while his left hurled the canister of explosive into space.

"Thank Heaven!"

His heartfelt sigh of relief as the deadly object shot downward coincided with a yell in Mike's familiar brogue.

"Bedad!" he bawled. "Look there! Call me a Hindu if I can't see wan o' those invisible ships!"

The vague shape of a small warship was speeding toward the Mongolian spy swimming in slow circles round the floating fabric of the parachute. The disturbance of the water was plain enough to be seen, although nothing seemed tangible about the queer ship itself.

The aldurien-built craft of the Mongolian navy was still half a mile distant, and Val only caught a glimpse of it.

His attention was taken by the splash of the infernal machine into the sea within fifty yards of Kichi the spy.

A split second after it struck there was a thunderous explosion and a column of white foam leaped skyward.

The deadly object had been detonated by its time-fuse, and the leaping fountain of foam was succeeded by a swirling vortex in the sea.

The silvery fabric of the parachute danced fantastically on the waves, but Kichi the spy had vanished in the ocean depths.

Thundering Surf!

"WHO'S throwin' things?" bellowed old Mike from the controls, swerving the Banshee sickeningly. "Phwat's that young spalpeen, Pompey, up to?"

He usually suspected that Pompey had a finger in the pie when something peculiarly alarming occurred. This time he was surprised to learn that cookie had made none of his bloomers, but had been the victim of a savage attack.

Between them Val and the admiral revived Pompey and took him into the large forward cockpit.

"Begorra," remarked Mike, at the sight of him, "the poor little nigger has turned pale as coke. It's no healthy coal-black colour he has at all, at all!"

The negro boy had little information to give.

"I was at de electric cooker scramblin' de eggs," he moaned, "when de locker door came open. Befo' I could swallow de lump ob candied peel in my mouf, some yellow pusson slammed me wid a spanner or somet'ing. After dat, dis chile knew no more till he woke up."

"It seems, lootenant," the admiral said, turning to Val, "that we have to thank you for saving the ship and our lives. Exactly what happened after you went below?"

Val briefly explained.

"The spy must have got aboard a short time before we left Manila," he added. "His original intention may have been to blow up the Banshee at the cost of his own life. One of our parachutes is missing from the rack, so I suppose he took the odd chance of making a getaway."

"I guess," the admiral remarked, "that Mosaki put him up to the job."

"Yes," Val responded, "though it was probably the merest fluke that one of the warships of the Mongolians' secret fleet happened to be in the neighbourhood when he made his jump. The spy took out the inner case of the clock and put the infernal machine in its place. It was an ingenious plan to prevent anyone from noticing the ticking of the instrument. My hat! It was lucky I noticed the part of the clock in the locker. That gave me the idea that the bomb had been stowed in the clock itself."

The Mongolian ship, built of the strange and almost invisible metal, had stopped and could be seen no longer from the air. There was no object in seeking it, and Val took over the controls from Mike and sent him below with Pompey.

"We'll get right on to our destination, lootenant," the admiral said. "It was for fear of spies such as Kichi that I said nothing in Manila. I want you to set me down at Honolulu, chief port of the Hawaiian Islands."

There was much more that the admiral had to say during the flight over the Pacific.

The Hawaiian Islands, owned by the

United States, provided the key naval position in the Pacific Ocean.

They were coveted by the Mongolians and, most amazingly, the 1943 census showed that the population of yellow men in the islands had increased enormously.

"By some means the Mongolians are quietly migrating to Hawaii," the admiral said. "Our Amurrican immigration people and the police are completely flummoxed. When we get to Hawaii, lootenant, I'd like you to make some investigations on your own."

The only help he could give Val was to supply him with a newspaper picture of the man known to be Mosaki's migration expert.

"A Jap, by the cut of his jib," Val remarked.

"At one time he was the 'big noise' in the Migration Department at Hiroshima," the admiral said. "He's known as Fuji. He has a curious birthmark on his right arm—like a picture of Fuji, the sacred mountain of Japan. For the rest, he's as cunning as a coyote, can swim like a fish, and is a deal more crooked than a rattlesnake!"

The long flight ended in the afternoon. The beautiful Hawaiian Islands, so-called the Paradise of the Pacific, appeared in the blue sea.

Val circled round the small island of Oahu, passed over Pearl Harbour, with its warships and the modern city of Honolulu, and landed near an ancient inn to the south side of the volcanic mountains, as directed by the admiral.

Here a guard of U.S. Marines took charge of the Banshee. The admiral proceeded to his headquarters aboard the flagship in Pearl Harbour, and Val and his chums took up their quarters at the inn, which had become a naval guard-house.

In the early evening Mike and Pompey went into Honolulu to get some supplies, and a couple of hours later the Irishman returned alone.

"That young blacking went scullin' off somewhere on his own," he announced.

It was fully an hour later when Pompey himself turned up, full of ice-cream and excitement.

"Boss, I seen dat Mosaki pusson!" he announced. "I recognised him from de description yo' gave me."

"Great snakes!" Val exclaimed. "You're sure?"

"Sartin, sah. He was wid anudder fella, dressed much de same."

"Did you shadow him?" Val inquired eagerly.

"I sure did, boss," cookie nodded. "Most misfortunately, when dese two pussons parted, I went after de wrong one widout knowing it."

"Oh, my aunt!"

"Sure, it was deir fault," Pompey mumbled; "dey was dressed too much alike. Dis pusson I went after proved to be a Jap. His name am Shenjo, and he went to some boat-building yards along by de bay."

It was possible that Mosaki was at Hawaii, unknown to the American authorities, and Val groaned to think that, except for that unfortunate bloomer, Pompey might have discovered where he was staying.

He passed Pompey's information to the admiral, who, in turn, would warn the police and the immigration authorities.

It occurred to Val that the secret warships might be bringing Mongolians to the islands by stealth. He could keep a watch on the sea from the Banshee, but judged that the approach of any ships to the islands would be made at night-time.

Leaving Mike to enjoy some extra sleep in the guard-house on the following morning, Val made his way, with Pompey, to Waikiki Beach, near Honolulu, the finest surf-beach in the world.

Having supplied Pompey with some melons to enjoy himself in the negro manner, he hired a surfing costume and ran over the soft, sun-warmed sand.

Lithe Kanakas, with golden-brown bodies, rode the foaming wave-crests on long surf-boards. Val himself had no surf-board to ride, but, a crack swimmer, he knew he could get far out in the bay and ride back on successive breakers.

He stretched his muscular arms to the Pacific breeze. A wall of foam piled up over his knees, and he laughed aloud when the under-tow almost dragged his feet from under him. And then he saw a short, bronzed man wading outward, with a surf-board, past two or three other bathers. For one moment the man looked in his direction with a look of recognition in his dark eyes.

The surfer was a Jap, and Val could not recall ever having seen him before.

Caught unaware, the Jap was slewed half-round by a breaking wave which struck his eight-foot surf-board at an angle. Val's eyes were still on the man, and from the distance of four or five yards he saw a thing which caused his heart to miss a beat. He saw it only for a moment, for a wave flung him from his balance and rolled him shoreward—but he was certain he had made no mistake!

On the Jap's right arm was a birthmark, purple at the base and white at the apex!

Fuji!

Before Val regained his feet and cleared his eyes of sea-water, he remembered the conversation with Admiral Dwight. The Jap, who long before had been a high official in the migration service, was clean-shaven now, but apparently had retained all his powers as a swimmer.

Plunging forward through the surf, Val tried to obtain another sight of him. Several bathers disporting in the small breakers near the beach obscured his view, but a few yards farther out he again saw the brown-skinned Jap.

The swimming ability of Fuji could only have been acquired by one who had spent most of his boyhood days in the warm southern sea. He thrust the surf-board before him and travelled seaward at surprising speed by a propeller-like action of his muscular legs.

Other swimmers—white men, Asiatics and Kanakas—were heading for the big surf that broke a mile out from the shore. Thus Val followed the Jap without fear that he would be noticed by the man.

"It's long odds," he told himself, "that Fuji's running the business end of this yellow migration stunt for Mosaki. But he doesn't know the Yanks have got his description."

Val decided he would shadow the Jap in the water and after the bathe. Once he discovered Fuji's lair on the island, he could leave Admiral Dwight to decide what further steps should be taken about the fellow.

By this means he progressed seaward, avoiding the punch of the waves driven by the force acquired over hundreds of miles of ocean, and swimming strongly in each long, swinging trough between the breakers.

While in the watery valleys Fuji was lost to his sight. Occasionally, when he was swung aloft on some mountainous sea which had failed to curl at the crest, he saw the Jap still swumming toward the broad Pacific.

If he could get one good, close look at the man in circumstances which would not arouse suspicion! That was his immediate aim. Then he could wait and see in which direction the Jap proceeded shoreward.

In the glow from the volcano, Mike saw the enemy machine. His gun-sights were on the target, and his finger pressed the trigger. Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat! The machine-gun spat a stream of hot lead into the Mongolian's fuselage.

By the tremendous power of his legs the Jap punched his way through the small surf near the beach, called by the natives the "woman-surf," and headed for the great curling rollers farther out, the "man-surf," where only the experts dared to venture.

Gamely Val followed in his track, and painfully realised that long cruises in shark-infested seas where swimming was impossible had taken toll on his former prowess.

Although unhampered by a surf-board, he was unable to lessen the distance between himself and that Jap who swam like a fish.

Almost contemptuously the agile Asiatic bucked his way through the smaller surf, thrusting his board ahead of him. As each white-crested sea swung shoreward, Val dived neatly under the foam and emerged in the emerald-green valley of water beyond.

Meantime Fuji headed toward the blue ocean, heedless of any danger from sharks which might lurk beyond the breaking seas.

"My hat!" Val spluttered. "I've got to give him best here. Hopeless to come up with him."

The powerful swimming of the man was a revelation to him, but he had yet to learn that Fuji was one of the finest surf-men who ever launched a board from Waikiki Beach!

A seventh wave, a prince among ocean rollers, came racing in with incredible speed. The English fellow, treading water and regaining his breath in a crystal-clear trough two hundred yards in length, gazed toward it in awe.

Man-surf—and with hundreds of tons of sea-power in its punch! Val saw its peacock-blue crest transforming to snow-white; a

roaring cataract of foam as it curled. He saw the spray flung from it in cascades of scintillating jewels to the sport of the Pacific wind.

No swimmer dared be caught by that! Dealt a hammer-blow by that surging mass of foam, he would be rolled over and over helplessly as driftwood, and possibly be drowned before he could extricate himself.

Val knew the alternatives. He might dive deeply under the advancing breaker, or turn and try to ride the foaming crest until he was left astern in the bubbling trough.

He had two seconds in which to make up his mind—and he drew a sharp breath and dived.

Marine thunder roared tremendously in his ears, and the white-bearded giant raced over him. He emerged breathless, bewildered, but safe in the crest. He shook the brine from his eyes and gazed ahead of him.

Then again he saw him—Fuji! The Japanese had swung round and thrust his surf-board dexterously into the creaming crest of the next giant sea.

Filling his lungs with ozone, Val watched the Jap in fascination. He saw him crouched on the board his oiled body like a sculpture in bronze against the background of blue sky.

The white-crested breaker came hurtling toward him, and with it the man on the surf-board. Clearly in the golden sunlight he saw the face of the Japanese—it was impressed indelibly on his mind—and the vicious twist of his lip as he leaned forward.

In a split-second he understood. This was no blithe Pacific sea-god disporting himself. Death's own grim messenger rode that foaming wave-crest!

By some means—he knew not how—the Jap knew him for an enemy. He saw the man's agile twist of his muscular body to slew the broad, heavy surf-board. At forty miles an hour, borne by the racing sea, the Asiatic was heading directly for him. The speed of the board, with the man's weight on it, was sufficient to stun a sea-elephant if the thing struck home.

Reason urged him to turn, to swim to one side. Instinct caused him to plunge downward under the sea, and he followed instinct to his own salvation!

Brine cataracted into his nose, mouth and down his throat. He felt the forward drag of the swinging water under the boiling surf. But the deadly board with its human freight passed over him, and he emerged in the green trough, gasping for breath, to see Fuji, defeated in his fell design, still rushing shoreward on a running wall of tumbling white foam.

With "bellows to mend," it took Val the best part of fifteen minutes to regain Waikiki Beach. He flung himself on the hot sand, unable to see the would-be assassin or Pompey, whom he had left to the melon feast.

When, after a brief rest, he arose, he saw the negro boy, who came toward him in a fever of excitement.

"Massa! Massa!" Pompey exclaimed. "I'se seen him. Shenjo! Dat pusson I followed was down here on de beach. But he's done gone left de place now in his ebery-day clothes, sah."

"What d'you mean, young 'un?" Val demanded. "Was he in a surfing costume when you first saw him?"

The darky nodded.

"Dat am so, boss. Sure, I knew dat pusson by his face. And he had a mark on de right arm, like a plum wid a spot ob ice-cream on it."

"Great snakes!" Val breathed. "Fuji and Shenjo—one and the same person! Things are beginning to move. Pompey, my pippin, you have a heaven-sent talent for making mighty useful bloomers!"

The Cauldron of Fire!

FOR the third night in succession the strange craft, Banshee, circled slowly and invisibly above a deep bay beyond the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbour.

Val Crichton himself was at the controls, and Mike O'Hara sucked an empty clay pipe as he leaned on a machine-gun of the silent 1934 pattern. In a compartment below Pompey prepared coffee on an electric cooker and found time to make inroads into a large and luscious pineapple.

"Bel'ave me, skipper," Mike remarked, "that dirthy spalpeen, Mosaki, has made his getaway."

"I think you're right," Val answered. "The police have got reason to think that some more Mongolians have got into Hawaii, and only a couple of nights ago. If they got in, Mosaki could have got out. He's gone. Somehow he slipped through the net. But this fellow Fuji remains, and they'll bag him."

"'Tis a pity they don't do ut," Mike grunted.

"No fear! The plan now is to give him enough rope to hang himself. It's got to be established exactly how he and his associates have been getting migrants into the island in large numbers. The stunt itself has got to be stopped, and nothing must be done at present to make those in league with Fuji alter their present plans."

"Whin there's enough o' the yellow spalpeens here," Mike muttered, "I s'pose they'll start a gineral revolt?"

Val nodded.

"That's the bright notion, no doubt," he said. "Probably arms will be landed when everything is ready. An attack by Mongolian ships and 'planes and a large mob ashore would give Uncle Sam a severe jolt."

"Aye," Mike agreed, "'twould be good-bye-e-e Hawaii!"

Each day since the affair at Waikiki a watch had been kept secretly by the U.S. Navy on the stretch of water near Shenjo's boat-building yards. Val was not surprised to learn that nothing unusual had been observed, although he himself had suggested to Admiral Dwight that the watch should be kept. His own opinion was that the next landing of Mongolians would take place at night, which was the reason he had chosen night duty for himself and his crew. Fuji, masquerading under the name of Shenjo, of the boat-building yards, was handling Mosaki's secret migration scheme!

Silently the Banshee circled over the bay that reflected the tropic stars. The lights of Honolulu became less numerous; a clock chimed the hour of midnight, and Mike began to nod despite strong coffee. Down below, Pompey showed his appreciation of Hawaii's chief fruit product by carving his third pineapple.

One o'clock—two o'clock! As on former nights, Val's hopes began to fade while still he circled over the bay.

Then suddenly his expression became more tense. There was not a breath of wind, yet "cat's-paws" appeared on the surface of the sea.

The ripples extended and moved shoreward, slowly and uncannily.

"Mike!" Val whispered. "Take a dekko now!"

The red-bearded Irishman looked over the side of the cockpit, and almost lost his discoloured clay pipe in his excitement.

"Mither MacCree!" he gasped. "'Tis an invisible ship, bedad! You can see that as plain as your face, sor!"

Val laughed softly, although there was reason in the Irishman's queer-sounding remark. A small ship was stealing toward the concrete slope leading to Shenjo's boat-sheds. The general shape of the craft against the water, and the slightly phosphorescent ripple of foam against its hull could be seen from the air.

A deduction made previously by Val when he had discovered that Fuji and Shenjo were one and the same person was proved correct. The Mongolians had come again to Hawaii in one of the small, aldurien-built warships which could also be used on land!

In the darkness of the early morning the ship, like some sinister sea-beast, moved to the concrete slope that led up from the water.

Sweeping low in the Banshee, Val saw the shape of it as it emerged, and the water running from the grey concrete. The doors of a great shed were opened silently, and the ship, which could be used also as an armoured tank, entered the place.

Mike needed no hot coffee now to keep him awake. Val had difficulty in restraining him.

Leaving Pompey to satisfy the last of a boyish appetite, they watched from the air as other doors opened on the far side of the shed.

The shape crept out over an open piece of ground and took a deserted road that skirted the port. Some ingenious sweeping arrangement behind the craft eliminated the marks of its tracks in the dust astern of the monster.

It passed over a strong bridge spanning a shallow ravine, and Val hurriedly wirelessed a prearranged signal in code. A detachment

of U.S. Marines on duty thus received the news of what was happening, followed at a distance in an electric lorry, and, well-trained in their job, laid the trap which would prevent the silent invader ever again reaching the sea!

By a semi-circular route, the Mongolian craft covered a mile of ground and stopped near a large building adjoining the Asiatic quarter of the port. There it decanted its passengers, who vanished into the building like rabbits into their warren.

"Faith!" breathed Mike. "There must be two or three hundred o' the spalpeens!"

A curious shadow moved away from the forward part of the craft. It was as though a giant moth had escaped suddenly from the amphibian machine, and Val shut off the engine that pumped the vapour to the cylinders. The uncanny occurrence seemed to threaten danger, and he was keyed up to peril, aware of the scientific devices possessed by the remorseless enemy.

Aboard the Banshee he had instruments for magnifying the faintest sound of machinery in the air. He listened in, and heard a soft droning similar to that made by his own aero-engine when it was running.

"Mike!" he muttered. "They've loosed a 'plane!"

He switched on the engine again and headed at high speed and greater altitude across the island, unwilling to risk the invaluable Banshee in conflict with an unseen foe.

His own seaplane had an instrument for detecting hostile aircraft, a device invented by his uncle, and it was probable that the Mongolian 'plane possessed a similar device. That implied that the presence of the Banshee might have been discovered by the faint sound of her engine.

A deep rumbling from the Pali mountain temporarily obliterated all other sound. And then came Mike's voice, hoarse with excitement:

"Bedad, I can see ut, sor! 'Tis an airy-plane hot afther us!"

Val glanced over his shoulder. In the curious orange glow from the volcano crater he could discern the machine like a huge ghostly moth.

After a warning to Pompey below to "hold tight," Val banked the Banshee sharply and peered downward. Mike meanwhile took the chance of clipping the safety-straps of himself and his young skipper.

"Stand by the gun!" Val snapped. "He's got twin machine-guns aboard. See those flames?"

The flickering flames were all that disclosed the presence of the hostile craft.

At tremendous speed, Val circled to avoid the unseen streams of lead ripping through the night air.

The Mongolian airman imagined that the Banshee intended to dive under him to gain the best position for delivering a burst of machine-gun fire. To frustrate the manœuvre, he ascended sharply, and his machine was revealed briefly in the orange-coloured light.

Instantly Val flattened out the Banshee, and Mike saw the enemy machine and acted with equal readiness. His gun-sights were on the target, which was illuminated by the Pali's glow; his finger pressed the trigger.

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat!

The machine-gun spat a stream of hot lead into the Mongolian's fuselage!

Some freakish air-current or burst of sulphurous heat from the Pali caught the Banshee and hurled her in an astounding loop of a thousand feet!

For breath-taking seconds Val and his crew looked down upon a cauldron of molten lava. And then the Banshee shot like a bat out of a furnace into darkest night.

"G-g-g-golly!" stuttered Pompey, clinging to the cockpit companion ladder. "Am it time to go home, boss?"

"It am—I mean, it is," returned Val grimly. "But I'd like first to get that swab who——"

"Begorra, we got him!" Mike exulted. "See that flame, sor!"

In a spiral of fire the Mongolian machine swung downward like a giant comet.

"Good-noight!" the Irishman rasped. "The Pali's got him! He wint down there—into the crater!"

The unknown enemy who had tried to "get" the Banshee had received his just due; yet the chums were subdued in their triumph during the flight back to their base.

Later they learnt of the fate of the Mongolian craft which had come from the sea. By explosive and electrical contact, the Marines had destroyed the bridge on the road that led back to the boat-building yards. The craft had stumbled into the shallow ravine, and American bluejackets and troops had effected the capture of the Mongolian crew.

Fuji, alias Shenjo, was captured, and later sentenced to a long term of imprisonment for offences against the alien immigration laws. A general round-up of Mongolians took place, and hundreds were deported.

The stealthy invaders had been disembarked at a house kept by another agent in the pay of the Mongolian governments. Underground passages to premises in the Asiatic quarter of Honolulu enabled them to mingle with their compatriots without detection by the police.

The whole scheme for the invasion of Hawaii had been defeated. Unfortunately, Mosaki, the arch-plotter had escaped. But once again he had met his match in Val and his two loyal shipmates!

At a celebration dinner aboard the American flagship, Admiral Dwight expressed his satisfaction to Val.

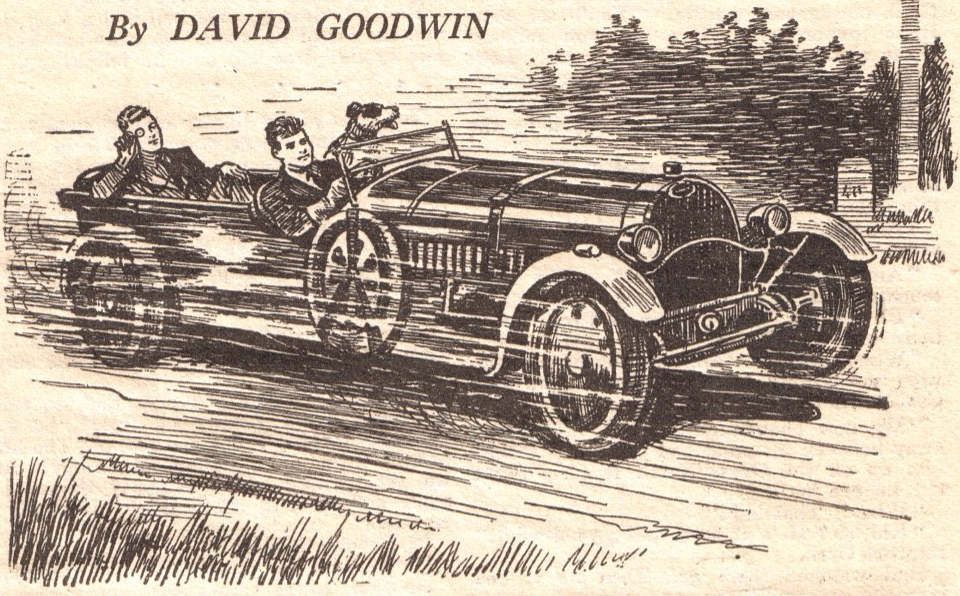
"I'll allow, lootenant," he said, "that this tour of ours to the Pacific Paradise has been —stoopendous!"

(The final fight between the white and yellow races for the supremacy of the Pacific Islands is one continuous thrill. Make certain you read "The Phantom Fleet" next week. Order your copy to-day.)

Bud Discovers That Two Rascals Are Out To " Get " His Boss!

OPEN THROTTLE!

By DAVID GOODWIN



A Rascally Plot!

BUD made his way in by the back entrance of the house, and ran into a grey-haired, solemn-looking butler, who stared gloomily at him, and, in answer to his questions, told him the way to the library.

"Funny thing, that green guy from Wellstead coming here," mused Bud, as he went upstairs. "I don't much like his looks. And he don't seem to like mine, either. He's not so green as his coat. Wonder what 'young Barney' is like?"

Bud was soon to learn. He had no difficulty in finding the library. He heard plenty of noise coming from it. The library was a big, richly-furnished room on the first floor, and the door stood open.

Bud halted at the door and stood staring in astonishment, wondering whether he had better go away.

There were half a dozen men and youths in the library, and a queer crowd they looked. If this was Cyril's birthday-party, he was making a remarkable start. Bud wondered whether they had invited themselves, and it was a pretty good guess.

They were sprawling in the armchairs as if the place belonged to them. One was shouting out a song and slapping the table with his cane. The air was thick with smoke, there were spirit decanters on the sideboard, and a pack of cards lay scattered about the floor.

Babbit stood by the fireplace, and a big, fat man, fashionably dressed, with a bloated face and a pearl in his necktie, stood in front of him, his hands on Babbit's shoulders.

"My dear boy—my dear Cyril," he said, beaming on Babbit, "this is what I like to see—a young fellow of spirit enjoying himself! That's the time to see life—when you're young. Let the tail go with the hide—be open and free-handed—full steam ahead, and let her rip!"

"Oh—ah, yes!" said Cyril, who was looking rather unhappy.

"We're all coming to see you sweep the board at Brooklands to-morrow! For the honour of the family, you've got to break the record!"

"You bank on me, Uncle Hotham!" said Cyril. "If you want to see a car flash round Brooklands like a high-explosive shell, you watch me to-morrow!"

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Bud Kelly, a clever young motor mechanic, gets fired from his job in a garage. Accompanied by his dog Pincher, he sets out to walk to London. On the road he meets a youthful millionaire named Cyril Babbit, who offers the young mechanic a job as chauffeur-valet, which Bud promptly accepts. Reaching the London home of Cyril, Bud makes an enemy of the shady chauffeur of Babbit's uncle.

"Good for you, Cyril!" said a youth of about the same age as Babbit, dressed in sporting style and with a pale face and cunning eyes. He slapped Cyril heartily on the back. "Mind you give that big racer of yours a full throttle, and she'll show 'em all the way—she'll go like the angel of death!"

"I believe you, Barney, old thing!" said Cyril, swaggering a little. "You'll see some sport to-morrow. Here, all you fellows! Come along out to the billiard-room. Let's have a knock up before we dress for dinner."

The crowd got up and came through the door. But Hotham Finch took Cyril by the arm.

"My dear boy," he said eagerly, "we want to see you privately, Barney and I. Something very important——"

"All right," replied Cyril genially. "Come along. Hallo, Bud—that you?"

"Any orders for me, sir?" asked Bud, touching his forehead politely.

"I'll see you in a minute or two. Go in there and wait for me."

"Who's that?" whispered Barney Finch, with a sidelong glance at Bud as he took Cyril's other arm.

"My new chauffeur," said Cyril, walking away between his uncle and cousin. "Picked him up on the Great North Road. Some lad, believe me!"

"What! That kid?"

"Kid, eh? He's all wool and a yard wide!" retorted Cyril.

Bud watched them go. Then he walked into the empty library, and screwed up his mouth in a silent whistle.

"So that's Uncle Hotham and 'young Barney'?" he murmured. "Don't envy the boss his relations!"

He looked round him at the untidy room with disgust—the cards on the floor and the overturned glasses.

"I wonder if I can stick this sort of thing? But I suppose I'll have to. What a crowd of thugs he's got round him! They're living on him. I'd put 'em all in the street if it was me. Why does the silly ass stand for it?"

Bud looked round for a seat. There was a Japanese screen near him, and an armchair behind it. He could be alone there till his master wanted him. He sat down, and Pincher curled up at his feet and went to sleep.

Bud pondered. What he had seen and heard gave him food for thought.

Why were Barney Finch and his father so keen on having Babbit break records at Brooklands to-morrow? Babbit called himself the Terror of Brooklands, but that was "hot-air." He was not the sort of fellow to handle a hundred-horse-power car in a big race. That was a dangerous game—a game for experts. Were they betting on him, or against him, or what?

Bud had been in some queer places, but this boy millionaire's house struck him as the queerest place he had ever yet been in. He had never seen such a crew.

Bud waited patiently. He could hear the riot going on in other parts of the house, but Babbit did not return. Presently the old butler waddled in. He did not notice Bud behind the screen, but he looked round him at the mess and disorder, shrugged his shoulders gloomily, turned off all the electric lights except one, then he left the room.

Bud felt drowsy. He had had a long day, and the air of the room was close and heavy. His eyelids drooped, and he fell asleep.

. . . . . .

The door of the library opened gently, and Mr. Hotham Finch entered. There was a nervous, anxious expression on his flabby face. He looked round the room carefully, filled a glass from the decanter, and gulped the liquor down. Just then his son came in and softly closed the door.

"Have you stung him?" asked Hotham.

"I think so," said Barney. "I've seen Joe, the chauffeur."

He cast himself into a chair, and his cunning eyes gleamed in the light of the single bulb overhead.

"Doesn't it make you sick, dad, to think of young Cyril having all this?" he said viciously, looking round the room. "The little beast! Close on a million of money! And we get nothing but a beggarly thousand a year—and most of that's gone. It ought to be ours!"

"Of course it ought."

"I wish he was dead!" growled Barney.

Hotham leaned across and tapped him on the knee.

"If he was dead, Barney," he murmured, "it would be ours! All old John Babbit's money!"

Barney Finch nodded.

"Barney," said Hotham slowly, "there's two ways it might come to us, after all! The first is, if he got into trouble. You know what I mean. Properly into trouble. The stone jug."

"I understand," said Barney.

"The other way," continued Hotham, coming closer and lowering his voice, "is, if he was—underground! That's sure! That's certain!"

"I get you, dad!" said Barney, and his eyes narrowed.

"It's got to be one or the other—and quick, too! We're in a tight place, my boy," said Hotham Finch nervously. "Which is it to be? We can't draw back now!"

"The first way's too slow!" breathed Barney. "I give my vote. Underground!"

Hotham Finch drew a long breath.

"It's dangerous," he murmured. "But it has to be done. And there's a good chance to-morrow."

"And we'll take it," said Barney. He turned his thumb down towards the carpet. "I'm for putting the little beggar downstairs!"

Hotham Finch turned round with a gasp and stared dumbly at something on the floor. It was only a dog. It was Pincher, who had

roused himself and come forth, hearing voices. The hairs on his back were bristling, and he was looking silently at Mr. Hotham Finch just as he would have looked at a rat.

Hotham caught sight of a pair of boots sticking out from behind the screen.

"By gosh!" he gasped. "What's this?"

He seized the screen and pulled it aside. Bud Kelly was revealed, lying comfortably in the armchair, wide awake, and his eyes met the gaze of the two Finches.

They moved towards him, both of them very white, their faces so dangerous and threatening that Pincher gave a warning growl.

"You!" said Barney through his teeth. "You young spy! You were listening to what we said!"

Bud rose to his feet. He folded his arms and looked Hotham Finch straight in the face.

"Well," said Bud grimly, "what about it?"

— —

Suspicions!

BUD'S defiant air seemed to strike the other two dumb. For a moment they stared at him in blank amazement.

Bud was rather astonished, too. Hotham Finch and his son were not only white-faced and frightened, but they looked at him with a positively murderous expression. He held himself alert and ready.

"What about it!" echoed Barney Finch, coming closer to him. "What do you mean? You were listening! You were eavesdropping!"

"Look here!" said Bud quietly. "You've called me a spy already! If you've got any more names handy cut 'em out, or else there'll be a rough-house in here! I don't know any more than the man in the moon what you're driving at!"

"I——"

"Barney—Barney, hold your tongue!" said his father quickly, and turned to Bud. "What were you doing behind that screen, my lad?"

"What was I doing?" said Bud, looking at him steadily. "I was waiting for my governor, who told me to sit in here till I got orders. Being pretty tired, I fell asleep. And I don't much fancy being woke up and called a spy!"

The expressions of Finch and his son changed quickly. They stared searchingly at Bud's face. Mr. Hotham Finch smiled an oily but rather uneasy smile.

"Ha, ha!" said Mr. Finch. "Really—really this is an absurd fuss about nothing! You are a chauffeur, my lad—a mechanic, aren't you? Well, then, it would not have mattered even if you had heard everything we said, instead of—er—being asleep. If you had been a man of business it would have been different!"

"Well, I ain't a man of business," said Bud, "nor a spy either!"

"Quite so. We came in here, my son and I, to talk over some very important—er—private affairs connected with a company in the City. Business secrets have to be carefully guarded, my lad. So it was very awkward to find somebody was in the room unknown to us, and might have heard what we were saying, and perhaps stolen a march on us. We might have lost thousands of pounds by it."

"That's it. And if you're suddenly found behind a screen in a place where people are talking business secrets, you've only yourself to thank if they think you're a spy," said Barney. "It's all right, dad," he added, lighting a cigarette, "the fellow's only a servant, he wouldn't understand what we were talking about!"

"Wait a moment," said Bud quietly, taking a step nearer to him. "You said I was listening to you. Do you take that back?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" said Mr. Finch quickly. "You see, my lad, there are some rather queer people in this house, people one wouldn't trust very far, and for all we knew you might have been one of them."

"You're quite right, sir," said Bud, looking at him fixedly. "There's some very funny people in this house, and I wouldn't trust 'em any farther than I could throw 'em!"

Mr. Finch seemed more taken aback than ever. Barney, breathing hard, glared at Bud. It is uncertain what would have happened if there had not been an interruption. For just then the door swung open and Cyril poked his head in.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Cyril.

The two Finches turned round quickly.

"What's the matter?" asked Cyril. "You look as if somebody had sold you a pup! I say, Barney old thing. I want to speak to you about something urgent—no end of a spree! You, too, uncle! Come in the next room a minute!"

Uncle Hotham and his son glanced at Bud rather nervously, and followed Cyril out. Bud, left alone, shut the door and drew a deep breath.

"Well, that beats the band!" he said.

Bud was completely puzzled.

What he had told Finch was quite true. He had been asleep when the two of them came in, and he had only wakened up just before they pulled down the screen. He had missed the conversation between Barney and his father—all except the last sentence.

He had heard Barney say:

"I'm for putting the little beggar downstairs!"

That was enough to set Bud guessing. Who was "the little beggar," if it wasn't Cyril? And what did "downstairs" mean?

Very likely Bud would have thought no more about it if they had not set about him in the way they did—accusing him of listening. If ever there was a pair of badly frightened and angry men, thought Bud, it was those two. They had been too startled

to think what they were saying. They had given themselves away!

They took it for granted that Bud had heard all they said. And it was evidently something that nobody ought to hear.

"'Little beggar.' 'Downstairs,'" murmured Bud thoughtfully.

Not for a moment did he believe the story about a business conversation. People don't get so excited as that about business. If they had been told they were going to be hanged they could not have "got the wind up" worse.

"What do you think about it, Pincher?" said Bud.

Pincher showed an admirable set of white teeth.

"I'm with you, old son," said Bud. "That's a pair of rum 'uns, and they're up to no good. What their game is I'd give a trifle to know. And I'll find out!"

He thought it over. How did the two Finches stand with Cyril, whom they seemed to be so fond of? Were they trying to get money out of him, or what? Bud did not know. And when he didn't know he wasted no time in guessing. "Downstairs" might mean anything. It might also mean something very unpleasant. But that didn't seem possible. Whatever it was it sounded as if there might very soon be a rough house of some sort. And Bud liked a rough house. He had seen a good many, young as he was.

"Here, Bud," said Cyril, opening the door. "You're sharp on cars. Do you know anything about racing engines?"

"Yes, sir. I've handled a forty-horse-power Mercedes for a gent that came to Huggins' garage last year. But I haven't had a lot of experience."

"Handled her? What, on the track?"

"Only on the track at Wexfield, sir. I can tune a racing engine pretty fair."

"By gosh, I shall take you with me to Brooklands in the morning, then!" exclaimed Cyril. "I believe in you, Bud. You'll stand by me while we do the trial run."

Bud's eyes sparkled.

"I'll be ready, sir." He blushed and hesitated. "Might I take a liberty, Mr. Babbit? There's something I want to ask you."

"Fire ahead, kid!"

There was a faint rustle just outside the half-open door. Bud caught a momentary glimpse of a collar and a tuft of hair. Somebody was listening, and without a doubt it was Barney Finch. Bud paused.

"It's about my wages, sir," he said uncomfortably. "I'm rather broke. Could I have a bit to be going on with? I want to send some money to my mother, who's badly off."

Babbit stared at him.

"Got a mother, have you?" he said reflectively. "Funny thing it must be having a mother. Did she bring you up?"

"Yes, sir."

"I've heard chaps who are brought up by their mothers all the time get a bit soft. You don't seem as soft as I'd expect."

Bud grinned.

"We couldn't afford much softness, sir, mother an' me. But we got all that was going. She's a widder, and has a sweetstuff shop—19, Couper Street, E.—but it don't much more than keep her alive. I hope you don't mind——"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Babbit, taking out his notecase. "I'll have the rest of your giddy family history some other time, Bud. I'm busy. Here you are, month in advance."

He tossed eight one-pound notes on the table. Before the surprised Bud could thank him he was out of the room.

"Well, he's a good sort!" said Bud, scooping up the notes. "Easy to see he's got no mother, though But he's a long sight softer than me even if he don't know it."

He sat down at a desk in the corner, and, borrowing a sheet of superb cream-laid notepaper, squared his elbows, and began to write painfully, thrusting out his tongue. Bud was a better hand with a spanner than a pen.

"My Dearest Mother,—This is a swell address I'm at, isn't it? I got sacked from Huggins' this morning, but had a bit of luck and got a job with Mr. Babbit at two pounds a week. He seems to be rolling in it. I enclose six pounds. You've looked after me a long time, dear, and now I'm going to look after you. I have to go to Brooklands tomorrow, but I'll be coming to see you as soon as I can get a day off, so no more at present.

"Your loving son,

"BUD."

"I'll have to register that when I get out to the post," he said to himself, slipping the letter into an envelope with six of the notes. As he did so an intruder came into the room, and Bud looked up.

It was the dark-faced chauffeur in the green livery, whom he had seen in the Napier car below, the man from Wellstead. He walked into the room as if it belonged to him and gave a leer at Bud.

"Hallo, kid!" he said. "Seen my guv'nor anywhere about?"

Without waiting for an answer he poured some spirits into a tumbler from the cut-glass decanter and drank it. Bud stared at him in wonder. The chauffeur winked at him and laughed.

"This is help-yourself house," he said, "as I bet you've found out already—eh? Come and have one!"

"Not for me," said Bud. "Your governor was in here just now. Mr. Hotham Finch and his son Barney, isn't it?"

"Ah, you've met 'em, have you?" said the man in green with another leer. "What d'you think of 'em?"

"Two very nice gentlemen," said Bud dryly.

"You're a fly kid, ain't you?" said the man, looking at him narrowly. "Know which side your bread's margarined?"

"Well, I've been taught to keep my eyes open."

The other came a little closer.

"Know when to keep 'em shut, too?" he asked.

"I've shut a chap's eyes for him before now," replied Bud. "But, of course, you've had more experience than me."

"Experience!" said the man in green, with a slight hiccup. "I believe you." He set down the empty glass. "I'm Joe Cleugh, the smartest mechanic in London," he added, and swaggered out of the room.

"And a dirty dog, too," said Bud to himself, "for not havin' washed your hands before you came up from the garage." He picked up the glass from which Joe Cleugh had drunk, and noticed an oily thumb-print on the side of it, clearly marked on the glass. There was a tiny little scar on the side of the thumb-mark, as though Joe Cleugh had lately cut himself with the edge of a spanner.

Bud looked at the thumb-print. It was a trifling thing. Bud had a noticing eye, even for trifles, and a good memory. There was very little that got past him.

But even Bud did not guess that his fortunes and even his life depended on that little mark on the glass.

. . . . . .

"I believe that kid knows," said Hotham Finch in a trembling voice. He and his son were sitting alone in the room next the library. "I believe he heard more than he let on."

"Well, I don't," replied Barney. "It's my belief he heard nothing that matters. I was a bit too quick calling him a spy. But we were both rather upset, you see."

"How can we be sure? If he did hear, then we're done for—ruined! He'll give it away to young Cyril."

Barney shrugged his shoulders.

"No good meeting trouble half-way, dad. Cyril's gone to see the kid now, so we shall mighty soon know."

Cyril Babbit came in at that moment, and Hotham shot a glance at him that was full of secret terror. But Cyril was beaming cheerfully, and looked as happy as a monkey with a bag of nuts.

"Hallo!" he said. "Just been having a word with that new kid of mine. Funny kid. By gosh, he makes me laugh!"

"What did he say that was funny?" asked Barney anxiously.

"He's got an old mother that keeps a sweet-shop in the East End," said Cyril. "And he's sending her his wages. Rather decent of him. Nothing funny in that. It's his face that gets me. Sort of face you throw sticks at in a Bank Holiday fair, and get a cigar when you hit it. I'm coming to like it, though."

Mr. Finch drew a deep sigh of relief. Evidently Bud had said nothing, and had not heard anything that mattered. Barney was right.

"No doubt the boy is useful as a comic turn," said Hotham. "You pick up such odd people, Cyril. But, my dear boy," he added, laying a hand on Babbit's knee, "what you want is an absolutely first-class chauffeur for racing-cars, and we've brought you the man. Joe Cleugh."

"It's a bit of a sacrifice, Cyril," said Barney. "But we're going to let you have Joe Cleugh. You take him down with you to-morrow. He's absolutely the finest mechanic in England!"

"That's jolly kind of you. But I haven't room for another just now, and I can't very well fire Bud."

"The boy?" said Hotham, smiling. "Oh, we'll take him off your hands, if that's all. We'll exchange you Cleugh for him."

Cyril lay back and roared with laughter.

"Nothing doing!" he said. "That dark-faced guy in green? I wouldn't swop Bud, or his dog, either, for ten like Cleugh! I stick to Bud until he lets me down!"

"My dear Cyril, you can't be serious?"

"I am, though," replied Babbit abruptly, and left the room.

Barney and his father looked at each other in consternation. They seemed upset.

"That cursed kid!" growled Barney. "Who'd have expected this?"

"Cyril's like that sometimes," said Hotham hastily. "And when he is he's obstinate as a mule. We'd better not press it. He's evidently taken a fancy to the boy. After all, perhaps things are better as they are. I was talking to Cleugh just now, and he's ready to do the job. If that comes off, nothing else matters. Here he is."

Joseph Cleugh, still in his green livery, came stealthily into the room.

"Yes," he murmured, "here I am, governor."

"Wait a moment!" said Hotham. He closed the door, and this time he made a thorough search of the room, to make certain they were alone. The three then came close together by the table in the middle and spoke in whispers.

(What treachery are the three scoundrels plotting now? Don't miss the next stirring instalment of this popular serial.)

TRIED BY HIS FORM!

(*Continued from page* 29.)

then Fullwood & Co. will have to look out for themselves. Fullwood's victorious now, but it won't last!"

And, before going up to bed, to suffer further humiliation, I managed to go to Mr. Alvington's study with some excuse or other. Once alone with the Housemaster, I told him the main facts of the case.

It was great to be talking to the guv'nor again, in our usual free-and-easy manner. And Nelson Lee at first was inclined to be angry.

"The boys have sent you to Coventry, Nipper?" he asked, sitting back in his chair and lighting a cigarette. "Good gracious, the thing is absurd! How can the boys be so ridiculous? The headmaster publicly——"

"Yes, I know, guv'nor," I interrupted. "But the fellows have got queer ideas into their heads. Of course, this is strictly on the Q.T., you know. I'm not complaining, and you mustn't take any action."

"I shall let matters take their own course, young 'un," Lee answered. "You are quite capable of looking after yourself. And I think I have a piece of news for you which you will welcome."

"News, guv'nor?"

"Exactly! We are to take up our old profession for a little while," smiled Nelson Lee genially. "I have decided to get to the bottom of this mystery without any further delay. When the truth is revealed, you will, of course, resume your old position in the Remove."

"What's the programme, sir?" I asked eagerly.

"I am not exactly sure at the moment," was the guv'nor's reply. "But it seems that our old friend, Detective-Inspector Morley, of Scotland Yard, is at present staying in Bannington."

"Bannington! That's only three miles away!"

"Precisely! Morley is investigating a robbery there. The local police didn't feel up to conducting the investigation on their own hook," said Nelson Lee, "and I am going to consult Morley with regard to this Farman mystery."

"What can old Morley do, sir?"

"It's not what Morley can do; it is what we can do!" replied the guv'nor easily. "I mean to lay a trap for these enemies of Farman, for I am convinced they are still hanging about the place. And then the truth will come out."

"What sort of trap, sir?" I asked wonderingly.

"Ah, I don't know that just now!" smiled Lee. "But within a day or two your term of 'Coventry' will come to a sudden end. So don't worry, young 'un! Farman refuses to say who the attackers were. Very well! We shall proceed to find out for ourselves."

THE END.

(***Nipper's Form-fellows are convinced that he is guilty, but Nipper's not content to let it go at that. He's determined to prove his innocence. Read next week's story, "NIPPER'S TRIUMPH!" and be thrilled.***)

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