Buying the Remove!

By

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

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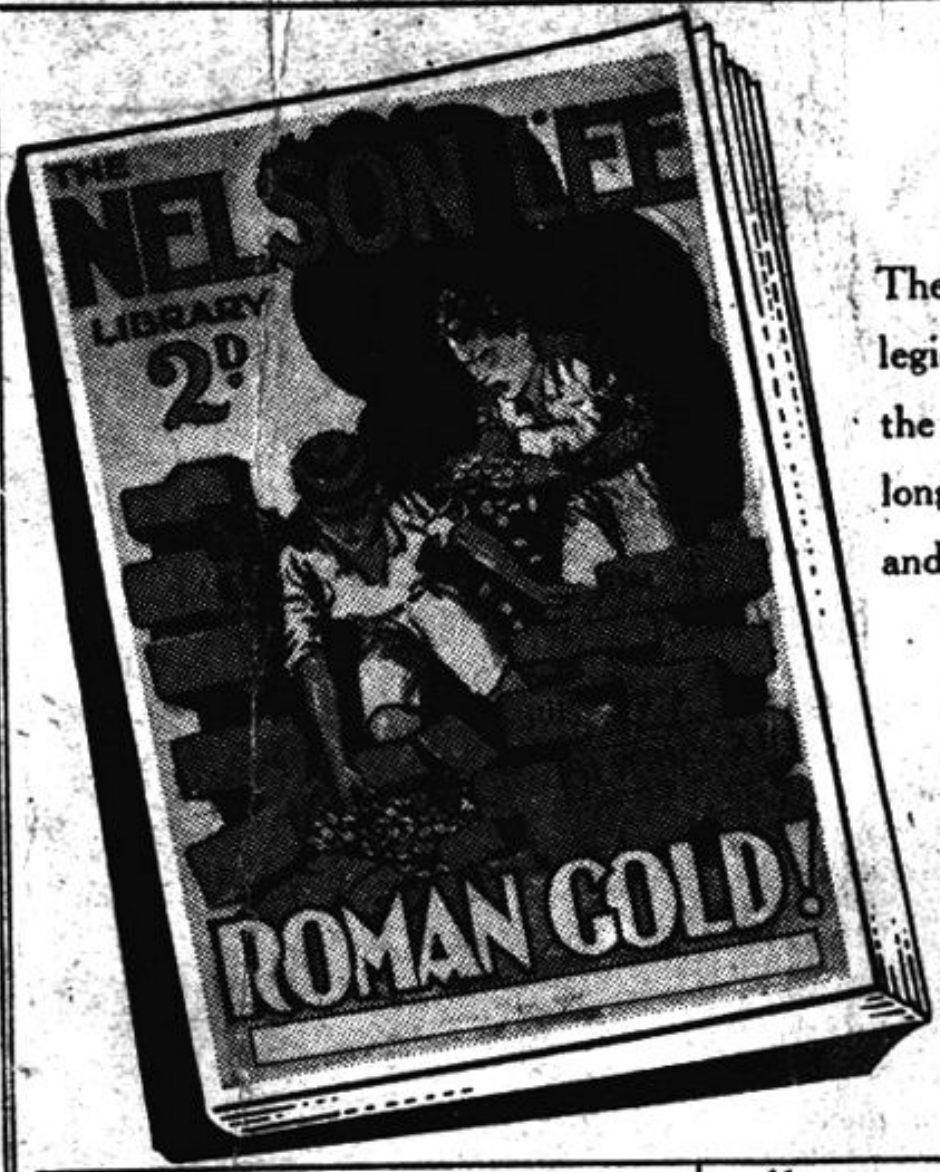

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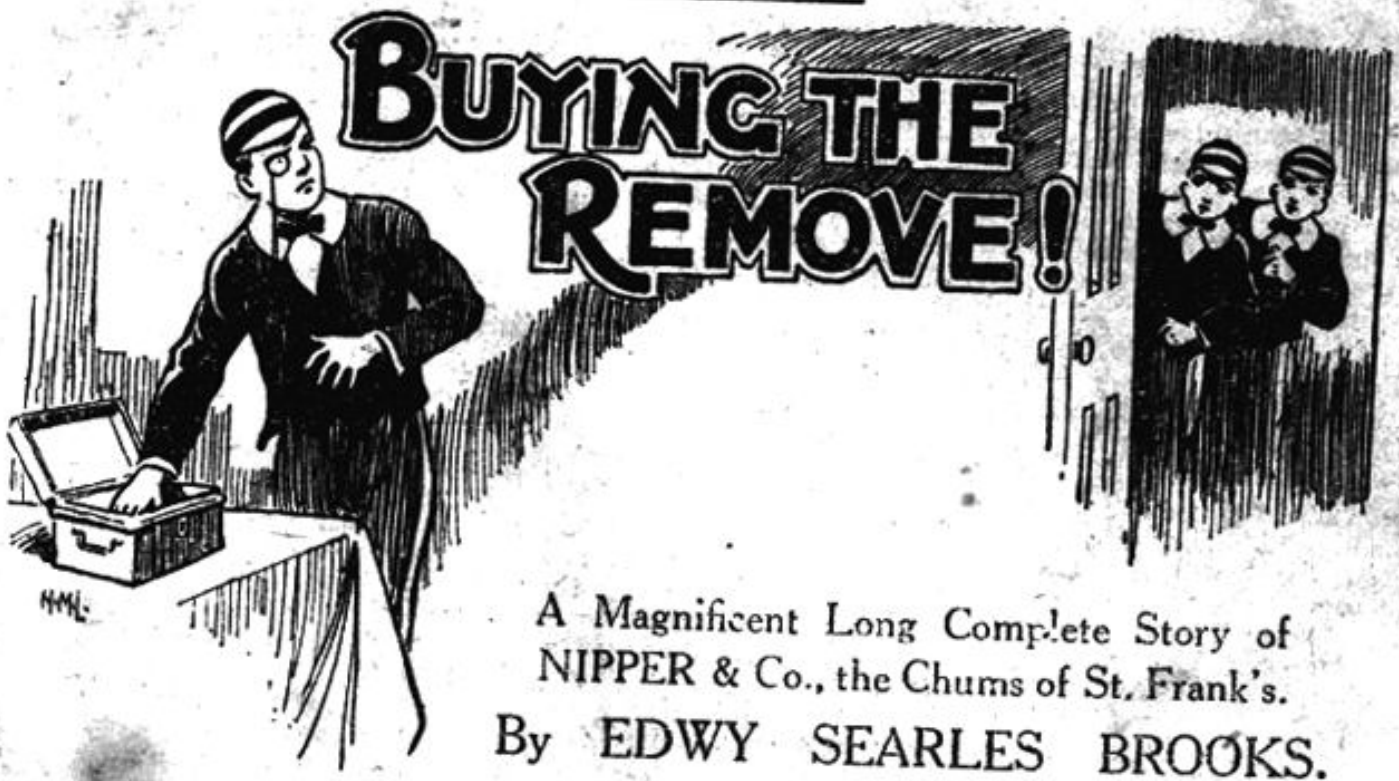


A Magnificent Long Complete Story of NIPPER & Co., the Chums of St. Frank's.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

CHAPTER 1.

The Emerald Pendant!

RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD, the cad of St. Frank's, rested his feet upon the mantelpiece, and lazily tossed a cigarette end into the fire-place.

"I'm gettin' a bit fed up with things," he yawned. "It's as slow as a rotten funeral at St. Frank's nowadays, and a chap doesn't know what to do with himself."

"Oh; I don't know," said Gulliver. "It isn't so bad. Better than it was when Nipper was skipper of the Remove, anyhow. We can do pretty well as we like, without any blessed interference."

"Rather!" agreed Bell.

The Nuts of the Ancient House at St. Frank's were in Study A, and dinner had been over for about twenty minutes. It was a half-holiday, and the three juniors hardly knew what to do for the afternoon.

It was really rather strange that Fullwood & Co. should be fed up. They had never had a better chance to do what they pleased. For, as Gulliver had remarked, Nipper—that being the name I am always addressed by at St. Frank's—and most of the other Removites had not yet returned from the holidays. In our holiday party were most of the best chaps in the Remove. My own chums, Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West, Reggie Pitt, Archie Glenthorne, the genial ass, Handforth & Co., and several others.

Fullwood & Co. should have been pleased at this state of affairs because they had any amount of liberty and could do as they liked. Also, discipline was slack. This was partly due to the absence with our party of Nelson Lee, Housemaster of the Ancient House. Till he returned the house was being looked after by Mr. Crowell, who was not much of a disciplinarian.

And in addition to this, since there was no form captain at the college—I had the honour to hold that position—cricket, so far as the Remove was concerned, was at a standstill.

The majority of the decent chaps—such as Burton and Jerry Dodd and the Duke of Somerton—were not happy about the state of affairs. But they expected us back at any moment and were in favour of not electing a new captain till we returned.

It was a sunny day—one of those bright days which are real summer. The heat outside was considerable, and the triangle was lazily basking in sunshine and shade with a

monotonous drone of insects sounding from the flowers in the Head's garden.

And so the Remove, without any leader, was becoming stale. Cricket was nearly at a standstill, and the slackness in the junior studies was rather fearful. Fullwood & Co., for example, smoked just as much as they liked in Study A. Mr. Crowell very seldom came round, and the fellows did practically as they liked.

"There ought to be a change," went on Fullwood. "I don't believe those cads will ever come back. Anyhow, I jolly well hope they won't! I'm blessed if I want that crowd here again."

"Yes, things are pretty easy now," said Bell. "If Nipper starts his rot again we shall be pounced on every bally day! I expect the whole crowd's got lost down in the Antartic—an' a good thing, too!"

"Of course they won't come back!" exclaimed Gulliver. "But why should we worry? The question is what are we goin' to do this afternoon? It's a lovely day, an'——"

"By gad!" exclaimed Fullwood, jumping up.

"What the deuce——"

"The races!" snapped Fullwood. "Confound it! I'd forgotten all about them until this minute!"

"The races?"

"Yes, at Bannin'ton!" went on Fullwood. "They don't often have any racin' at Bannin'ton, an' I've just remembered they're on this afternoon! Rats! We shall miss the two o'clock an' the two-thirty!"

Gulliver looked doubtful.

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "What's the good of goin' to the races without any money? An' what's the good of goin' with money? We nearly always lose it if we have a flutter on horses——"

"Rot!" interrupted Ralph Leslie. "It's a fine game—nothin' like it. Why, a chap can increase a quid into ten quid in half a tick on the racecourse! He's only got to put a quid on a ten-to-one winner!"

"Oh, easy!" said Gulliver. "The trouble is, we can't pick the giddy gee-gees out! We generally manage to shove our money on the duds!"

"Well, look here—I've got a couple of quid," said Fullwood. "It's not much, but it won't last long, anyhow. An' if we go careful we can increase it to six times the amount. Come on!"

The three juniors hurried out of Study A, and went down the passage to the Ancient House lobby. The Duke of Somerton and the Hon. Douglas Singleton were lounging in the doorway, chatting with Jerry Dodd, the Australian junior.

"Hallo! What's the hurry?" inquired Singleton.

"Mind your own business!" said Fullwood curtly.

"That means you're up to something pretty blackguardly!" said Singleton. "I'll bet anything that you're off to the Bannington races. Mugs! You'll walk home, and you'll lose your giddy boots!"

Fullwood & Co. took no notice.

But they were rather upset to learn that their mission was so easily guessed. However, they didn't care. They got their bicycles out, and they were soon speeding along the dusty road towards the town.

They arrived to find Bannington a great deal more animated than usual. There were only about two race meetings every year in the town, and these were not particularly big affairs.

The big race meetings took place at Helmford, twenty miles away.

Nevertheless, Bannington was making the most of the occasion. And a little on the outskirts of the town, past the Grammar School, lay the park. And within these grounds was the racecourse.

Fullwood & Co. paid their admission money, and went in. Gulliver and Bell only raked up just enough to gain admittance. They couldn't very well back out, particularly as their leader was so set upon the idea. And they knew that if Fullwood met with any luck, he would share out. He was several kinds of a cad, but treated his own pals pretty well.

"Just in time for the three o'clock," said Fullwood. "Now, let's have a look at the card."

They studied the race-card with perfect intelligence—for these mysterious documents were nothing new to the "nuts" of the Remove. They knew practically every horse by name, for they always followed the racing news, and made a point of looking up form.

"What-ho!" said Fullwood. "Swanee Whistle's runnin' in the three o'clock! A jolly fine horse—it beat Tortoiseshell by a couple of lengths at Sandown last week. She'll romp home."

"I fancy somethin' else," said Gulliver. "Swanee Whistle hasn't got much of a form, takin' the whole season into consideration. Besides, look at the weight she's carrying! She won't last!"

"Never!" said Bell.

Fullwood sniffed.

"You needn't worry—it's my money!" he said. "I am not askin' you to risk anythin'. If Swanee Whistle's a good price, I'm goin' to shove a quid on her."

They went across to one of the numerous bookmakers, and very soon discovered that bets were being taken on Swanee Whistle at five-to-one against. Fullwood put his pound on at once.

"What did you do—ten bob each way?" asked Bell.

"No—a quid to win."

"All right—I'll bet she won't come home in the first three!" said Gulliver. "An' if she does, she'll get a place. Your quid's gone. But, I say—keep your eyes skinned. We don't want to meet anybody we know."

They had taken the precaution to bring tweed caps with them—and they were already wearing grey flannels. So there was nothing to show that they were St. Frank's juniors. It would never have done to have worn their school caps on a local racecourse!

They had to chance whether they were recognised. They had chanced it on other occasions, and had more than once brazened things out, lying glibly, and actually proving an alibi.

So they were not in much fear. All their attention was centred upon the three o'clock race, which was just about to start. Very much depended upon the result—for if Fullwood won, he would certainly splash even more liberally.

"They're off!"

The shout went up from the crowds.

Fullwood grabbed at his card, and gazed at it.

"Swanee Whistle's number six!" he exclaimed. "Jockey's wearin' red sleeves and black cap. There he comes! Good! Swanee's leadin'!"

The horses came thundering past.

"Hallo! She's fallin' back now!" panted Gulliver excitedly. "Look at that rotten number eight! He's gettin' ahead!"

They could no longer see the horses as they swept round the bend. They turned anxiously, and stared at the post where the result would appear. The numbers came up very promptly.

Eight—four—two!

"Rotten!" grated Fullwood. "Swanee's lost!"

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Gulliver. "I knew she wouldn't come home in the first three——"

"I didn't ask you to crow!" growled Fullwood curtly. "We can't always win! I'll get this quid back on the next race—you see if I don't! I'm not goin' to be whacked!"

"But you'd better go easy!" said Bell. "You've only got a quid left, an' you don't want to plunge. You'd better put five bob only on the three-thirty—half-crown each way on somethin'. No need be rash."

"We'll see," said Fullwood.

They studied the race-card again, and Fullwood picked out a horse which, in his opinion, was not merely a dead certainty, but a walk-over. There was no question about the horse winning.

"I'm going to put a quid to win on it!" he declared.

"An' what if it loses?" asked Bell.

"This horse won't lose—Bella Rose is a tip I had from a chap only last week," said Fullwood. "She's an outsider, too—bound to be a big price. I'm goin' all or nothin' on her!"

"Look here, don't be an ass!" protested Gulliver. "You were just as certain that Swanee Whistle would win—an' she lost. You'll have no money for the four o'clock or the four-thirty if you blue it all on Bella Rose. I shouldn't go more than five bob!"

"Of course not," said Bell. "It's a mug's game to plunge."

Fullwood listened to his chums' advice, and finally agreed to go easy, and bet only five shillings. But he wouldn't listen to them when they suggested that he should put the money on half-a-crown each way—that is, half-a-crown to win, and half-a-crown for a place.

"No, I'm not going to mess about like that," he said. "Hang it all, I've a good mind to put a quid, after all! I can get eight to one on Bella Rose—an' that'll mean eight quid in pocket, in addition to my quid back."

"An' it'll mean you're stony if Bella Rose comes in second," pointed out Bell.

"Oh, all right!"

Fullwood put five shillings to win on the horse, and then he and his chums paced up and down, watching the crowds, and waiting for the race to start. The time soon passed, and the race was run.

The numbers went up—three—seven—one.

"Great!" gasped Fullwood. "She's won, you chaps! Number three—that's Bella Rose!"

"You'll draw two-pounds-five from the bookie," said Bell. "That's all serene!"

"Is it?" snapped Fullwood angrily. "If it hadn't been for your rotten advice, I should have got four times the amount! I'm blessed if I'll listen to you again! Puttin' me off, just when I was on a certainty!"

He collected his money, but was very morose about it. He wasn't content with winning moderately—he couldn't help remembering that he would have been eight pounds in pocket if he had stuck to his original decision.

On the next race he went a pound—and lost it. Gulliver and Bell said nothing. But they advised him to go easy on the last race—which, in their opinion, was a very risky one. It was almost impossible to foretell the winner.

But Fullwood knew.

He picked the winner in a few seconds. It was a horse that couldn't possibly fail to romp home in a canter, and he put another pound on it, leaving himself with only five shillings.

As a matter of fact, the horse came in about five minutes after the others.

"Well, what about plungin'?" asked Gulliver bitterly. "A fat lot of good you did by winnin' that two quid! You've lost it all——"

"Don't talk to me!" snarled Fullwood. "It was all your fault. I was goin' to put a quid to win on Bella Rose, an' you know it! I'm fed up with this! We're stony, an' I can't get any more money until next week."

They were a very disconsolate trio as they walked across the grass towards the exit. But even this experience had not taught them a lesson. As soon as they got hold of some money again, they would probably back horses once more. They always had an idea that they would win.

They were slouching along, heads down, and too grumpy to speak to one another, when Fullwood suddenly stopped.

"What's that?" he muttered.

He had seen something gleaming amid the grass—something green—which looked like a piece of brilliant bottle glass. As a matter of fact, he thought that his guess was correct. But he bent down to make sure. And the next second he uttered a startled exclamation.

"By gad!" he gasped.

"What's the matter?" asked Bell quickly.

"Oh, nothin'!" said Fullwood. "The grass looked funny, that's all!"

There were all sorts of people about, and Fullwood had no intention of showing his prize in the public gaze. He had slipped something rapidly into his pocket. And his chums were very curious.

It was not until the three juniors were well out in the road, and to themselves, that Fullwood extracted his hand from his pocket.

"I found it—lyin' there in the grass!" he whispered. "It looks pretty valuable, too. Have a squint!"

He opened his palm, and Gulliver and Bell stared. The object which Fullwood held was a pendant—an article of jewellery which had apparently been dropped by some lady who had been leaving the racecourse on foot.

The pendant was a delicately made article of some white metal, which was apparently platinum. And it was set with four gloriously large, green stones. The centre drop was a superb thing.

And the chums of Study A stared at it, rather fascinated.

CHAPTER 2.

One Hundred Pounds Reward!

GULLIVER was the first to speak.

"It's only imitation!" he said. "A thing like that couldn't be real—you don't pick up genuine jewellery in the grass nowadays! I suppose it's worth about a couple of bob!"

Fullwood examined it closely.

"No fear!" he exclaimed. "It's the real thing. My mother's got a pendant somethin' like this. You can always tell a dud article from the genuine thing. It's real platinum, an' these stones are emeralds!"

"Phew!"

"Emeralds!" said Bell. "They ain't very valuable, are they? Emeralds are common stones—not half as good as rubies or diamonds——"

"You ass!" interrupted Fullwood. "Emeralds are the most expensive of all—an' these look regular beauties. By gad! Just see the size of that centre drop! I'll bet this pendant is worth five hundred quid if it's worth a penny."

Gulliver and Bell gasped.

"You're mad!" said Gulliver faintly.

"I know I'm not—it's tremendously valuable," said Fullwood, slipping it back into his pocket. "An' we're goin' to make some cash out of it, too. We've had some luck on the racecourse, after all! We'll make quids over this!"

His chums looked absolutely alarmed.

"But—but you can't keep it!" stuttered Bell. "You—you fathead! That would be thievin'! You can't——"

"Who's talkin' about keepin' it?" snapped Fullwood. "I'm not such a mug as all that! Why, if I tried to pawn this, I should be detained at once—an' I couldn't even try to sell it. If I did sell it by a lucky fluke, I'd have about a dozen bobbies after me in a couple of hours!"

"I'm glad you know that, anyhow!" said Gulliver, with relief. "I—I don't feel comfortable with a thing like that on us."

"It's on me," said Fullwood coolly. "There's no need for you to worry."

"But—but it might be risky!" persisted Bell. "If somebody happened to see us pick it up, he'll tell the police, an' we shall all be arrested."

"Nobody saw is," said Fullwood. "There's no need to get scared, my sons. I know what I'm doin'! An' I'm stickin' to it!"

"But—but that's mad!" said Gulliver. "The best thing we can do is to take it to the police-station, an' then we shall get a reward—a tenner, at least!"

"Exactly!" said Fullwood calmly.

"Eh?"

"A tenner—at least!" repeated Fullwood. "We shouldn't get any more, if that. I'm pretty wide, my lads. You can't catch an old bird like me."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, you're dense!" said Fullwood impatiently. "Just look here. Supposin' we take this pendant to the police-station, an' say we found it on the racecourse? In the first place, that'll be bad for us. In the second place, we've got to give our addresses, an' they might get to know at St. Frank's."

"I hadn't thought of that!" said Bell.

"Of course you hadn't," went on Fullwood calmly. "An' there's another thing, too. When the owner of that pendant misses it, she'll do one thing—straight away. She'll buzz to the police-station, an' say she's lost an emerald pendant. An' the bobbies will yank it out, an' there you are. Where do we come in?"

"Why, they'll tell her we found it——"

"Exactly," said Fullwood. "She'll have her pendant, an' won't care tuppence about who found it. If we're lucky we'll get a fiver. That's not good enough for me—not by long chalks!"

"Then what do you propose doin'?"

"We'll wait!" said Fullwood. "I wouldn't mind bettin' a quid to a brass button that there'll be an advert in the Bannin'ton Gazette to-morrow. This pendant is valuable, an' they'll move heaven and earth to get it back. An' about the first thing they'll do is to offer a reward. They'll advertise—an' if they don't offer fifty quid, I shall be mistaken."

"But—but——"

"We'll simply answer the advert, an' take the pendant with us," said Fullwood. "We'll say where we found it, an' draw the reward. If they ask why we didn't give it to the police, we'll say we thought it was an imitation, an' worth about tuppence. See? We didn't realise how valuable it was until we saw the advert. It's money for nothin'!"

His chums stared at him in open admiration.

"Well, I'm blessed!" exclaimed Bell at length. "I knew you were pretty smart, Fully, but I never thought you were as deep as all this! It's a great wheeze! Supposin' it happens all right? Will you give us some?"

"Of course," said Fullwood. "An' now we'll buzz back."

He was quite cool, but Gulliver and Bell were extremely excited. Fullwood grinned knowingly.

"There you are!" he said. "It looks significant, eh?"

He nodded towards the police-station. A superb limousine was waiting outside—obviously the property of an immensely rich person. And as the three juniors went by, they caught a glimpse of a lady within, talking to the inspector in charge. Fullwood's surmise was surprisingly correct.

He chuckled as they continued their ride.

"She's just givin' him the information about the loss!" he grinned. "Why, it's obvious! An' the pendant's in my pocket all the time! By gad! We shall be rollin' in money after this—you mark my words!"

His chums were almost too overcome to speak. And they didn't exactly know how they passed the remainder of the evening.

Gulliver, in fact, dashed back into Bannington just before calling over—to get an evening paper. But although he searched the columns through and through, there was no mention of any emerald pendant. This was not surprising, for the paper had probably been in the press at the time of the loss.

For the remainder of the evening Fullwood & Co. were jumpy with impatience.

They knew it was quite useless to do anything that night. They had to wait until the morning. And Fullwood was quite right. Under the circumstances—and providing the pendant was really genuine—it was practically certain that an announcement of some kind would be in the morning paper. And it was not only likely to be in the local paper, but in the London dailies as well.

Some of the other juniors noticed that Fullwood & Co. were rather on edge, but they didn't take much account of this. Fullwood & Co. were a queer lot, and were generally allowed to go their own way.

When the rising-bell went in the morning, three juniors leapt out of bed with one accord. They were Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell. And this created a record.

They had never been known to get up so promptly in the whole course of their St. Frank's existence. And some of the other fellows sat up, and rubbed their eyes, and stared.

"Great Scott!" said Hubbard. "What's happened? Fullwood's out of bed—and Gulliver and Bell are out of bed! Gimme cater!"

"Dry up!" snapped Fullwood. "Bein' funny doesn't suit you, Hubbard! We're goin' for an early mornin' run."

Hubbard seemed to choke, and buried himself in the bedclothes. Sundry gurgling sounds came to the surface. The idea of Fullwood & Co. going for an early morning run was somewhat humorous.

Nobody could get the Nuts to say why they were so fearfully energetic this morning. And at last Fullwood & Co.—who had been making a race of dressing—finished up in a dead heat. They rushed downstairs together.

In the lobby they met Morrow, of the Sixth.

"Hallo, hallo!" exclaimed the prefect. "What on earth——" He clutched at the wall for support. "Who said the age of miracles had passed?"

"Oh, we—er—thought we'd get down pretty early this mornin'," said Fullwood carelessly.

"You young asses!" exclaimed Morrow, holding his heart. "You shouldn't do these things so suddenly! What's the matter? Expecting a tip from home, I'll bet! Nothing else would drag you down like this!"

Fullwood grinned.

"You've guessed right first time!" he said coolly. "As a matter of fact, we're hard up, an' I think my pater's sendin' me a fiver!"

"Lucky young dog!" said Morrow, as he passed on.

Fullwood & Co. didn't even go near the letter-rack—they knew without looking that it was barren as far as they were concerned. But they sped like lightning to Mr. Crowell's study.

They knew that the Form-master would not be down yet—and they knew, also that his papers would be lying neatly on his desk.

"Is it safe to go in?" breathed Bell, as they paused just outside the study door.

"Safe—of course it's safe!" said Fullwood. "Old Crowsfeet never gets down at this time! He'll be half an hour yet, if he's a minute! An' supposin' he surprises us? He'll only give us twenty lines, at the most. No harm in lookin' at the newspaper!"

They entered, quite satisfied that there was nothing to worry about. And, sure enough, on Mr. Crowell's desk, there were two newspapers—the "Daily Mail" and the "Bannington Gazette." Mr. Crowell always believed in being well up with local news, but he couldn't do without his "Mail."

Fullwood seized the "Bannington Gazette," and he didn't even have to open it. For there, on the very front page, at the top of a column, were the words:

"VALUABLE EMERALD PENDANT LOST! £100 REWARD."

"A hundred quid!" panted Fullwood, his eyes glittering. "What did I tell you? What did I tell you? A hundred quid! Look! Here it is, as plain as your giddy face!"

"Great Scott!" breathed Bell faintly.

"A—a hundred quid!" muttered Gulliver dazedly.

They stood there, gulping. In their wildest dreams they had never expected anything of this kind. But there it was, in black and white. They feverishly read the announcement.

It was an ordinary news item, and announced the fact that Lady Norton, wife of Sir William Norton, Bart., of Oakley Manor, Helmford, had lost a very valuable emerald pendant on the previous afternoon —to the best of her knowledge, on the racecourse. The pendant, the report stated, was worth £1,500. And a reward of a hundred pounds was offered for any information which would lead to its recovery. Readers who thought they knew anything were advised to apply to the police-station, or to Sir William Norton personally, at the Grapes Hotel, Bannington. Sir William was staying in the town for a couple of days.

Fullwood & Co. were quite pale with excitement.

"It—it's impossible!" said Bell, breathing hard.

"Oh, absolutely!" agreed Gulliver.

"Is it?" said Fullwood, his eyes glittering. "We'll soon see about that! We're goin' to grab that hundred pounds reward —an' we'll do it quickly, too. The sooner the better. I'll give you chaps ten quid each!"

"Good!" said Gulliver. "That's—that's jolly decent of you, Fully. Thanks awfully!"

Ten pounds was a great deal of money to Gulliver—as it was to Bell. They never received very liberal allowances from home. Fullwood, of course, generally managed to have a good supply of cash. He had rich relatives, and his father was always pretty extravagant with him. Not that Fullwood ever made any good use of the money.

What he would do with a hundred pounds seemed rather problematical.

"How will you get it?" asked Bell feverishly. "I suppose you'll dash over to Bannington at once——"

"No fear!" said Fullwood. "I've got the pendant—an' I don't see why I should do any dashin' about. Let them do that."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, for one thing, I don't want to have anything to do with the police," said Fullwood. "Inspector Jameson is in charge at Bannington, an' old Jameson is a nosey bounder. I'm goin' to ring up.

"Ring up?"

"Yes."

"But—but——"

"My dear chaps, don't get excited!" said Fullwood. "I'm goin' to ring up the Grapes Hotel, an' I'll tell Sir William Norton that we found his pendant on the roadside, in the grass. How can he tell any difference? He'll probably buzz round here in his big car, an' bring the cash with him."

Gulliver and Bell stared more than ever.

"But that'll set the chaps talking!" said Bell.

"Just what I want!" replied Fullwood. "Don't you worry—I know what I'm doin'! It'll be ten times as good if we can get Sir William to come here for the pendant. I'll explain afterwards. No time now."

Fullwood coolly seized Mr. Crowell's telephone, and placed the receiver to his ear. Gulliver and Bell were more and more impressed with their leader. He was proving himself to be a great deal deeper than they had ever given him credit for being.

"Hallo! Oh, give me 688 Bannington!" said Fullwood. "Yes. Hallo!" he added after a pause. "Is that the Grapes Hotel?"

"Yes, what do you want?" came a voice. "I'm the clerk."

"I'd like to speak to the manager——"

"Sorry, but the manager isn't about just yet—it's rather early," replied the hotel clerk. "Who is it, please?"

"I don't think that matters," said Fullwood. "As a matter of fact, I want to speak to Sir William Norton—he wouldn't know my name if I gave it. Please tell him it's very important."

"Sorry, sir, but Sir William is not yet up," said the clerk. "If you could give me any indication of your business I might be able to send a message——"

"Oh, all right!" said Fullwood. "Tell

him it's about the missing emerald pendant. I've found it, an' I want to tell Sir William——"

"Eh? You've found it?" shouted the clerk through the wires. "Oh! All right—all right! I'll see if I can get Sir William Norton to the 'phone!"

Fullwood grinned as he waited.

"I thought that would startle him!" he remarked calmly. "An' when Sir William Norton comes, everythin' will be O.K."

He turned back to the instrument as a voice sounded.

"Hallo!" it came—a deep voice. "Who is that? Dear me! The 'phone is atrociously bad this morning. What? What?"

"Are you Sir William Norton?" asked Fullwood.

"Yes, I am," came the reply. "What is it you want? What is this I hear about the pendant being found——"

"It's quite right, Sir William," said Fullwood. "I've got it in my possession now. I found it in the grass just outside the racecourse yesterday afternoon. But I thought it was worthless until I saw the announcement this mornin'."

"Good gracious me!" ejaculated Sir William. "You've found it, have you? Outside the racecourse? Splendid! Splendid! Who are you, sir? Kindly give me your name at once——"

"My name's Fullwood, sir, an' I belong to the Ancient House at St. Frank's College, near Bellton," said Fullwood. "I'd like to come over at once, sir, but I'm not allowed to leave the school grounds before breakfast. So I thought I'd let you know over the 'phone."

"Very thoughtful indeed—very thoughtful!" said Sir William. "A schoolboy, eh? Good lad! Good lad! All right—I'll come over at once. What did you say your name was?"

Fullwood repeated it, and gave other directions.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Sir William. "I understand that St. Frank's is only a short distance away. I will come by car as quickly as possible."

"Right you are, sir," said Fullwood. "I don't suppose you'll bring the police with you, will you?"

"The police?" repeated Sir William. "Good gad, no! What on earth for? The police don't need to interfere here. I'll tell them about it later."

"Don't forget the reward, sir," said Fullwood.

"If you've got the genuine pendant, you shall have the reward!" replied the baronet. "Good-bye—good-bye! Good gracious, this is most fortunate!"

Fullwood could hear him talking excitedly away as he hung the receiver up. And the leader of Study A pushed the instrument aside and looked at his chums.

"There you are!" he said calmly. "All fixed up! He's comin' along now with the hundred quid, an' we shall have it in our pockets within an hour. An' the police won't know anythin'. It's easy!"

But Gulliver and Bell were feeling rather too overcome to say much. They followed their leader out of Mr. Crowell's study in a dazed kind of way.

And then they hung about outside on the Ancient House steps. It was rather dull this morning, but still mild and fine. And in a surprisingly short time a huge car rolled up, and entered the gateway. From it stepped an elderly gentleman in grey tweeds. He stood looking about him through his pince-nez. Fullwood & Co. were by his side in a moment.

"Yes, yes!" said the newcomer. "I am looking for a boy named Fullwood——"

"Quite so, sir—I am Fullwood!" said Ralph Leslie. "If you'll come to my study, sir, we'll settle about this little matter at once."

"Dear me! A most collected young gentleman," said Sir William. "Thank you—thank you!"

They all went into the Ancient House, with many juniors watching their movements. When they arrived in Study A, Fullwood carefully closed the door, and got to business at once.

"Here's the pendant, sir," he said, pulling it out of his pocket. "We found it just in the grass——"

"Wonderful!" interrupted Sir William, grasping the pendant, and examining it intently. "Yes, yes! This is certainly Lady Norton's property. I am greatly relieved, my boy—very greatly relieved! I had half an idea that you might be playing an absurd practical joke, or that you might have been mistaken. But, no. This is indeed the genuine pendant."

"I thought so, sir," said Fullwood calmly. "Well, it's yours, of course—an' I think we take the little reward, don't we?"

Sir William looked up, smiling.

"Ah, to be sure—to be sure!" he exclaimed, beaming. "And I am glad to give it to you, my lad! By gad, you've been so confoundly straightforward over the whole business that I can afford to be generous. I'll make it a hundred and fifty—hang me, if I don't!"

"That's jolly good of you, sir," said Fullwood steadily—although his eyes glittered.

Sir William Norton produced a bulky pocket-book—one that fairly bulged with money. There were notes by the pack in there, and the baronet placed a big pile bound by an elastic band upon the table.

"There's a hundred," he said, chuckling with delight. "And now about the extra fifty. Here we are, my boys! Count them after me!"

Gulliver and Bell were still clutching at the table, as though they couldn't believe the evidence of their own eyes and ears. But Fullwood remained calm. He checked the notes as Sir William counted them out.

This was better than even Fullwood had hoped for. Fifty pounds extra! But Sir William was obviously rich, and he was so extremely delighted to get the necklace back with such a small amount of trouble, that he could afford to be generous.

"That's right, sir," said Fullwood at length. "Thank you very much. I thought it better to ring you up as soon as I could."

"Splendid—most commendable of you!" exclaimed Sir William. "And now what about your masters? Had I not better see one of them, and explain this little affair? It hardly seems——"

"Oh, that's all right, sir!" said Fullwood easily. "I told the Head all about it, and he knows you were comin'. I shall take him this money at once, an' ask him to put it in his safe."

"Excellent!" said Sir William, gazing lovingly at the pendant once more before putting it away. "A most business-like young man. Well, I think I may as well be going. Thank you—thank you! I cannot tell you how delighted I am that everything has turned out so well. Good-morning, boys—good-morning!"

He was escorted out by Fullwood. Gulliver and Bell remained in the study. They sank into two convenient chairs. And it seemed as though they had some little difficulty in breathing.

CHAPTER 3.

Money Like Dust!

"QUIDS—quids all over the giddy place!" said Bell feebly.

Fullwood had just come back, and was looking at the notes lovingly. And now he was collecting them up and recounting them in order to make sure that the amount was correct.

His composure had gone somewhat, and he was now giving way to his excitement—for, to tell the truth, Fullwood was even more excited than his chums. But he could control himself better.

"By gad!" he gloated. "Talk about luck! This is the biggest stroke we've ever had! I've never met with such a glorious stroke! An' Sir William's a good 'un for springin' the extra fifty."

"Rather!" agreed Gulliver. "I—I say, perhaps—perhaps you'll make it a bit more now for Bell an' I. We were with you when the thing was found, you know——"

"Don't you worry—you'll help me spend it all right," said Fullwood. "But I want to have a jaw with you fellows. I've got a wheeze—a jolly good idea. That's why I wanted Sir William to come here. You'll soon find out about it."

By the time breakfast was over quite a number of fellows were hazarding guesses as to who the benevolent-looking old gentleman was who had called upon Fullwood & Co. They were not in the habit of having such visitors.

As a rule, they consorted with very different-looking people.

And during the interval before morning lessons, a number of fellows were gathered round the Ancient House steps. Fullwood and Co. lounged out, and Hubbard came up carelessly, and nodded.

"You're looking pretty pleased!" said Hubbard.

"I've good reason to be!" said Fullwood calmly.

"Why, what's happened?" asked Hubbard. "Who was that queer old gent who came here this morning in a car!"

"He was a solicitor."

"A solicitor?"

"Yes," said Fullwood easily. "He brought me some good news."

"Glad to hear it," said Canham, coming nearer. "Come into a fortune?"

Fullwood nodded.

"Well, as a matter of fact, yes," he said coolly. "That's just it. I have come into a fortune."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tell us another, Fully!"

"Of course, if you don't like to believe it, you can do the other thing!" said Fullwood. "But it happens to be a fact that I'm jolly rich now. An uncle of mine died, an' he left all his money to me—about four hundred thousand!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll soon wake up, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Fully, you don't expect us to believe that, I suppose?" asked Owen major. "Don't be an ass! Just as if you'd come into a lot of money like that! You giddy spoofer."

"There's no spoof about it," put in Bell. "Fully's nearly a millionaire—an' he's got the money in his own right. He's absolutely rollin' in it—he's got money like dust!"

The juniors crowded nearer, and Fullwood fairly hugged himself. There was nothing he liked better than being the centre of attraction. It was very seldom he could enjoy this experience—for, as a rule, the juniors took very little notice of him.

But now, suddenly, he saw a way, of not only gaining attention, but also of gaining power. Money, as he well knew, is a very useful thing to have about the place.

"I say, Singleton, come and look here!" called out Canham. "Fullwood says he's got pots of money—he's come into a fortune. In that case, he ought to be richer than you are. But I'll bet you can show the most tin!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Hon. Douglas Singleton had been known as the Spendthrift when he arrived at St. Frank's. He was always throwing money about in every direction, and he had pots of it.

"I don't see any reason why you chaps should cast doubts like this!" said Gulliver warmly. "Bell an' I were in the study at the time, an' we heard the whole thing. It's true enough."

"Rot!" said Owen major.

"Piffle!"

"Why, Fully couldn't produce a fiver!"

"Perhaps not," said Fullwood, "but I can produce a few pound notes, if you'd like to see 'em. I don't see why I should do anythin' to prove my words. But I don't like bein' called a liar, so I'll show you."

And Fullwood leisurely dived into his pocket, and brought out a crisp bundle of Treasury notes. The juniors gasped as they saw him. There were at least a hundred in Fullwood's fist—more than most of the fellows had ever seen in all their lives. They stared, open-mouthed.

"Money!" said Fullwood proudly. "See it? This little lot is just a hundred quid! The solicitor left it with me to be goin' on with. I can draw as much as I like, whenever I like—see? It's taken the shine out of you fellows, anyhow! I'm somebody pretty big!"

"But—but is it real?" gasped Canham faintly.

Fullwood laughed.

"Do you think they're duds?" he grinned. "Here you are—you can have one! I don't care—I've got more than I can spend, anyway!"

He tossed one of the notes into Canham's hand, and the junior took it, and looked at it in a bewildered manner.

"It's—it's a real note all right," he panted. "But—but it's not mine! I can't keep it——"

"You'll be a fool if you don't!" interrupted Fullwood. "I'm feelin' generous just now. Take it, you ass! I've given it to you!"

"Oh, thanks—thanks awfully!" said Canham eagerly.

"I—I always said you were a generous chap, Fully!" exclaimed Hubbard, with a smirk. "I—I suppose you couldn't lend me a quid, could you?"

"No, I couldn't!" replied Fullwood. "But I'll give you one, if you like. Here you are—take it, and my blessing goes with it!"

The change in Fullwood was startling. He was positively bouncing with importance, and his usual supercilious face was now

fixed into a kind of superior smile. He seemed conscious of the fact that he was miles and away better than anybody else.

"It—it is most generous of you, sir!" exclaimed Enoch Snipe, edging up to Fullwood, and rubbing his hands softly together. "I am always willing to do any little service for you, my dear Fullwood."

He paused, regarding Fullwood out of his little, piggish eyes.

"Oh, so you've come lickin' round, have you?" said Fullwood. "I suppose I might as well give you a quid, just to show there's no favourites. You see, I can easily afford the whole hundred."

Snipe snatched the note as though Fullwood might change his mind.

And by now the juniors were swarming round in an eager, excited crowd. The cad of the Remove had suddenly become a popular hero. Most of the fellows completely forgot his record. They only knew that he had plenty of money—that he had come into a fortune—and he was absolutely certain of countless friends—of a certain type.

With money to chuck about, and to distribute among the juniors, Fullwood was in an altogether different position to what he had been the previous day.

But even Fullwood was not quite such a conceited fool as to throw his money away for the mere sake of swanking. There was something behind all this—and that something soon came out.

"By the way," he said, after a while. "Things have been goin' pretty bad in the Remove of late. I reckon we ought to have a skipper—a chap ought to be elected captain of the Form. It's all very well to say Nipper's comin' back—but he doesn't come. An' I reckon we ought to go ahead an' appoint a skipper, in any case. Blow Nipper!"

"Hear hear!"

"I suggest Fullwood as captain!" exclaimed Hubbard.

"Good!"

Fullwood looked round, smiling. He had been expecting it. If nobody else had proposed him as Form captain, Bell would soon have done so. But it was far better to come from one of the others.

Practically every junior accepted without question the story which had been told. They believed that Fullwood had come into a fortune. Hadn't they seen the solicitor arrive? Hadn't Fullwood shown a hundred pounds in notes? Hadn't he distributed a number with reckless generosity?

If it wasn't true, he wouldn't throw money about in this way. Indeed, he couldn't have the money. And if he had come by it dishonestly—which, after all, was very unlikely—he certainly wouldn't swank about with it. So practically all the fellows believed the story.

And this was just what Fullwood wanted.

Having received fifty pounds more than he had anticipated, he felt that he could splash a bit. And for a long time he hoped to have power in the Remove. He had never been able to have any particularly big voice. But he could see that a display of money, and a tale of a fortune, would make all the difference. With his usual cunning, he had seized his chance.

"Yes—Fullwood's the chap to be skipper!" said Canham.

"Hear, hear!"

"It's jolly decent of you," said Fullwood, looking round. "I'll tell you what—we'll have an election after morning lessons. I think Nick Trotwood was thinking of puttin' up as skipper. I don't want to chuck him out, of course, but if I'm elected, he'll have to accept the vote of the Form."

"Of course!" said Nicodemus Trotwood, nodding. "But I can't buy votes in this way, Fully! And any chap who votes for you because of your giddy money, won't be worth his salt! Even if you're elected, you'll only be pitchforked into the captaincy by bought votes."

Fullwood scowled.

"I'm not asking for votes of that sort," he replied. "This election is goin' to be square."

But it wasn't.

Soon after morning lessons, the election took place. But by this time Fullwood had been round numerous studies. He had looked in Study B, and he was certain of the votes of Hubbard and Teddy Long. He was equally certain that Merrell and Marriot and Noys would be on his side. Canham was already a supporter, and even Owen major, fascinated by the display of money, was going to vote for Fullwood.

There were many other juniors who were equally keen—particularly as Fullwood had dropped in and had loaned them as much cash as they required—although he never went beyond a pound. He also intimated that the chaps needn't hurry about paying the loans back

The result was inevitable.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood, the worst cad in the Ancient House, was elected to be Captain of the Remove!

CHAPTER 4.

News at Last!

DR. MALCOLM STAFFORD paced up and down his study with an extremely pleased expression on his face.

The door opened, and Mr. Crowell appeared.

"Ah! Here you are, Mr. Crowell!" said the Head genially.

"Yes, sir, you sent for me!" said the Form-master.

"Quite so—quite so!" said the Head. "I have some most excellent news, Mr. Crowell—news that will delight you, I am sure."

Mr. Crowell started.

"Concerning my boys, sir?" he asked. "Concerning Mr. Lee?"

"Exactly!" interrupted the Head. "Some very delightful news, Mr. Crowell, concerning your Remove boys and Mr. Lee! You will be greatly interested to hear that they are all in London."

"Good gracious!" said the Form-master, starting. "But—but that is surely impossible, sir! When we last heard, they were travelling in the vicinity of the South Pole!"

The Head smiled.

"Quite so!" he agreed. "But they have returned, I am glad to say."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Crowell. "And the boys are all in London? Needless to say, this is a very pleasant surprise to me, sir. I had been hoping that the boys would return before the term was very far advanced. It will also be a great relief if Mr. Lee takes up his duties as housemaster again."

"Exactly!" agreed the Head. "I knew you would be pleased, Mr. Crowell. I have had a letter this morning from Mr. Lee, and he informs me that he will ring me up from London later in the day—and make certain arrangements regarding the boys. But, in any case, they will be at St. Frank's to-day."

"Good gracious me!" said Mr. Crowell. "This—this is remarkably sudden, sir—most surprising. It is somewhat calculated to take me off my feet. To-day! The boys will return to-day?"

"I can well understand your surprise, my dear sir," said the Head. "However, to-day also embraces the hours up till midnight. By what I understand, the boys will return to the school by the last train from London—that is, the last train to Bannington. It arrives, I think, at something after ten. The boys will walk from the town, and arrive here at about eleven."

"Splendid!" said Mr. Crowell. "And tomorrow we shall be able to go on as usual—and after that everything will run smoothly. I am more delighted than I can say—for I fear things have been somewhat slack of late. My added duties have prevented me from attending to many little matters——"

"I quite understand, Mr. Crowell," said the Head. "Oh, and by the way! I do not think the boys want any mention of their arrival made known. You quite understand? Some little idea of theirs——"

The telephone-bell rang sharply.

The Head excused himself, and placed the receiver to his ear.

"Yes, this is St. Frank's," he said. "Exactly. Why, dear me! It is Mr. Lee, is it not? My dear Mr. Lee, I cannot tell you how wonderfully delighted I am to hear your voice again! It seems ages since you were here with us."

"If it seems ages with you, Dr. Stafford, it positively seems aeons to me—which, after all, amounts to the same thing!" came Nelson Lee's voice. "We have met with many strange adventures on our travels, but all the boys are bronzed and healthy, and quite eager to get back to school."

"That is good news, indeed!" said Dr. Stafford. "No doubt you will all be featured largely in the newspapers to-day and tomorrow, and for many days to come. I understand you have met with the most astounding experiences near the South Pole."

"Quite so," said Nelson Lee.

And he continued to chat for some little time. And while he was at the telephone, I was not far off him. Handforth & Co. were over by one of the windows, looking out into Gray's Inn Road. Other juniors were collected in various parts of the room.

For we were in Nelson Lee's consulting room in London. We had arrived in London two days earlier—and most of the fellows had spent a whole day at home. Nelson Lee would not allow them more—for we

were due back at St. Frank's. And there was no getting out of it.

"I think we ought to go down this morning!" Handforth was saying, while the guv'nor was telephoning to Dr. Stafford. "It's absolute rot to leave it until to-night. I've got all sorts of plans."

"Yes, I know," I said gently. "You've got an idea of having a brass band to meet us, haven't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's nothing to laugh at!" roared Handforth. "It's a jolly fine idea. We're important people, and there's no reason why we shouldn't have a decent reception. If we go down early, we can arrive just before tea. And we can roll up to St. Frank's in a whacking great motor-car—two or three cars, in fact. There's nothing like creating an impression."

"Who's going to pay for the cars?" asked Church.

Handforth looked at him witheringly.

"Just like you!" he sneered. "Thinking about rotten money at a time like this! Isn't it right that we should be given a huge reception? We want to let them all know we're coming. And then, after we're there, there's going to be a huge feast in our honour!"

"Hear, hear!" said Fatty Little promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a jolly good idea!" said Fatty stoutly. "I thought about the feast—it was my wheeze. All the chaps at St. Frank's ought to get up a huge party, so that when we get down there we're all——"

"Fed up like prize turkeys?" said Pitt. "That sort of thing might suit you, my fat son, but it doesn't suit me. And I don't think it suits many of the others, either."

"Rather not!" said Church. "We don't want to go swanking down there like heroes! We don't want to be met with crowds to kow-kow to us just because we've gone through a few adventures."

"Eh?" said Handforth ominously.

"I—I mean——" began Church hastily.

"You traitor!" roared Handforth. "You blessed rotter! And this is all you can do after the way I've treated you!"

"But—but I've done nothing!" gasped Church.

"You've been sneering at me!" retorted Handforth. "But I'm jolly well going to have my way."

"Look here, Handy, be sensible!" I put in. "This thing goes by the vote—and the vote is already taken. The majority of us prefer to go down to St. Frank's on the quiet, without any fuss or display."

"Hear, hear!"

"The idea," I went on, "is to go to Bannington by the last train, and then we'll walk to St. Frank's, and arrive after everybody is in bed. They won't know we're there until the next morning—so they can't prepare anything."

"My hat! Won't they be surprised?" grinned Watson.

"Rather!"

And we discussed the whole situation—much to Handforth's disgust—and made all sorts of plans for our journey down to St. Frank's.

Little did we imagine the surprising events which were occurring there!

CHAPTER 5.

Going Strong!

"THIS is what I call decent!" said Fullwood, lounging back in his easy-chair, and lighting a cigarette. "I'm goin' to make the fur fly, my sons. Nipper's not here, an' he isn't likely to be here. I don't suppose the cad will ever turn up again."

"Let's hope he doesn't, anyway," said Gulliver. "Well, you're skipper of the Remove, Fully. What are you goin' to do about it?"

Fullwood grinned as he looked round Study A.

"Do?" he repeated. "I'm going to get busy at once—I'm goin' to make everythin' absolutely different from what it has been. An' what's more, we'll have a cricket team of our own."

"We haven't got any decent players," said Gulliver.

"Rot!" said the new skipper. "I can fix up an eleven at a moment's notice, if necessary—an' I'll guarantee to do as well as Nipper's rotten lot. Anyhow, we'll see. An' there are all sorts of other things I shall do, too. I've got the support of the Remove, now——"

"But will you be able to keep it?" asked Bell. "All the chaps think you've come into a fortune. But they won't think that after your tin has vanished. An' even a hundred quid won't last for ever."

"Not if you spend it like this!" said Gulliver.

Fullwood had already been very lavish. He had laid in a large number of luxuries, and he had been throwing his money about in the most reckless fashion. What did he care? He had pockets full of notes. And he informed his chums that he would be able to treble it—once the Helmford races started in a few days.

"To make big money, you've got to bet big money," he said. "It's the only way. An' I'll bet I'll have quids by the hundred all the time now. Don't you worry your little heads, my children. I shall be able to keep up this fortune yarn just as long as I like. An' nobody will be the wiser."

"Well, you know best, of course," said Gulliver. "I shouldn't mind one of those cigarettes——"

"Help yourself!" said Fullwood generously.

The door opened, and a head appeared. It was the head of Kenmore of the Sixth. Kenmore was a prefect, and it was his duty to deal very severely with junior smokers. And Study A was rather blue at the moment.

But Kenmore entered, closed the door, and smiled.

"Don't mind me!" he said with a wink. "It's all right, kids—I don't mind a bit of a puff now and again."

"Good!" said Fullwood calmly. "Try one."

Kenmore helped himself, and sat down smoking. This, of course, was quite atrocious conduct on the part of a prefect. But Kenmore was one of the worst bullies in the Sixth—and he would never have been a prefect if the Sixth Form master had had any inkling of his real character.

"Of course, smoking is against all rules," said Kenmore. "Not that it matters to me. I don't see any reason why I shouldn't be pally with you youngsters. You're a decent crowd—I've always liked you."

"Thanks!" said Fullwood drily. "How much do you want to borrow?"

Kenmore smiled.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I am a bit hard pressed for the moment," he said. "I didn't come here to borrow anything—but now you remind me of it, I might as well take advantage of your wealth."

"Jolly good of you," said Fullwood languidly.

"Is it true?" asked the prefect.

"Is what true?"

"Why, that you've come into a huge fortune?"

"Of course it's true," boasted Ralph Leslie. "My uncle left it to me, you know. Nearly half a million. But it hasn't turned my head. I'm still just the same as ever. How much would you like, Kenmore? A quid—two quid——"

"Well, I thought about a fiver——"

"Right you are—anything to oblige," said Fullwood, taking out a bulky pocket-book and counting five currency notes on the table. "I particularly want to be pally with you, Kenmore, because—well, a friend in the Sixth is always handy."

Kenmore nodded.

"I understand," he said, rising. "You needn't worry—I'm on your side, kids. Thanks for this fiver. I'll pay you back soon."

"There's no hurry," said Fullwood generously.

Kenmore nodded and left the study.

"You'll never see that money again," remarked Bell.

"Who wants it?" said Fullwood. "It was well spent—Kenmore will be our slave in future. We can do practically as we jolly well like. I can tell you, things are goin' to be easy in the Remove now."

Only a few minutes had elapsed before Kenmore looked in again.

"Somebody asking for you on the 'phone, Fully," he said. "I told them to hang on."

"Somebody askin' for me?" said Fullwood quickly. "Who is it?"

"Oh, some kid—the captain of the Eastwold College Juniors, I think. He wanted to speak to you."

"But I don't know the chap——"

"Well, he doesn't know you," interrupted the prefect. "He merely asked for the captain of the Remove—so I came here."

Fullwood beamed.

"Oh, I see!" he exclaimed. "Right you are! I'll go and speak to the chap at once. Eastwold?" he added, after Kenmore had gone out. "Isn't that a new school just the other side of Bannin'ton?"

"Yes, the whole school moved down to a new buildin' at the beginning of this term," said Gulliver. "They come from some place near Brighton, I think. Not much of a crowd, by what I understand."

"Well, anyway, I'll see what he wants," said Fullwood.

He went along to the prefect's room, and was soon on the telephone. A pleasant voice came over the wires.

"Are you the junior skipper?" it asked.

"Yes," said Fullwood. "Anythin' I can do?"

"Well, yes," said the other. "My name's Dalton, and I'm captain of the Fourth over here—Eastwold College. I was wondering if there was any possibility of us fixing up a cricket match?"

"Certainly!" said Fullwood promptly. "To-day, if you like."

"My hat!" said Dalton. "You're pretty swift, aren't you?"

"No time like the present," went on Fullwood. "There's plenty of light after lessons. If you can get over here pretty promptly, there's no reason why we shouldn't have a match. Then perhaps we can fix up some future dates."

"I say, that's jolly decent of you!" said Dalton eagerly. "Thanks, awfully! Yes, we'll come—rather! It'll be great to play a match this evening. I wasn't expecting you to give us an opening for weeks."

"Of course, St. Frank's is a jolly posh sort of place—don't forget that," said Fullwood condescendingly. "However, I believe in being sportin'. Bring your team along, an' we'll give you a good game."

Dalton was profuse in his thanks, and soon rang off. And Fullwood grinned and went back to Study A. He explained to his chums what he had arranged, and they looked at him in a very surprised way.

"But, hang it all, what's the idea?" asked Bell. "We can't play a game this evenin'!"

"Why not?"

"Well, for one thing, we've got no team," said Bell. "That seems to be a pretty important point, to my mind."

Fullwood grinned.

"You chaps always seem to think that things are impossible," he said. "Now that I'm captain of the Remove I'm goin' to wake things up. None of this dilly-dallyin' business. I'm a chap for speed."

"Well, you've certainly been goin' pretty swiftly," said Gulliver.

"Cricket isn't a game that needs a lot of practice," went on Fullwood. "There's a big lot of swank about the whole thing. I can put a team into the field that will knock spots off Eastwold."

"How will you get the team up?"

"Easy!" replied the new skipper. "There's Hubbard and Merrell and Marriott to start with, and you and Bell. It won't take five minutes to fix up a team!"

According to Fullwood's talk, it did not seem that he would be very successful as a skipper. Favouritism went a good deal further with him than merit. Any two youngsters in the Third, picked at random, would make better players than Gulliver and Bell.

But these little details seemed to be of no importance to Fullwood. And later on, just before afternoon lessons started, the Remove skipper happened to run into Kenmore once again. As a matter of fact, Fullwood was looking for him.

"I say, Kenny, I want you to do me a favour," said Fullwood.

"Anything you like," said Kenmore generously. "I'm only too glad to oblige, old man."

"Great pip!" ejaculated Singleton, who happened to be near by.

He was quite staggered. Previous to this, if Fullwood had dared to ask Kenmore a favour, the latter would have clipped Fullwood over the ear. But now he was on the point of being obsequious.

"Anything you like," repeated Kenmore.

"Well, you see, we're having a match this afternoon after lessons," said Fullwood. "Some of the Eastwold fellows are comin' over. I though perhaps you'd give a hand—an' umpire for us."

Kenmore nodded.

"Just as you like," he said. "I'm your man!"

"Oh, by the way," said Fullwood carelessly. "We're goin' to win—you get me? We've got to win, Kenny. We're not goin' to let these Eastwold bounders go back with a victory to their credit."

Kenmore grinned.

"Trust me!" he said knowingly.

CHAPTER 6.

Something Like Cricket—But Not Much!

"HALLO—hallo—hallo! What's all this? What's the giddy invasion in the peace of the eve?"

It was the Hon. Douglas Singleton who expressed himself thus. He was

reclining elegantly against one of the stone buttresses of the Ancient House steps. Lessons were just over, and Singleton had been discussing matters in general, and Fullwood in particular, with Somerton and Trotwood, and one or two others.

But now he gazed across at the big gateway.

A perfect troop of cyclists had just entered—fully twenty youngsters, and there appeared to be some more behind. They were absolute strangers to the St. Frank's fellows, and they were regarded with much curiosity.

"Blessed if I know who they are!" said Conroy minor. "Their caps are unfamiliar, too! They must have made a mistake."

Singleton and a few others marched down to meet the invaders. In advance of the newcomers was a fair-haired, freckled youngster, with a particularly cheerful face.

"Anything we can do?" asked Singleton politely.

"Are you Fullwood?" asked the freckled youth.

"I hope not!" said Singleton promptly.

"I don't understand."

"Well, of course, you wouldn't!" said Singleton. "I can't quite picture a perfect stranger coming up and insulting me deliberately. So we'll forgive it, and let the matter pass."

"But I don't know what you're talking about!" exclaimed the freckled junior. "How did I insult you?"

"You mistook me for Fullwood!" said Singleton blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The newcomers couldn't see the joke.

"Look here, my name's Dalton, and I'm the captain of the Eastwold College juniors," said the freckled boy. "I fixed up a match for this evening, and we've arrived."

"Oh!" said Conroy minor. "You fixed up a match? That's queer—we don't know anything about it! And all the cricketers in the Remove are here. Of course, our best chaps are away, and goodness knows when they'll come back. To be absolutely frank, we haven't really got a team just now."

Dalton looked rather blank.

"But—but I arranged it over the 'phone—to-day!" he said. "I was talking with the junior skipper himself—Fullwood——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fixed the match up!" said Dalton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't see anything funny about it!" said the Eastwold junior, becoming rather impatient. "What's the joke?"

"The joke, my son, is that Fullwood knows about as much concerning cricket as a cat knows about swimming the Channel!" said Singleton calmly. "In fact, what he doesn't know about the game would fill a library. To be absolutely candid, Fullwood's a hopeless duffer!"

"I don't believe it!" said Dalton promptly. "No offence, of course—but I think you're trying to pull my leg. A chap wouldn't be elected Form skipper unless he was a decent cricketer."

"Ah, but you don't know the facts," said Singleton mysteriously. "Fullwood's only been skipper for about half a minute—and then he bought the votes. You see, he's just come into a fortune, and he's been chucking money about like powder. We couldn't walk in the Triangle for pound notes an hour ago!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The blessed things kept blowing into our faces——"

"Look here, I don't want to be rude, but this is a bit too thick!" grinned Dalton. "I can easily see that you're trying to kid me——"

"My only sainted aunt!" gasped Somerton suddenly. "Look! Gaze! Feast your eyesight upon the vision!"

"Great Scott!"

All the juniors fairly gaped as they turned round and looked at the Ancient House doorway. A number of fellows were coming out—fellows who were attired in flannels. They wore the St. Frank's junior colours—but they were certainly not the St. Frank's Junior Eleven.

In short, Fullwood & Co. had appeared for the fray.

Dalton and his chums did not see anything peculiar.

"I knew you were trying to spoof me!" said Dalton. "The Junior Eleven is coming out now. I say, is Fullwood here?" he added, going forward.

"My name's Fullwood," said Ralph Leslie, nodding. "I suppose you're Dalton, eh?"

"Yes."

"Good man," said Fullwood. "We'll get

straight along to Little Side at once. We've got a Sixth Former to umpire for us."

"Oh, that'll be great!"

"Rather!"

The Eastwold fellows streamed away towards Little Side with Fullwood & Co. And Singleton and the other juniors looked at one another.

"This," said Singleton, "is going to be rather funny."

"Either funny—or nasty!" said Nick Trotwood. "Personally, I don't think Fullwood & Co. will play much of a game."

They decided that it was up to them to go along and have a look at things.

And so they collected round the ropes of Little Side.

They had not to wait long. In less than five minutes eleven white-clad figures came out of the pavilion and strolled towards the pitch. They were the Eastwold fellows. Fullwood had won the toss for St. Frank's, and had determined to put his own side in.

"Well, that's quite brainy, anyway," remarked Singleton. "I'm glad that we've got first innings!"

Fullwood certainly knew enough about the game to take first innings when the pitch was in good order. But the question was, what would his team do when they got to the wickets? That was certainly a problem!

The side he had selected consisted of Merrell, Marriott, Gulliver, Hubbard, Bell, Simmons, Noys, Skelton, Canham, Clifton and himself.

Of them all, the only batsman of any use was Hubbard. Canham was a slow bowler who sometimes got a wicket, and Clifton was not so bad with the pads and gloves. Of the rest, only Fullwood had any claims to being a cricketer—and his were pretty weak!

Although he very rarely played the game, he considered himself a good fast bowler. He could certainly sling them down fast enough. But the balls were very rarely straight. And in addition Fullwood was so bad-tempered that when he could not find a length he went all to pieces and sent the ball down anywhere.

The Eastwood team took up their positions in the field as the opening batsmen for St. Franks appeared. They were Marriott and Merrell. Dalton, the Eastwold skipper, started the bowling, and Marriott took the first ball.

Dalton was quite a useful bowler of a medium-paced type. Three balls he slung down, two of which Marriott stopped, and the other passed him, to be taken by the wicket-keeper. The next ball was a yorker.

Marriott played forward to it. There was a click and his middle stump turned a somersault. The first wicket had fallen for no runs.

As he walked disconsolately back to the pavilion Marriott met Fullwood coming out. The skipper's face was grim. He meant to stick in. And he meant to have a word with Kenmore.

The Sixth Former was umpiring at the batsman's end. It was the Eastwold fellow who was officiating at the other end. Fullwood put his bat in front of the next two balls, and the over finished still without St. Frank's having made a run.

Then it was Merrell's turn to take the bowling. A chap called Duke was in charge of that end. He was a slow break bowler, and it looked easy stuff—till Merrell skied his fourth ball into cover-point's hands.

Merrell went back to the pavilion and Gulliver appeared. Fullwood's face was black. Two wickets were down for nothing!

As Gulliver walked to the wicket Fullwood managed to get in a word to Kenmore.

"This won't do," he whispered. "You've jolly well got to let us get some runs."

"It's not my fault," Kenmore whispered back. "I can't help it. I'll do my best for you when I get a chance."

Kenmore's chance came a moment later. Duke had sent down a straight ball. Gulliver played at it and missed. He stepped right in front of his wicket and the ball hit his pad.

"How's that?"

The shout went up all round.

"Not out!" said Kenmore.

Duke gave a whistle of astonishment. He knew it was out, and so did several of the others. But he was too good a sportsman to dispute the umpire's decision.

The game went on, and during the next over four runs were scored. It was then Duke's turn to bowl again, and Fullwood was facing him. The first ball he lashed out at and sent it to the boundary.

A cheer went up. It was rather a fluke, but the hit was a big one. The next ball

Fullwood tried to hit the same way. But his bat only met the air. There was a click behind him. At the same moment a husky shout left Kenmore's lips.

"No ball!" he called.

Fullwood breathed a sigh of relief. The next balls he skied luckily over the heads of the slips, and each went to the boundary. By the end of the over twenty runs were upon the board.

At the other end Gulliver plucked up courage. He hit out at ball after ball. He got two lucky fours. Then he was clean bowled by Dalton. The Eastwold umpire had not been bribed by Fullwood!

Hubbard then came in. He was a good batsman, and he started scoring at once. He wanted to run a three for his first hit, but Fullwood was not having any. He wanted to remain at the other end. He knew that Kenmore would not give him out.

During the next over he managed to add another ten to the score. There was an appeal for a catch at the wicket, but Kenmore shook his head. The next over, with Hubbard batting freely, produced another dozen runs, and then it was Fullwood's turn to face the bowling again.

Fullwood was now slogging for all he was worth. One shot of his went off the side of his bat and landed straight into slip's hands. There was a loud appeal, but once more Kenmore shook his head. This was too much for the Eastwold fellows.

They knew that Fullwood had been caught out, and a murmur of anger went up. But they were too sporting to do more than that. And in the next over they had their revenge. For Fullwood was clean bowled by Dalton.

There was no doubt about that, and he had to go. Bell took his place and only lasted a couple of balls. Then he also was clean bowled, and back to the pavilion he went.

By this time over fifty runs were on the board. But nearly all these had been scored as the result of Kenmore favouring the batsmen. Hubbard was playing a good innings and really making runs. But the others who followed were no good.

They scraped up a few runs here and there, aided by Kenmore. The prefect was thoroughly enjoying himself. He was too thick-skinned to care about the black looks he was receiving all round the field. Whenever he was appealed to he gave the batsman in.

But even so, the innings could not last for ever.

Ninety runs were on the board when Dalton clean blowed the last man in—Skelton. And of those ninety Hubbard had made thirty-five and had batted well.

The teams left the field, and Dalton sought out Fullwood.

"I don't think much of your umpire," he he said frankly.

"I can't help that!" Fullwood replied sourly. "If you mean that you think he's cheating, just say so!"

"I won't go so far as that," Dalton returned. "But I should say he's never played cricket in his life!"

"Hear, hear!" said several Eastwold fellows who had overheard the conversation.

"If you mean by that," Fullwood went on in feigned indignation, "that I am to blame for——"

"I haven't said that," Dalton said calmly. "It's not your fault. But your umpire doesn't understand the rules."

"You'd better tell him so!" Fullwood replied heatedly.

At that moment Kenmore strolled up to the group.

"Time you started your innings," he said to Dalton. "The light will be fading pretty soon."

Dalton nodded his head without speaking. When the St. Frank's eleven had gone out to the field he said a few words to his team.

"There's no doubt about it," he said. "That chap's out to cheat us. But we're going to win. We've only got to score ninety-one runs for victory. It's not a very big total."

"That's all very well," said Duke angrily. "But they should never have got all those runs. We were cheated out of them!"

"Never mind," Dalton said sportingly. "Let's forget about it and go out to win!"

He and a fellow named Brunton went out to open the innings, and the other Eastwold chaps sat together in the pavilion. They talked amongst themselves, and it was no wonder that their remarks were anything but friendly towards the Remove.

They were, in fact, seething with anger. They had thought it a great honour to be playing against the famous college. Yet

now they found that the St. Frank's umpire, if not the team, was cheating.

It was only natural they could not understand it. For they did not know that the eleven they were playing was not by any means the regular Remove team.

But if they were angry now, it was nothing to what they were destined to be later on. For those ninety-odd runs were not going to be easily scored—not if Kenmore knew it!

Fullwood started the bowling. His first three balls were several feet wide of the wicket. But Kenmore did not signal them as wides. And the last three were sent through the slips to the boundary for four apiece!

Noys went on to bowl at the other end, and he had 10 scored off his over. Thus 22 runs were on the board in just over five minutes. This would never do!

Fullwood gritted his teeth and sent down the balls as fast as he was capable of. Two went past Clifton for four byes each, and the remaining four were hit to the boundary.

As the fieldsmen changed at the end of the over Kenmore took an opportunity of whispering a word of advice to Fullwood.

"You've got to bowl straight," he said. "How can I help you if every ball is ever so far off the wicket? Don't trouble about sending 'em down so fast. Pitch them straight!"

Fullwood grunted in annoyance, but he decided to take advantage of the advice. During the next over another half a dozen runs were added to the score, and so already 50 were nearly up. Things were certainly getting desperate!

But Fullwood was determined not to get beaten. At any cost, he would see that St. Frank's did not lose!

So when it was his turn to bowl again he sent down a slower ball. It was much straighter.

It was only a foot or so outside the off stump. Dalton hit out at it and missed.

Clifton, the wicket-keeper, gathered the ball in his hands.

"How's that?" he cried.

"Out!" said Kenmore in a loud voice. "Caught at the wicket."

Dalton gasped with surprise! He knew he had not touched it. But what could he do? He realised that it would be unsportsmanlike to dispute the umpire's decision. There was nothing for it but to leave the crease.

There was a sly grin on Kenmore's face as he strolled up the pitch while they were waiting for the next man to come in.

"Bad luck on that chap," he said loudly. "But, of course, I had to give him out. He certainly just touched the ball!"

Fullwood grinned back.

"I thought I should get him," he remarked confidently.

The next man came in and hit the first ball he received to square leg. He ran once, then turned to run back. He and his partner crossed in the centre of the pitch, and the latter ran leisurely towards the wicket.

Canham at square leg chased the leather and threw it back to the bowler. Fullwood caught the ball as it was thrown in and promptly knocked off the bails.

"How's that?" he appealed, though the batsman had already grounded his bat inside the crease.

"Out!" said Kenmore.

The batsman had to go. But by now the Eastwold fellows were taking no pains to disguise their disgust. Their umpire walked up to Kenmore and asked him whether he had ever seen a game of cricket in his life.

Kenmore took no notice. He ignored the remark and started to chat with Fullwood. The Sixth-Former realised that the visitors were rattled, and it was his job to see that Fullwood's team won the match.

The next man now came in. He was a thick-set fellow, and from the first it was obvious that he had got some instructions from Dalton.

All that he did was to stop the ball. Price, at the other end, was to do the scoring. Dalton had seen that the only way to treat Fullwood was either to hit him to the boundary or pat him back to the bowler.

And at the end of the over the new batsman strolled over to Price, and they held a whispered conversation.

The next over produced another 10 runs. Eight were scored by boundaries and the other two were made off a good hit that only just failed to get to the boundary.

Then it was Fullwood's turn to bowl again. He saw that the Eastwold captain

had found a method of defeating his plans. As long as they never gave Kenmore a chance to be appealed to they were safe.

Their own umpire was absolutely fair. But they realised that Kenmore was doing his best to make the Remove win by fair means or foul.

So Price and the other man played steadily. When Fullwood was bowling they just stopped the balls and never attempted to run. And when Noys had the ball they slammed out.

In this way the runs came slowly but surely. And now there were only another dozen to get for the Eastwold fellows to win.

Fullwood took the ball, and his eyes blazed with anger. He realised that his side stood no chance of winning now. The Eastwold captain had spotted his wheeze, and within a few minutes their opponents would have scored the winning hit!

And as Fullwood took the ball and started on his long run to the wicket he determined that he would finish the match! If the Remove could not win, he would make certain that they should not lose.

He ran up to the stumps and sent down one of his swiftest balls. It was a foot or more outside the wicket. Clifton made a dive at it, but it hurtled past him to go for four byes.

From the ropes, where many Removites and other boys were gathered, came a cry of disgust. They realised that a few more balls like that one would lose the game.

Fullwood heard the cries, and a surge of anger rushed over him. At the moment he was scarcely sane. He saw all his hopes, all his plans, gone wrong. He had meant that this game should secure his supremacy in the Remove!

Instead of that the match would be lost, and his chance would have gone!

These bitter, angry thoughts rose in his mind as he once more started on his run to the wicket. And this time he could not keep them in check. As he ran he saw Price at the other end.

The Eastwold fellow stood there calm and steady, his bat lightly tapping the ground.

And at the sight all Fullwood's control went. With the ball clasped in his right hand he dashed to the wicket—and past it!

Half-way up the pitch he ran, then released the ball with all his might!

The red sphere sped through the air. Dazed, Price saw it coming, but he had no chance to avoid it.

Crack! It hit him on the temple! And, dropping his bat, he fell to the ground—stunned!

At once the fellows crowded round. Fullwood hung back, frightened to approach too near! Now that he had accomplished the vicious act he felt ashamed!

A couple of the Remove eleven bent over the Eastwold batsman. He opened his eyes and looked round dazedly. And then from the pavilion came a rush of feet!

The Eastwold cricketers came running to the pitch in a body, with Dalton at their head.

The captain rushed up to where the fallen batsman lay and bent over him. Then gently he raised him to his feet.

"How do you feel, old chap?" he asked.

Price still looked dazed, and he rubbed his forehead ruefully. On it a great bump had appeared.

"I'll be all right in a minute," he said pluckily. "I shall be able to go on!"

But Dalton had had enough. He turned upon Fullwood, his eyes blazing with disgust and anger.

"We're chucking the game!" he cried. "I'm fed-up with you! We came here thinking we should get a fine match! We thought St. Frank's was a decent school with a decent code of honour!"

"It—it was an accident," began Fullwood lamely.

"Accident be blowed!" shouted Dalton. "You shied that ball on purpose, because you knew that you were losing! Anyway, I won't play another minute with your team! You're a set of rotters!"

"Look here, you're goin' to continue this game!" shouted Fullwood hotly. "You asked for a game, an' we're givin' you one——"

"Who said so?" shouted Dalton. "Is this what you call a game? It's nothing but a lot of rotten cheating! We're going, and you'll never see us at St. Frank's any more, you curs!"

The Eastwold fellows crowded off in a furious group—to be met near the pavilion by Singleton, Somerton, and a few others.

"I say!" began Singleton. "I hope you don't think we're all like that——"

Dalton walked past with his lips tightly closed. And every other Eastwold junior followed his example. When they came out it was the same. And they mounted their bicycles and rode off.

"Well, that's done St. Frank's a bit of good—I don't think!" exclaimed Owen major. "The rotten cads! Blow Fullwood and his money! I wouldn't touch a penny of it after this!"

"And he's our Form skipper!" said Conroy minor bitterly.

CHAPTER 7.

Prowlers in the Night!

"HERE we are!"

"Good!"

"Same old place—just as it used to look!" said Handforth, gazing round the platform of Bannington Station. "Same old bookstall—same old waiting-room! By George! It's even the same old porter!"

I grinned.

"You speak as though we'd been away for twenty years!" I chuckled. "And yet, as a matter of fact, it's only about two months. Did you expect to find everything different?"

"It seems that we've been away for ages!" said Handforth. "But I suppose you're right—there wouldn't be much difference, after all. All the same, it's jolly fine to be back among the old scenes."

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie Glenthorne. "I feel, dear old lads, that it's up to me to stagger away to the pater's place. As you know, it's only slightly in the offing from here——"

"You're coming with us, Archie," declared Pitt.

"Oh, absolutely, every time!" agreed Archie. "That is to say, precisely, old scream! We trickle towards the old school in a somewhat big crowd. I mean to say, back to the scenes of childhood, what? Back to the old place where we learn the jolly old A.B.C.!"

"I don't think we started quite so early as that, Archie!" chuckled De Valerie. "Well, come on. Don't forget your tickets. It's a glorious night, and we shall be at St. Frank's easily within the hour."

The whole crowd of us had alighted on Bannington Station. The last local train had left for Bellton long since. Our only method of getting to St. Frank's from Bannington was to walk, or hire a car.

Archie was strongly in favour of the latter.

"Pray don't let the matter of expense worry you, dear old things," he said. "That, as it were, is a mere old what-do-you-call-it? That is to say, a bally old bagatelle! Kindly dismiss it! I will produce considerable lumps of cash, and fling it at the old garage merchant——"

"That's all very well, Archie, but it's needless expense," I said. "Besides, we shall all enjoy the walk."

"Oh, absolutely!" murmured Archie. "It'll be frightfully ripping. The scheme is a poisonous one, old dear, but proceed! I will withdraw from the old arg."

And it was agreed that we should all walk. Many of the fellows would have liked a car-ride—but I didn't see why they should be indulged. There was no hurry at all, and the night was calm and clear. Besides, we didn't want to give St. Frank's any warning of our arrival.

And so we started out—the whole party of us, going four abreast through the town. We had no luggage—for this had all been left at the station, to follow us on in the morning.

And the walk did prove to be really enjoyable. Long before we reached the half-way mark, the moon was up, and the whole countryside was bathed in a wonderful silvery light.

So far we had remained in London since our return from abroad. And this was our first glimpse of the quiet English countryside since our arrival.

"Oh, you can't beat it!" declared Pitt. "We can go to tropic islands, and strange lands hidden in the Antarctic—but there's nothing like the good old English scenery, after all!"

"Rather not!" said Church. "Isn't it glorious?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Upon the whole, dear old lads, I consider it was a priceless scheme, after all. I mean to say, it makes a chap bubble with poetry, as it were. We wander along and sing a jolly

old song—— Gadzooks! Did you notice, old tulips? Poetry, don't you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The meter was a bit wrong!" grinned Watson.

"You couldn't expect anything else, with gas like that!" chuckled Reggie Pitt.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

We walked on, joking and laughing. And, indeed, it was certainly glorious to see the countryside bathed in the moonlight.

And then, at length, we came to the village of Bellton.

It was quite asleep, for at this hour all the villagers had long since retired. And Bellton was reposing peacefully in the quiet moonlight. We seemed almost compelled to go on tiptoe as we passed through.

We certainly talked in whispers—with the single exception of Handforth. He was talking in a loud voice all through the village.

And yet he declared that he was whispering all the time! This was the most peculiar part of it. When Handforth whispered, you could hear his voice about half a mile off. He seemed to imagine that a whisper should be about twice as loud as an ordinary voice. He simply imparted a husky sound to his tone.

But we got through Bellton all right, and then made our way up the lane to the school.

And when we arrived, we hopped nimbly over the wall, and looked into the Triangle. There were the old buildings. To us, who knew them so well, there was something pally about the shape of the Ancient House. We could see Mrs. Hake's tuckshop nestling in the corner, and I noticed that Fatty Little's tongue was licking his lips as he saw the building.

"Oh, for a feed!" he exclaimed. "I'd love to break into there now, and pinch some of Mrs. Hake's lovely beef patties! They're absolutely great! I suppose we couldn't get in, and leave the money——"

"We couldn't!" I interrupted. "If you're patient for a few minutes longer, you'll find a ripping spread all ready for us indoors. It's all arranged—and then we shall go to bed afterwards."

"Well, we don't want to stand here—let's get inside!" said Fatty.

But just then Pitt caught my arm.

"What's that?" he asked, pointing. "I thought I saw some figures moving on the other side of the shrubbery."

"Your fancy, I suppose——"

I broke off, and stared. Sure enough, there were some figures there. I warned all the fellows to remain quiet, and we stood still and watched. Fatty Little was terribly impatient, but we wouldn't let him move.

And then, out into the moonlight came at least two dozen shadowy forms! This was most extraordinary, for we had expected to find the whole school asleep. I didn't think these figures belonged to St. Frank's fellows.

"We'll have a look into this!" I said grimly.

"Burglars, what?" said Archie. "I mean to say——"

"My dear ass, burglars don't come in troops!" I exclaimed. "These fellows are schoolboys—and I want to see what they're up to."

"Come on!" said Pitt.

We went forward at a run. And then, in a moment, the figures in front of us turned and faced us. And as we came up we saw that they were perfect strangers. Over by the school wall were a couple of sacks, and two tins.

"What's the idea of this?" I asked calmly. "Who the dickens are you, and what do you want?"

"I was going to ask you the same questions!" said one of the figures.

"I'll soon answer that," I said. "We're St. Frank's fellows, and we've just come back from a holiday—a bit late for term, but we'll soon make that up. But what's the idea of prowling round here at eleven o'clock at night?"

To my surprise, I found that all the strangers were looking at us aggressively.

"Do you belong to the Remove here?" asked one of them.

"Yes," said Pitt.

"We don't want anything to do with you!"

"That's pleasant!" I remarked. "But what's the idea? What have we done? Before being barred, we should like to know the reason for it."

"I should think you ought to know!" said the spokesman bitterly. "My name's Dalton, and I'm captain of the Fourth at Eastwold College. If you didn't seem a

decent chap, I wouldn't be talking to you now."

"That's very nice of you," I said. "But I'm still in the dark."

"You oughtn't to be!" said Dalton. "Look here, you fellows—I'll put it to you straight, and I can judge your characters by your answer. What kind of a chap is your Form skipper?"

"First class!" said Pitt promptly.

"One of the best!" said Tommy Watson.

"Hear, hear!"

Dalton stared grimly.

"All right—that's enough!" he said. "If you think your Form skipper's one of the best, I don't want to say another word to you. Personally, I think he's a cad—an out and out rotter!"

"Thanks awfully!" I said. "But what have I done?"

"What do you mean?"

"Merely that I happen to be the captain of the Remove," I replied smoothly. "I should just like to know why I've got such a tremendous character."

Dalton gripped my arm.

"You're the Remove captain?" he asked blankly.

"Yes!"

"What's your name?"

"Nipper."

"But the Remove skipper's name is Fullwood," said one of the others.

Reginald Pitt staggered, but recovered almost at once.

"Fullwood," he said feebly. "Fan me, somebody! Oh, by jingo! Is it possible that Fullwood has made himself skipper during our absence? Great cokernuts! I could understand these chaps calling him a cad and a rotter!"

"Fullwood is the captain!" said Dalton grimly.

"Then, look here, old man, there's something radically wrong," I said quietly. "You see, we've all been away, and we're late in getting back. I'm the Remove captain, and if you had any dealings with Fullwood, I'm sorry for you. He's the biggest cad in the Lower School, and his pals are all the same class. I should like to hear how you ran across him."

We did hear—then and there.

Dalton told us the whole story about the blackguardly cricket match. We listened with growing indignation. And by the time the Eastwold fellows had finished, we were fairly bubbling with fury.

"The cads! The infernal rotters!" exclaimed Pitt hotly. "But I'm not surprised—it's just the kind of thing they would do! I hope to goodness you chaps don't think we're all the same here."

"We did think so," admitted Dalton.

"Then you'd better think again—quick!" exclaimed Handforth, placing his fist beneath Dalton's nose. "See that? Any fellow who runs down St. Frank's in my hearing gets this fist on his blessed nose!"

"Don't take any notice of this chap—he's harmless!" interrupted Pitt. "He's quite tame, although now and again he breaks out. And he seems to have a special liking for punching the most innocent noses. But he's as good as gold at heart—absolutely one of the best."

Handforth gulped.

"You—you fathead!" he said weakly.

As a matter of fact, he had been about to slaughter Pitt on the spot—but the latter part of Reggie's sentence mollified him to such an extent that he had mercy. He glared round him aggressively.

"Look here, you chaps!" he said grimly. "You Eastward chaps, I mean—or East something or other! Fullwood is a dirty cad—and all his followers are more dirty cads! While we've been away, I expect they've got into power. Of course, I'm the Captain of the Remove, really——"

"Then there are three skippers?" asked Dalton.

"No—only one—and that's me!" said Handforth. "Of course, I hate trouble, and so I let Nipper call himself skipper. But when it comes to running the Remove, I'm always the responsible chap. Nipper's not a bad sort—if he likes to think he's skipper, I don't mind!"

The Eastwold fellows were looking rather bewildered.

"That's just another sign!" I exclaimed. "Handy's all right—but he will have these delusions. I'd like you to come over on Saturday afternoon, Dalton, and we'll give you a match—the real thing, not a travesty of it!"

"Well, I don't know——"

"Look here, you've got to come!" said Handforth curtly. "By George! Do you think we're going to allow you to have such a rotten impression of St. Frank's? I'm the Remove wicket-keeper, and I

ought to be playing for the First Eleven."

Dalton and his chums agreed to come over on Saturday. They were, in fact, very favourably impressed with us—I could see that. This was not to be wondered at, after the treatment they had received at the hands of Fullwood.

"But what's the idea of this?" I asked. "Why have you chaps come round here?"

"At this time of night?" added Pitt.

"Well, the fact is, we were going to give your precious Fullwood & Co. something to be going on with!" explained Dalton. "We've got tar here—and a couple of sacks of feathers. We thought about giving them a good double coating. Any fellows who play foul in the way they did, deserve to be tarred and feathered!"

Handforth grabbed Dalton's hand.

"Good man!" he said. "Go ahead—that's the best thing you can do! And, by George, I'll help you!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Steady on!" I exclaimed. "I don't think that operation had better be performed to-night. It'll upset things considerably. You can trust us, Dalton, to make things hot for those cads. You see, the Head's up and awake, and he's expecting us. He'd be bound to hear the commotion, and then there'd be trouble all round. But I'm jolly glad we met you. Take my advice, and drop this thing for to-night. If you like to come one evening next week—we won't interfere!"

Dalton nodded.

"Right you are—you know best!" he said promptly. "Thanks for the tip—we don't want to ask for trouble. And we'll be here on Saturday—and we hope we'll have a really good game."

"You'll have a clean game, anyway," I said. "Good-night, you chaps!"

They went—with their opinion of St. Frank's already much altered.

"It seems to me," I said grimly, "that it's high time we arrived back!"

CHAPTER 8.

The Power of Money!

CLANG—clang!

The rising bell made its usual racket, and sleep was no longer possible for all the fellows of St. Frank's. In the Remove dormitory in the Ancient House, one or two juniors sat up sleepily.

They didn't care much for turning out. But it generally happened that at least two or three fellows were determined to rise immediately upon the bell sounding. Perhaps they had arranged for a little early morning jaunt. But it was far more likely that they were expecting a letter from home. Not that they were anxious about the letter. Their eagerness to get down was to ascertain if the letter contained something in the shape of a postal-order, or a currency note.

On this occasion Owen major sat up, rubbed his eyes, and gave a prodigious yawn. He looked sleepily up and down the room, and then gave a little gulp.

He was quite accustomed to seeing the dormitory in a somewhat deserted condition. Ever since the beginning of this term at least fourteen beds had been empty—although these beds were kept constantly aired and ready.

But the missing juniors had not returned. And the Removites had grown accustomed to the semi-deserted nature of the dormitory.

It was hardly surprising, therefore, that Owen major gulped.

Every bed was occupied!

"What the—— How the—— I—I must be dreaming!" gasped Owen major. "Hi, you chaps! Canham—Farman! Look!"

Owen major's two study chums were accommodated in the next beds, and they looked up dreamily as Owen's major's voice smote their ears.

"Say, I guess you're some darned noise!" growled the American junior. "I'm kind o' feelin' rattled——"

"Look, you ass!" roared Owen major.

"Gee!" said Farman, sitting up. "What in thunder's bitin' you? Waal, say! If that ain't real queer! Them beds is sure full up! Now, what do you know about that? Say, pards, I guess I'm sure puzzled!"

"But—but they were empty last night!" exclaimed Canham blankly. "All those beds were empty! Some fathead must be playing a game—they're full of dummies! I'll soon see!"

He bent down, picked up a boot, and hurled it at one of the beds. There was a wild howl, the bedclothes heaved up like

some volcanic eruption, and then a fierce face appeared--but a well-known face.

"Who did that?" it bellowed, like a mighty blast.

"Handforth!" yelled Owen major wildly.

"Handforth!" gasped Canham.

"You—you funny fatheads!" roared Handforth. "What's the idea of chucking things at me? Why, hallo! What the—— Oh, yes! Of course. I'd forgotten for the minute."

Handforth sat up and looked round, forgetting his bump.

"How goes it, you chaps?" he said. "Back again, you know! And this term I'm jolly well going to keep things in order!"

"When—when did you come?" asked Owen major faintly.

"Last night!"

Handforth spoke quite unconcernedly—although he was conscious of his own importance. Then another junior sat up—and another—and another. It was really unreasonable to expect the fellows to go on slumbering while Handforth was talking. One might as well expect oil to mix with water!

Fullwood was one of those who sat up.

He gave one stare round—and then his expression became utterly startled. It quickly changed to a scowl of vicious hatred.

"By gad!" he muttered. "They're back!"

It took Fullwood quite by surprise. It left him stranded. For he had been confidently telling himself that nobody could come along to drive him out of his new position. He was the Remove captain, and he meant to stick to his job. And now, just when everything was all right, the wanderers had returned.

For Fullwood, it was certainly rather sickening.

"Oh, so there you are?" said Handforth, glaring at him. "You cad!"

"What?" snapped Fullwood.

"You miserable blackguard!" said Handforth warmly.

"Look here——"

"I'm looking!" went on Edward Oswald. "And I can see something that oughtn't to be alive. I can see an object that absolutely gives me a pain! I don't know why they allow such things to live! They kill beetles and scorpions and other venomous insects—and yet they let you live!"

"Good for you, Handy!" grinned Owen major.

Fullwood was purple with rage.

"What's the idea of this?" he snarled. "The first thing you do when you see me is to insult me right and left!"

"I know all about it!" said Handforth mysteriously. "I get to know things! You seem to forget that I'm a detective! And although I wasn't at St. Frank's yesterday, I jolly well know that you acted like a common ruffian on the cricket field! I might as well tell you at once that I'm going to slaughter you!"

And Handforth stalked out of bed, and slowly and deliberately turned up the sleeves of his pyjamas. Fullwood hastily jumped out of bed, and backed away. The coming of the holiday party was not very welcome to him.

"Stop it!" he gasped. "If—if you touch me I'll yell for a prefect. I'm captain of the Remove——"

"Oh, are you?" interrupted Handforth. "That's queer! What put such a dotty idea into your head? The best thing I can do is to drive it out. I don't believe in doing things on the sly, so I'll tell you what my plan is. I'm going to get your head in chancery, and I'm going to punch your nose until you say you're not the captain of the Remove."

By this time every junior was sitting up—for the commotion was somewhat fearful. I was grinning, for the whole affair was somewhat humorous. Possibly Fullwood did not think so.

"Steady on, Handy!" I said. "We'll thrash this matter out later—there's no need to kick up a commotion now. And don't forget that we've just got back. It wouldn't look well."

"I don't care!" said Handforth. "Do you think I'm going to stand here, and see this cad call himself the captain of the Remove. Why, the first gorilla out of a travelling menagerie would make a better skipper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

This, perhaps, was the most deadly insult of all. But matters were not allowed to go further, for just then Morrow happened to come in. The prefect started, flushed, and then strode into the dormitory.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he exclaimed. "Where in the name of all that's wonderful did you kids drop from?"

His question was one of scores. And in a very short time we were all answering such questions as fast as we could manage. Everybody wanted to know all about our adventures.

And Handforth, in the flush of relating his marvellous deeds, forgot Fullwood for the time being. The latter was undoubtedly relieved.

He hurriedly dressed, and went down to Study A with his chums. And Fullwood was in a fine fury.

"Confound it!" he snarled. "Of course, they're bound to turn up, just when we don't want them! What ghastly luck!"

"And it's just like the cads to sneak in at dead of night, without giving us any warnin'," said Gulliver. "Well, I'm afraid it's all up with you, Fully."

"What do you mean?"

"About the captaincy!"

"All up with me?" snapped Fullwood. "Oh, is it? We'll see about that! If Nipper thinks he's going to turn me out, he's made a bloomer! The cad! Comin' back like this an' spoilin' everthin'!"

"It's no good gettin' into a temper about it," said Bell. "We all knew that they were comin' back some time—but we didn't expect them quite so soon. An', strictly speakin', Nipper is the Form captain."

"He was," said Fullwood. "He is not now. An' I'll take jolly good care that I stick to the job."

In the meantime we were hearing all sorts of yarns about the recent slack times in the Remove. The fellows who were particularly pleased at our return were Burton and Jerry Dodd and Nicodemus Trotwood and Singleton and Levi, and one or two other decent chaps. The rest, for the most part, did not seem to welcome us particularly. For they knew that the free and easy slackness would be stopped.

Fullwood & Co. and Merrell and his gang were absolutely angry about it. I knew well enough that they would have liked us to remain away for good. But here we were—and we were soon in possession of the facts.

"Oh, so that's it, is it?" said Reggie Pitt, as he finished dressing. "Fullwood's the skipper, and he's been creating the merry dickens! Well, his life as captain will be short and sweet!"

"Of course, he'll have to resign now," said Tommy Watson. "Nipper's back, and Fullwood will resign automatically."

"Will he?" exclaimed Somerton. "I don't think so. Fullwood's not that kind—he'll have to be pitched out in the end."

"I don't want anything like that," I put in quietly. "If Fullwood's been elected captain, he is captain."

"Are you willing to let it stand?" asked Handforth fiercely.

"No, of course not," I replied. "But I'll ask Fullwood if he'll resign—and if he refuses, we shall hold another election. That'll settle it. If he's voted captain, I'll say no more."

Pitt grinned.

"It's as good as settled," he declared. "He'll never be skipper. "You'll get three votes to his one—and if he doesn't abide by the Form's decision, we'll jolly well scrag him!"

"Hear, hear!"

As soon as we went downstairs we were surrounded by numbers of eager juniors. And even the seniors came buzzing round, asking all sorts of questions concerning our adventures. And this, of course, was only natural. But everybody wanted this other matter settled at once. The idea of Fullwood being captain made the juniors rather heated.

And so, without delay, I went along to Study A, tapped and went inside. The study was hazy with cigarette smoke. Fullwood & Co. were there, and they greeted me with hostile looks.

"Clear out!" said Fullwood curtly.

"Thanks—I will soon," I replied. "But I'd just like a word with you first, Fullwood. I understand you've been elected captain this term?"

"I have!" said Fullwood.

"Do you regard that as a permanency, or merely until my return?"

"As a permanency, of course."

"It's just as well to know these things," I said. "I thought perhaps you'd be willing to resign——"

"You'd better think again!" snapped Fullwood. "I'm the Form captain, and I'm not standing any nonsense from you. You're a back number, my son! I'm skipper, an' my word is law!"

"Right you are!" I said. "I think the Remove will have something to say about it."

"What do you mean?" snarled Fullwood.

"My dear chap, it must be obvious to you that a large number of fellows won't allow this to stand," I said quietly. "There'll be another election—immediately after breakfast. If you get the most votes, I'll say nothing further, and I'll let you remain captain until the Remove gets tired of you. But there's no sense in talking about it now."

I retired, and told the other fellows what the result was. They had expected it from the very first.

"Well, of course, it doesn't matter," said Jack Grey. "There'll be the election after brekker, and Fullwood will be nowhere!"

But Fullwood had other ideas.

"Another election?" he exclaimed, in Study A. "You heard that? I thought as much. Well, we'll see. I'm not goin' to be pushed out by this rotter! An' by gad, if I'm re-elected, I'll make him suffer."

Without wasting any time Fullwood got busy.

He got hold of every fellow he could—although he took great care not to interfere with the juniors who were loyal to me. But he went round to all the others—and before he had finished he had distributed at least twelve or fifteen pounds. At all costs, he meant to get the votes. He had piles of money in his pocket, and he didn't care how much he spent.

Besides, he had told everybody that he had come into a fortune. We had heard this but I didn't particularly believe it. There was no doubt, however, that Fullwood had a most unusual supply of cash.

And after breakfast, in spite of all the other matters in hand, the election was held. It was necessarily quite a brief affair—for it was not like an ordinary Form election.

In the Common-room we all gathered—every single member of the Ancient House Remove. The whole affair did not take more than ten minutes from start to finish. I stood up, and Pitt asked all the fellows in favour of my captaincy to raise their hands.

There was a flood of hands at once, and they were counted. I could see that my supporters were looking rather anxious, for a surprising number of fellows did not vote for me.

Then Fullwood received his votes.

It came as a bit of a shock to me to see the number of hands that went up. Pitt, Grey, De Valerie and the others looked very anxious. Their anxiety turned to consternation when the result was announced.

Fullwood was elected captain by a majority of five votes!

Pandemonium reigned after that. All my supporters, and particularly Handforth, shouted at the top of their voices. They weren't going to have it—they weren't going to let such a thing stand.

"Look here, we've got to play the game," I said quietly. "I told Fullwood that if he was elected I would say no more, an if you chaps want to please me, you'll keep mum. Let Fullwood have the captaincy—it'll be rather rich to see what he does with it."

But the anger in the Remove was very pronounced.

Everybody knew that Fullwood had obtained his votes by bribery. And this, of course, made the whole thing something of a fiasco. But I was content to let it go on.

And while we were still in the Common-room, talking, Tubbs, the Ancient House page, came along the passages, looking for Hubbard. He was found in the lobby, talking to Owen major.

"You're wanted, Master Hubbard, please, sir," said Tubbs.

"Wanted?" said Hubbard. "Where?"

"In Mr. Lee's study, sir."

Hubbard, rather bewildered, accompanied the page-boy to the headmaster's study. And he was staggered when he passed inside to find that Inspector Jameson, of the Bannington police, was seated in an easy chair. There was another man in addition to Nelson Lee—a man whom Hubbard recognised as Mr. Cowley, a Bannington chemist.

"Yes, that's the boy!" said Mr. Cowley at once.

"What—what's wrong, sir?" asked Hubbard, startled.

"It's all right, my lad," said Nelson Lee. "There is nothing to fear—I merely wish to make a few inquiries. I think you made

a purchase last night in Mr. Cowley's establishment?"

"Yes, sir—I bought some photographic films," said Hubbard.

"You tendered a pound note, I believe?"

"Why, yes, sir."

"I don't know whether you know it, young man, but that note was a forgery!" said Mr. Cowley severely. "As it happened, it was the only note in my till just then, for I had left only silver with my assistant. He knew at once that you were the customer who had given the note in."

Hubbard went rather pale.

"The—the note was a dud one, sir?" he asked blankly.

"Yes; and we should like to know where you obtained it," put in Inspector Jameson. "It may be of great help to us if you can give us that information, my boy."

Hubbard caught his breath in, and stared. For he had suddenly remembered—and he was utterly flabbergasted.

The note had been given to him by Ralph Leslie Fullwood!

CHAPTER 9.

A Shock for Fullwood!

NELSON LEE looked at Hubbard curiously.

The famous detective was somewhat surprised to find himself mixed up in a police case the very morning after his arrival at the old school.

"Well, Hubbard?" he said grimly. "There is nothing to fear, my lad. The inspector does not believe that you passed the note deliberately——"

"I—I didn't know it was a dud one, sir!" gasped Hubbard. "It looked all right——"

"Of course!" put in the inspector. "As a matter of fact, these particular forgeries are an extraordinarily clever job, and the forged notes are most difficult to detect. Do you remember where you got the note from?"

"Fullwood gave it to me, sir—— I—I mean——"

Hubbard paused, breathing hard. He had half made up his mind that he would not say anything about Fullwood. But it was out almost before he knew it. And now, it was too late to retract.

"Fullwood gave it to you?" repeated Nelson Lee. "Well, that is not particularly exciting. Why did Fullwood give you a pound note, Hubbard?"

"I—I don't know, sir," said Hubbard, scared.

For, quite suddenly, the junior felt shaky. He remembered the lavish way in which Fullwood was giving the pound notes away—he remembered the story of a sudden fortune. Was it possible that Fullwood had deliberately given forged notes away? It seemed altogether too awful. Even Fullwood wouldn't do that, rascal though he was.

"What do you mean, Hubbard?" asked Nelson Lee. "You don't know why Fullwood gave you that note? Didn't he lend it to you?"

"No—no, sir!"

"He made you a present of it?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Did he make similar presents to other boys?"

"I—I think so, sir!"

"Oh, indeed!" said Nelson Lee grimly. "Is it usual for Fullwood to go about presenting pound notes to his schoolfellows?"

"Nunn—no, sir—he's never done that before," gasped Hubbard. "Fullwood's got lots of them—pounds and pounds and pounds!"

"Oh, is that so?" said Inspector Jameson, jumping up. "So Master Fullwood has a great many of these notes? And he has been distributing them freely? To my mind, Mr. Lee, this looks very significant!"

"It certainly is very strange," agreed Nelson Lee. "Before we proceed further, I think we had better have Fullwood brought in. He will be able to tell us much better than this boy."

Nelson Lee touched his bell, and Tubbs soon appeared. Hubbard wanted to go, but he was not allowed to—Nelson Lee had no desire for him to spread a story about the school.

Tubbs was instructed to fetch Fullwood at once. And, within five minutes, Fullwood arrived, looking quite cocksure—but inwardly alarmed. He believed that Nelson Lee had heard something about that cricket match.

Ralph Leslie got a big surprise as soon as he saw Inspector Jameson. His mind instantly jumped to the emerald pendant. But, with an effort, he managed to control himself.

"You sent for me, sir?" he asked calmly.

"Yes, Fullwood," said Nelson Lee. "I understand that you are in possession of a considerable amount of money?"

"Well, I don't know, sir," said Fullwood. "I haven't got very much—just a pound or two."

The inspector and Lee exchanged glances.

"A pound or two?" repeated Lee. "Have you got the notes on you?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Show them to me!"

Fullwood hesitated for a moment or two, and then brought out three pound notes which he happened to have in his waistcoat pocket. He couldn't for the life of him understand what all the trouble was about. Nelson Lee took the three notes, and one swift glance at them was enough for him. He passed them to Inspector Jameson, and then looked at Fullwood.

"Are you aware, my boy, that those notes are forgeries?" he asked quietly.

Fullwood staggered.

"Forgeries!" he panted huskily.

"Yes!" said Lee, watching him closely. "They are forgeries—worthless slips of paper."

"But—but I didn't know, sir," panted Fullwood. "I—I—— Then—then the others——" He paused, and then gulped.

"The others, Fullwood?" said Nelson Lee. "Come, come! If you have any more of these notes, you had better deliver them at once. For if you attempt to pass them after knowing them to be false, you make yourself liable to arrest. Give me all the pound notes you possess."

A feeling of absolute desperation and dismay had come upon Fullwood. All his golden castles were tumbling about his ears. His money was worthless—in reality, he hadn't got a cent!

And now he no longer wished to conceal the actual state of his supposed wealth. Hastily feeling in his pockets, he pulled out bundle after bundle of currency notes.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Nelson Lee, rather startled. "How many are there here?"

"I—I don't know, sir—about a hundred and fifteen?" said Fullwood.

"A hundred and fifteen!" repeated Nelon Lee grimly. "Upon my soul! How on earth did you come into possession of such a big sum of money—or, rather, supposed money? I must have a full explanation at once, Fullwood. What was the original sum you possessed?"

"A hundred-an'-fifty pounds, sir!"

"There's something fishy about this, I'll warrant!" said Mr. Cowley. "No schoolboy has a right to go about with a fortune like that in his pockets! I'll warrant the young rascal knew all the time——"

"I shall be obliged, Mr. Cowley, if you will allow me to conduct this inquiry," said Nelson Lee coldly. "And I cannot permit you to make accusations against this boy without the proof. Come, Fullwood, the best thing you can do is to tell me the exact truth about the whole matter. Where did you get the money from?"

"Sir William Norton gave it to me, sir," said Fullwood quickly. "I— I didn't know! He's a rotten scoundrel, sir——"

"Now then—now then!" put in the inspector. "That sort of thing won't do, my lad! Sir William Norton is a most respected landowner—a thorough gentleman and it is absolutely impossible that he gave you the notes——

"But—but he did!" shouted Fullwood. "It was a reward—a reward for the emerald pendant which was lost——"

"What's that?" ejaculated Jameson. "Hallo, hallo! I'm beginning to see a bit of daylight!"

"What is this talk about a pendant?" asked Nelson Lee. "I am at a disadvantage, since I only arrived at the school last night."

"Why, Lady Norton lost her emerald pendant at the Bannington races!" said the inspector. "The pendant was recovered only last night, and it was found to be in the possession of two well-known crooks. They were trying to get out of Bannington at the time, when we detained them on suspicion. And the necklace was found on one of them. And these crooks are well known as forgers!"

"The necklace has been recovered?"

"Yes," said the inspector.

"But—but I found it!" shouted Fullwood.

"You found it?" repeated Nelson Lee. "And you declare that Sir William Norton paid you a hundred-and-fifty pounds in reward?"

"Yes, sir."

"I don't know what the boy is talking about," said Jameson. "Sir William certainly offered a hundred pounds reward for

the recovery of the necklace. But it was obtained by the police in the course of their duties—and so, of course, the reward was not paid."

"What does all this mean, Fullwood?" asked Nelson Lee sternly. "I am very much afraid that you have not acted in a straightforward manner. You declare that you found this pendant?"

"Yes sir."

"Where?"

"Why, I—I was out with my chums that afternoon, sir," said Fullwood. "We happened to be comin' along the road just near Bannin'ton racecourse. An' in the grass I happened to see somethin' sparklin'. I picked it up, an' found that it was a pendant."

"Why did you not immediately take it to the police-station?"

"I—I didn't think it was valuable at the time, sir," said Fullwood, his voice failing to ring with conviction. "I—I simply gave it a glance, an' put it in my pocket."

"Well?"

"An' the next mornin', sir, I saw a notice in the paper offering a hundred pounds reward for a pendant," said Fullwood. "I knew at once that the thing I had found was the missin' one."

"In that case you should have taken it to the police then."

"I didn't see any reason why I should, sir," said Fullwood, feeling a little easier. "I saw that Sir William Norton was at the Grapes Hotel, and so I rang the hotel up. Somebody answered, an' I asked for Sir William. But the clerk wouldn't do anythin' until I told him my business."

"You told this clerk that you had found the necklace and were willing to give it up?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, of course, the whole thing is perfectly clear," said Nelson Lee. "The man who answered the 'phone was not the hotel clerk, but one of these criminals. He heard that you were a mere boy, and as soon as he found that you had the pendant in your possession, he saw an opportunity of stealing it When he went to fetch Sir William, he merely fetched his confederate."

"Oh, the awful scoundrel, sir!" said Fullwood thickly

"The man you thought Sir William was really the chief criminal," said Nelson Lee. "And this man came to St. Frank's with the reward—which, we now see, consists of false currency. The man's generosity in making the amount up to a hundred-and-fifty pounds, is quite understandable."

"Then—then I haven't—got a penny, sir?" asked Fullwood.

"You have not."

"But—but I ought to have had the hundred pounds——"

"You forfeited all right to that by your underhand conduct," interrupted Nelson Lee grimly. "You certainly cannot claim the reward now becase it was the police who recovered the emeralds. This ought to be a lesson to you, Fullwood, not to act in an underhand manner."

"But—but I didn't——"

"You did!" said the detective curtly. "Your first duty on finding any property that may be valuable, is to take it at once to a police-station. But I can see your reason for not doing so. You thought you would gain a much bigger reward. Upon seeing the advertisement, you should have taken your find to the police station, and awaited results. Instead of that you used the telephone—a most foolish move. I am thankful the whole matter has come to light in time."

"An'—an' what about my money, sir?" asked Fullwood desperately.

"You have no money," replied Nelson Lee. "I shall not punish you further, because I think the lesson will be a severe one. You did not act criminally, but greedily. And your reward is a fitting one. You have received nothing."

The room seemed to reel round Fullwood's head.

"There is another point," went on Lee. "You must give the names of all boys you gave these notes to. I will see that they are recovered and traced—and I will do so without making the matter public. At all events. Fullwood, I will spare you from that humiliation."

"Thank—thank you, sir!" gasped Fullwood.

"And now you may go!" said Nelson Lee. "And upon the whole, you may consider yourself very lucky to have escaped so lightly."

Fullwood looked aggressive.

"But I found the pendant in the grass, sir!" he declared. "If it hadn't been for me, those men wouldn't have had the thing

on them. So it was my doin' that—that the property was recovered. That reward is mine——"

"You have lost all right to it," said Nelson Lee sternly. "However, I will see Sir William Norton, and it is possible that he will see the matter in the same curious light as yourself. If such turns out to be the case, I shall send the money at once to your father, to be held for your benefit—and I shall instruct him not to send any of it to St. Frank's!"

"But—but——"

"That will do, Fullwood—you may go."

Fullwood went, feeling crushed—after he had given Nelson Lee a list of the fellows who had received the forged notes from him.

He understood that Nelson Lee would recover those notes—or find out where they'd gone—without allowing the juniors to know the real truth. So the school would never know about the matter.

Hubbard was the only fellow—and Fullwood made sure that Hubbard would never breathe a word.

He went to his study, nearly crying with rage and helplessness. Even if Sir William gave the money—which was doubtful—he wouldn't be able to use it. And here he was captain of the Remove, without a penny!

And his very existence as skipper depended upon the bribes he had given out. Fullwood could see that it would only be a very short time before he would be knocked off his pedestal.

But he was determined to make one grim effort to retain control.

The affair was over, and the school knew nothing. But in Fullwood's heart there lurked a desperate scheme to save the situation.

CHAPTER 10.

Up Against It!

BIFF!

"Ow-yow!" roared Church. "What the—— Hi! Yarooh!"

Crash!

Church descended into the coal-scuttle, and there was a devastating clatter. The unfortunate junior lay there with his face smothered in coal-dust, and with his arms and legs waving wildly.

"That's for being a silly ass!" said Handforth tartly. "Perhaps you won't be quite so talkative in future. Pass the anchovy paste, Clurey!"

This, of course, was quite a commonplace proceeding during tea in Study D. It was nothing for Edward Oswald Handforth to interrupt the proceedings and pitch one of his chums into the fender.

Church picked himself up, fuming.

"You—you dangerous maniac!" he said fiercely.

"What?"

"You heard what I said!" snapped Church. "I don't care! I'm not going to be bashed about like that! You think you can do anything you like, but you can't, you—you bully!"

Handforth rose deliberately.

"What's that?" he said in ominous tones.

"Bully!" repeated Church recklessly. "That's what you are! And if you like, I'll meet you in the gym after tea, with or without gloves! I'm not afraid of a hulking rotter like you!"

McClure fully expected to see his chum picked up and slaughtered on the very spot. Now and again they would tell Handforth off in no uncertain terms—but it was always a risky proceeding.

On this occasion, Handforth glared, and then relaxed.

"You don't mean that, do you?" he asked.

"Yes, I do!"

"Hang it all, I let fly now and again," said Handy. "But I don't allow anybody to call me a bully! I bar bullies! They're rotters and cads! If I went a bit too far, I'm sorry. It's all right, old man. Come and have tea, and we'll forget all about it. Pass the sardines, Clurey—don't scoff the lot, you glutton!"

Church calmed down, and dusted himself.

Under the circumstances, he decided to let the matter drop. In the heat of the moment he had challenged Handforth—but he knew well enough that his leader could knock him into the middle of next week with ease.

There was never any knowing how Handforth would act.

He was an uncertain quantity. Sometimes he would get so violent that the only course was to flee. And at other times—generally when his chums expected dire danger—he would suddenly cool down.

"We'll forget all about the whole matter," said Handforth. "Goodness knows I'm not the chap to rake things up. But I will say that you are a pair of idiots. If you think the Remove is going to stand Fullwood's rot, you've made a mistake."

Church and McClure were silent.

"Eh?" said Handforth.

"We didn't speak," remarked McClure.

"Can't you make a civil comment?" demanded Handforth. "I talk and talk—and all you can do is to sit there like a pair of stuffed dummies! Fine chaps to talk to, ain't you?"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Church. "If we talk you fly at us, and if we don't talk you call us stuffed dummies! I'm blessed if I know what to do with a chap like you! Let's talk about the weather!"

"The weather's all right," said Handforth. "No need to talk about it, you fathead! We were discussing Fullwood——"

"Yes, and just because I made a remark, you pitched me backwards into the fender," exclaimed Church indignantly. "It's no good arguing with you, Handy. You don't give a chap a chance."

"Rot!" said Handforth. "You shouldn't talk such piffle! I say that Fullwood has got to be chucked out of the Remove captaincy—we've had enough of him. And all you can do is to argue, and say that the thing can't be done!"

"Well, can it?" demanded McClure tartly.

"Of course it can!"

"How?"

"How?" repeated Handforth. "There's a mad thing to ask! All we've got to do is to go to Fullwood and tell him that if he doesn't resign, we'll bump him round the Triangle, and then punch his nose until he can't see straight!"

"But Nipper won't have that," objected Church.

"Blow Nipper!"

"It's all very well to say blow Nipper," said Church. "He's our real skipper, and it's for him to say what's to be done. Fullwood was elected by the Remove. He got more votes than Nipper——"

"Yes, by buying 'em!" interrupted Handforth warmly. "The cad! The rotten cheat! He gets elected by a lot of blackguardly trickery—and Nipper is content to let things rest!"

"Nipper knows what he's doing," said McClure. "He's pretty deep, and I believe he intends to let Fully run on. Give him enough rope, and he'll hang himself."

"Who's talking about rope?" Handforth demanded.

"Well, you know what I mean——"

"How should I know?" asked Handforth. "And Fullwood can get all the rope he wants from old Cuttle's woodshed. He wouldn't hang himself, either—he hasn't got enough pluck——"

"It's only a saying!" yelled McClure impatiently.

"Don't bark!" snapped Handforth. "I'm not deaf. If you don't mean these idiotic things, you shouldn't say 'em!"

Handforth was a most difficult fellow to get on with. He always insisted upon taking everything literally.

"It's no good talking to you fellows," went on Handforth. "Fullwood has got to go. That's certain. If Nipper won't do anything, I shall. I've a good mind to become Remove skipper myself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Church.

"Eh?"

"Ah! Oh! Got it!" gasped Church, pretending to cough. "A crumb, you know——"

"It sounded as though you were laughing," said Handforth suspiciously. "You'd better not laugh at me, my son! Yes, I'll be skipper! Then you'll see the fur fly, I can tell you!"

"Well, it's no good talking and talking," said McClure. "It only leads to arguments. Better drop the subject. What about the cricket? We shall be playing Helmford College next week. I hope we whack the beggars!"

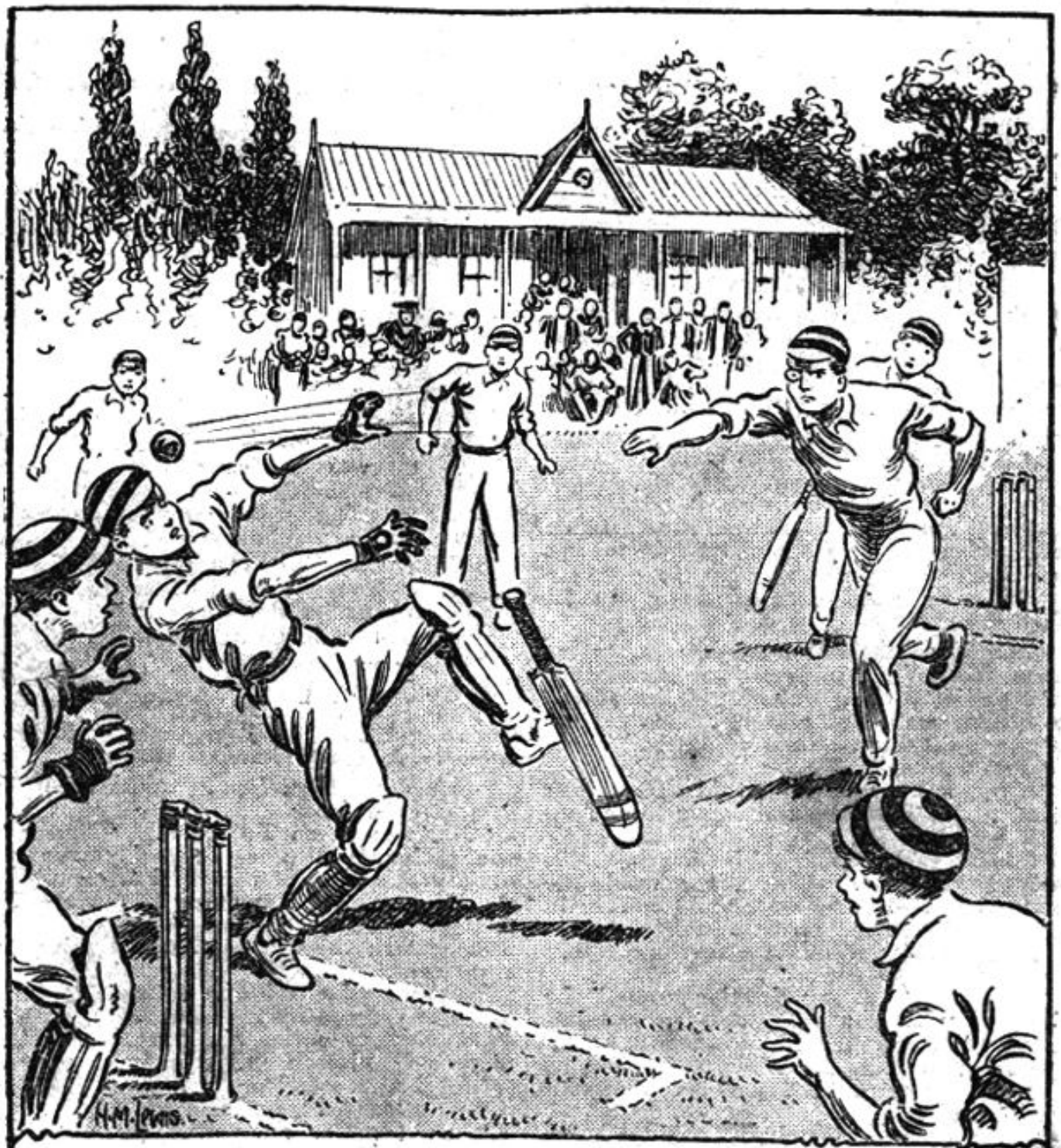
"Of course we shall whack Helmford—and Eastwold, too!" cried Handy. "But as long as Fullwood's the skipper, what can you expect?"

In spite of the efforts of Church and McClure, the conversation veered back to Fullwood. Handforth was very keen upon the subject. He hated the very idea of Fullwood being skipper.

For some few moments he had been silently sipping his tea. Then, suddenly, he brought his fist down with a crash.

"Yoo-hoooh!" hooted McClure wildly.

His own cup of tea, just poured out, and steaming hot, had jumped into the air. And it descended into McClure's



Half way up the pitch Fullwood ran, then he released the ball with all his might. The red sphere sped through the air. Dazed, Price saw it coming, but he had no chance to avoid it. Crack! It hit him clean on the temple, and he reeled to the ground. (See Chapter 6).

lap. He leapt to his feet, gasping and yelling. Hot tea is not exactly comfortable in a fellow's lap.

Handforth looked round.

"Careless ass!" he said. "I've never known such clumsy bounders! Always spilling something——"

"You did it, you—you——"

"I did it?" repeated Handforth. "Well, I like that!"

"Didn't you crash your fist down on the table?" yelled McClure. "Look at my trucks! Ruined! And I'm soaked——"

"Oh, don't make a fuss!" said Handforth impatiently. "What's a little drop of tea, anyway? I've got an idea! It just came to me, you know. A ripping, terrific wheeze to get Fullwood chucked off his perch!"

"What about my trousers——"

"Blow your trousers!" roared Handforth. "This idea of mine is to kidnap Fullwood in the middle of the night. See? Then we'll cart him off into an old barn somewhere near."

"But what's the idea of doing that?" asked Church.

"The idea?" repeated Handforth. "You dense fathead! Once we've done that we'll put it to him plainly. If he agrees to resign, we'll let him off. But if he refuses we'll keep him a prisoner!"

"For weeks?"

"Yes, if necessary," said Handforth grimly. "We'll keep the rotter locked up until he gives in!"

"That's no good!" said Church. "It couldn't be done. The police would be after him, and then we should get it in the neck. The idea wouldn't work, Handy. Better think of something else."

Handforth glared.

"Everything I say is the same!" he roared. "All you can do is to grumble at it! Nothing but bickering and growling from morning till night! I'm fed up with it! You're both going out of this study now!"

"Look here, Handy," said Church hastily. "Be sensible! That wheeze of yours may be all right, but it needs thinking over, and—and——"

"I don't want to hear any more!" bellowed Handforth. "Out you go! Understand? Will you go out quietly, or shall I hurl you out on your necks?"

It was a most difficult position.

If the juniors departed of their own accord, Handforth would say that they had deserted him when he needed them most. And if they waited until he tried to pitch them out, there would be a most unholy commotion. When Handforth was in one of these moods, he was a terror.

They tried to argue, but it was useless. He shouted all the more. And he was just in the middle of a choice flow of eloquence — delivered with foghorn-like power—when the study door opened, and Ralph Leslie Fullwood himself appeared.

Handforth was so surprised that he dried up.

"What's all this?" asked Fullwood curtly.

"Speaking to me?" gulped Handforth, when he found his voice.

"Yes, I am!"

"You swindling rotter!" roared Handforth. "I was waiting for you to come along! I'm going to kidnap you—I—I mean, I'm going to do something to make you resign the captaincy——"

"That's enough," interrupted Fullwood sourly. "Your voice is filling the whole junior passage. I don't like it."

Handforth clutched at the table.

"You—you don't like it?" he repeated dazedly.

"No, I don't," said Fullwood. "And you've got to stop it at once. I don't allow these uncouth noises to go on."

"You don't allow 'em?" said Handforth, in a faint whisper.

"No," went on Fullwood. "The way you go on is disgraceful, and you've got to stop this kind of thing. I'm captain of the Remove, and I'm going to put a finish to your nonsense, my lad!"

Handforth thought he was dreaming for a moment.

Fullwood—the cad—the rotter! Talking to him like this! And with such a supercilious, superior air, too! Handforth recovered himself with a jerk, and he turned his sleeves up.

"By George!" he said thickly.

"You'd better not——"

Crash!

Handy's fist thudded violently into Fullwood's face.

"Yaroooooh!" bellowed Fullwood wildly. "Help! Help!"

"And perhaps you don't allow this?" yelled Handforth.

Biff!

"Yow-ow-yow!" shrieked Fullwood, as

he got another fearful swipe. "You madman! Help! Get away, confound you! Don't touch me again, you fool——"

"Hallo! Hallo! What's this?"

Kenmore of the Sixth stood in the doorway.

"Mind your own business!" shouted Handforth. "I'm just giving this worm something to be going on with——"

"Help!" groaned Fullwood. "He's half killing me, Kenmore! I was just doin' my duty as Form-skipper, too!"

Kenmore nodded.

"I can quite understand," he said grimly. "I know what a young hooligan this Handforth is!"

"Hooligan?" repeated Handforth thickly.

"Yes!" snapped Kenmore. "You're a confounded young bully! If I ever catch you touching Fullwood again, I'll take you straight before the Head for a flogging! As it is, you'll write me a thousand lines!"

Handforth staggered.

"You're mad!" he gasped. "I won't do anything of the sort——"

"And if I have any further lip I'll double the impot!" interrupted Kenmore. "Don't forget that I'm a prefect, and if this matter gets reported to the headmaster, he's bound to support me!"

Handforth tried to speak, but couldn't.

"I shall expect those lines to-morrow by dinner-time," said Kenmore. "If they're not ready I'll give you another five hundred!"

He turned on his heel and walked away—Fullwood having already passed out into the passage. And as Handforth stared glassily out he saw a twisted kind of smile on Fullwood's face—a malicious sneer.

The captain of the Remove was protected! His friendship with Kenmore of the Sixth made it impossible for the other juniors to touch him.

Certainly, something had to be done!

CHAPTER 11.

Keeping it Up!

"ANYHOW, it gave the cad somethin' to think about," said Fullwood viciously. "The confounded rotter! One of these days I'll think of somethin' that will settle him for good an' all!"

"He's made a nasty mess of your face——"

"By gad!" snapped Fullwood, looking at himself in the mirror. "I'm just about tired of him. He thinks he's everybody because he's got fists like sledge-hammers. But there are ways an' means."

Fullwood was in Study A, with Gulliver and Bell.

They had been thoroughly enjoying themselves for the last day or two.

It seemed, however, that the game couldn't go on for ever.

"Of course, the chaps will soon tumble to the truth," remarked Bell. "It's a bit of a pity, because we're all right as long as you are captain. But if Nipper gets the job back——"

"He won't get it back," said Fullwood.

"How do you know?"

"I do know," exclaimed Fullwood. "I'm not going to resign——"

"Perhaps not," said Gulliver. "But there'll be another election soon, an' you won't get many votes, my son. It's no good blinkin' at the facts. Unless you chuck money about, the rotters won't vote for you."

"We'll see," growled Fullwood.

"It was all right as long as you had plenty of cash," said Bell. "But we're all broke now. I haven't got more than five bob, an' I believe you're stoney. How can you expect to keep the giddy game goin'? All the chaps still think that you've come into a fortune—but they won't think it long, when they see that you ain't worth a couple of beans!"

Fullwood scowled.

"Yes, an' I had over a hundred quid!" he exclaimed bitterly. "Did you ever know such rotten luck?"

Fullwood realised that it was only because he flung money about that he was still skipper. The moment the juniors found he had no cash they would desert him.

There was only one thing to be done—he must go on pretending he was rich!

The juniors would have to believe that the fortune was genuine. And the cunning Fullwood already had a deep scheme in his mind.

"Yes, we've got to keep it up!" said Fullwood. "Do you think I'm goin' to knuckle' under now—just when I've got the reins in my hands? Not likely! Nipper's not goin' to shove me out!"

"It's all very well to talk like that," said Gulliver. "But you seem to forget that the whole success of the thing depends upon you havin' pots of money. When you were elected you did have pots. But that money was all dud, an' now——"

"Don't keep harpin' on it," snapped Fullwood. "I know it as well as you do! It was just a piece of rotten luck—filthy luck! Of course, I expect I shall get the reward all right, but it'll be sent to my pater to keep for me. An' that's a fat lot of good, ain't it?"

"Can't you get your pater to send it down?"

Fullwood sniffed.

"Don't be a fool!" he said. "Do you think my pater's goin' to send me a hundred quid? No—that money's gone, so we can't reckon on it. But if we can't have genuine money, we'll try a bit of wanglin'."

"Wanglin'?"

"Yes!"

"But I don't see——"

"Of course you don't see," interrupted Fullwood. "The worst of you chaps is that you can't use your giddy brains. I'm captain of the Remove, an' if the truth gets out that I haven't come into any fortune—an' that I'm really broke—well, the rotters will desert me like rats desert a sinkin' ship. An' it'll be all up with our little game!"

"Is it worth it?" asked Bell. "After all, bein' skipper is a beastly bother——"

"I don't care about that!" said Fullwood, his eyes glittering. "It's fine to be in a position of power—to know that I'm above all others! An' I'm not goin' to give it up."

"But you can't distribute any more cash," persisted Gulliver. "An' some of the fellows are already talkin', you know."

"They can't talk much," replied Fullwood. "They don't know anythin' about that pendant, or the reward. They still think I came into a fortune——"

"They thought so at one time, but they're gettin' a bit doubtful now," said Bell. "You haven't splashed any money about for a couple of days, an' the chaps are wonderin' why you've eased up."

Fullwood nodded.

"I know it!" he said grimly. "Well, I've been fixin' things up. I've arranged with a chap I know in Bannin'ton. He's a pal of one of the bookies, an' quite a decent sort in his way. Used to be an actor, I think. Anyhow, I've fixed it up with him."

Gulliver and Bell stared.

"What have you fixed up?" asked Gulliver.

"Never mind now—you'll find out before long," said Fullwood. "But you can take it from me that my position will be made strong enough."

The three "nuts" continued talking, and when they emerged from their study shortly afterwards, they were all looking rather pleased with themselves. They lounged out into the lobby, and then made their way out into the Triangle.

The day was fine, and the sun was shining warmly. The three "nuts" took up their position near the Ancient House steps.

"Better stick round here somewhere," murmured Fullwood. "He's bound to spot us then. An' besides, the other chaps will be near by, too. An' don't you talk—leave it all to me."

"All right—we'll keep mum," said Bell.

They waited, and while they stood there chatting, Teddy Long came sidling up, looking careless.

"Hallo, you chaps?" he exclaimed.

"You can clear off, you little worm!" snapped Fullwood.

"Oh, really!" protested Teddy Long. "I—I was just going to ask you if I could borrow five or ten bob——"

"You can't!"

"But—but I'm awfully hard up!" said Teddy. "Only five bob, don't you know. I'll pay you back on Saturday——"

"No need for that!" said Fullwood kindly.

"Oh, thanks awfully——"

"Because you'll have nothin' to pay back!" went on Fullwood. "I'm not lendin' you any more money, my lad! Clear off while you're safe. Another word, an' you'll get a clip on the ear!"

Teddy Long looked somewhat indignant.

"You won't lend me anything?" he demanded.

"No!"

"Not even five bob, and you're simply rollin' in tin!" exclaimed Long. "All right—don't you jolly well come to me for any more votes! Yah! I wouldn't have voted for you last time if I'd thought you'd turn on me like this!"

"There you are!" muttered Bell. "They'll all be like that!"

Fullwood scowled darkly.

"All right—under the circumstances, I'll spring somethin', Long!" he said, putting his hand to his pocket. "Here you are!"

Teddy Long came over eagerly. Fullwood withdrew his hand, and then suddenly made a dive forward, and grabbed Teddy by the back of his jacket. The sneak of the Remove was taken by surprise.

"I said I'll spring somethin'—an' now you'll get it!" growled Fullwood. "This is just to show you that you can't cheek your Form captain an' get away with it. How's that?"

Fullwood twisted Teddy Long's arm with vicious enjoyment.

"Yow — ow — yarooh!" howled Long madly.

He wasn't very much hurt, but Teddy believed in yelling first. He had always found that the greater the noise he made, the less the punishment. Fellows who took pain without yelling, generally got a double dose.

"Stop that confounded row!" snarled Fullwood.

"Ow—yow!"

Instead of stopping it, Long yelled louder than ever. And it so happened that Archie Glenthorne was strolling out through the lobby at that moment. He paused, and adjusted his monocle. From this position he could see the cause of the yells of agony.

"Gadzooks!" exclaimed Archie. "I mean to say, it appears that some poor chappie is in the final throes! Death cries, and all that kind of rot! This is simply fearful—absolutely!"

Archie looked about him, but all was blank.

"The fearsome sounds appear to be waltzing around from the offing!" murmured Archie. "What-ho! What-ho! Well, this is really poisonous! Dash it all! A chappie has simply got to shove himself forward. There's nothing else for it, Archie, as it were, is largely required!"

He had just caught a glimpse of Teddy Long out on the steps. And he could see at once that Teddy was in the grasp of Fullwood. Archie detested seeing anyone being bullied. And now he strode forward, squared his shoulders, and grasped his cane more firmly.

He stalked out into the open.

"Dash it all!" he exclaimed. "Kindly cease the rough stuff, laddie!"

Fullwood glared at him.

"Talkin' to me?" he snapped.

"Absolutely!"

"Then you can fry your face!"

"I mean to say, what?" ejaculated Archie. "Fry my face? Well, really, how absolutely prepos! My dear old thing, it couldn't be done. Absolutely not! Moreover, I gather that the old dial is somewhat more handsome in its present condish. But we are straying from the point, old dear. What, may I ask, is the idea of putting it across this poor chappie?"

"He's—he's twisted my arm, Glenthorne!" wailed Long.

"So, as it were, I observe!" replied Archie. "I must request you, you frightful blighter, to chuck it! Absolutely!"

"Mind your own business!"

"Well, there you are!" said Archie. "There, to be absolutely exact, you jolly well are! This thing is my business—absolutely! And I must broadcast the information that unless you unhand the chappie, I shall sail in with considerable chunks of the old wrath!"

"You don't know what you're talkin' about!" snapped Fullwood. "You'd better clear off while you're safe, you soft fool!"

"As a matter of fact, old scream, I consider that I'm most dashed safe as it is," said Archie. "In other words, you fearsome bounder, I don't care a snap of the jolly old digits for the three of you. That, as it were, can be churned round in your bally old gear boxes! And if you don't like it, you can do something else. Absolutely! And I must demand the release of this chappie without delay!"

Fullwood released Teddy Long abruptly.

"Look here, Glenthorne, I'm not standin' any rot from you!" snapped Fullwood, pushing up against Archie. "I wouldn't like to spoil that elegant nose of yours, but I may be compelled to. How would you like to have it twisted?"

Archie shuddered.

"The 'sensash' would probably be most foul!" he observed. "But there is no fear of such a disaster taking place. Absolutely not! For you, my dear old buck, I have nothing but the vilest contempt. Absolutely! The fact of the matter is, you need ticking off. A chappie who bullies

another chappie is really a most frightful ruffian. And that, as it were, is that!"

Archie deliberately snapped his fingers in Fullwood's face, and strolled elegantly away. He could see that he had done all that was demanded of him, and he had not the slightest fear that Fullwood would attempt to molest him. Fullwood only went for these fellows who were his inferior in strength.

Ralph Leslie would probably have said a few things, but just at that moment an elderly gentleman appeared in the gateway. Fullwood caught sight of him at once, and he gave his chums a significant glance.

"Here he is!" he muttered. "This is him!"

CHAPTER 12.

Rolling in It!

REGINALD PITT and Jack Grey and De Valerie were over by the main gates, and they were chatting together—having finished a little conversation with Mr. Cuttle, the school porter. And then, before they could leave, a stranger appeared.

The stranger came in from outside—a smallish man, elderly, attired in a frock-coat and top hat. He had neat little side whiskers, and looked eminently respectable. He paused to adjust his glasses.

"H'm! Quite so—quite so!" he said. "This, no doubt, is St. Frank's College! Yes, yes! I must inquire of those young gentlemen."

He approached the juniors, and beamed upon them.

"Splendid!" he exclaimed. "This is indeed fortunate. Can you kindly tell me, my boys, where I can find a young gentleman of the name of Master Ralph Fullwood?"

Pitt shook his head.

"There's no young gentleman here named that, sir."

"No?" repeated the stranger. "That is most remarkable! I thought——"

"There's a fellow named Ralph Leslie Fullwood, of course," went on Pitt. "But I don't think he can be described as a young gentleman."

The other juniors grinned, and the old gentleman chuckled.

"Just one of your little jokes, eh?" he said. "Quite so! I was a boy myself once! Well, perhaps you will be good enough to tell me where I can find Master Fullwood?"

"You needn't go far, sir," said De Valerie. "Fullwood's lounging over by the Ancient House now—there he is, on the steps."

The stranger peered across the Triangle, and nodded.

"Ah, yes—yes!" he exclaimed. "I will go to Master Fullwood at once. A remarkably fortunate young gentleman, indeed! I should say, the most fortunate young gentleman I have ever come in contact with."

"Fortunate?" asked Pitt. "Why?"

The old gentleman looked surprised.

"But, surely, you know! Surely, Master Fullwood has not kept his good fortune a secret? I was under the impression that he had informed his schoolfellows——"

"About his inheriting a lot of money?" asked De Valerie.

"To be sure!" said the stranger. "Then he has told you. I thought so—I certainly thought so! You see, I am Mr. Grimshaw, of the firm of Hollingwell & Grimshaw, of Lincoln's Inn."

"Oh, you are a solicitor, sir?"

"Yes, my boys—yes," replied Mr. Grimshaw. "Quite so. Yes, Master Fullwood is an extremely fortunate young gentleman. Not many boys of his age have money to spend as he has. Not merely a few pounds—a few hundred pounds. The lad has thousands at his disposal!"

"He said something like that, sir," said De Valerie.

"Yes. I was quite certain that he would speak on the matter," said Mr. Grimshaw. "However, it is none of my business to remain here gossiping. Thank you, my boys—thank you!"

He bowed, and proceeded on his way. And he found Fullwood & Co. waiting against the Ancient House steps. A few other fellows were in the near vicinity, including Handforth & Co.

Handforth himself was pushing up his sleeves in a suggestive manner. It may have been mere force of habit, but he was certainly looking very closely in Fullwood's direction.

And then Mr. Grimshaw joined the three "nuts."

"Ah, Master Ralph!" he exclaimed. "I

am very pleased to see you looking so well!"

"Master Ralph won't look so well when I've done with him!" said Handforth in a whisper—which could have been heard across the Triangle. "Who's this queer-looking old buffer? His nose looks a bit suspicious! I'll bet he doesn't know what prohibition is!"

"Shush, you ass!"

The solicitor looked round, frowning.

"There is apparently some very rude boy here," he said severely. "But I will take no notice—I cannot waste time. To tell you the truth, Master Ralph, I must hurry away as quickly as possible."

"That's all right," said Fullwood easily. "I suppose you really came down about the money?"

"Precisely, Master Ralph."

"Did you bring the cash?"

"Yes, and it is here!" exclaimed the solicitor, opening his bag. "Oh, and by the way, I have taken the liberty, Master Ralph, of opening an account for you at one of the banks in Bannington. I thought it might be handy for you to have a banking account, in case you have reason to make any large payments. A cheque is so much better than cash!"

Fullwood nodded.

"Yes, I quite understand," he said. "It was a pretty good idea of yours, Mr. Grimshaw. What's that? Oh, the cheque-book? All right. And what about the notes? Got them?"

"I have here a small bundle to be going on with, Master Ralph," said the solicitor.

He handed over a fat sheaf of currency notes which were held together by an elastic band.

Fullwood carelessly ran his finger over them.

"How many here?" he asked.

"Two hundred, Master Ralph," said Mr. Grimshaw. "I trust that will be sufficient for your immediate needs."

"Well, I think so—but there's no need for us to keep talkin' out here," said Fullwood. "These inquisitive nosey-parkers can't mind their own business! Come inside, Mr. Grimshaw."

"Only for a moment, Master Ralph—only for a moment!" said the solicitor, consulting his watch. "I really cannot stay long."

They passed inside, and the juniors looked at one another somewhat blankly. They were very surprised.

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Owen, major. "I was beginning to doubt it, you know! But there's no spoof about the thing, after all!"

"No fear!" said Canham. "Did you see that? Two hundred quid notes! Lucky bounder! I wish I had twenty!"

"Rather!"

"It's queer how the rotters always get the best of it!"

"I wonder if it's genuine?" said Pitt, thoughtfully.

"It must be!" said Grey. "We saw the notes—a big bundle."

"They looked like notes, anyhow," replied Pitt cautiously. "But, after all, there's no reason why we should interest ourselves in the matter. Blow Fullwood! And blow his money! I wouldn't touch either with a barge pole!"

But a large number of juniors were not so particular.

"My hat!" exclaimed Merrell, his eyes gleaming. "Fully's got two hundred quid! And a banking account—and thousands and thousands! We shall jolly well have to look alive, or we shall be left out!"

"Plenty of time," said Marriott. "Fully's not a bad sort. He'll shell out some cash if we want it."

"If we want it!" said Noys. "There's no 'if' in it."

They all waited eagerly for further developments.

And it was only a short time before the whole Remove was buzzing with the news that Ralph Leslie Fullwood was fairly rolling in cash. He had two hundred pounds in cold money, and thousands more in the bank, with a local account of his own!

All who had doubted the story of Fullwood's riches were now convinced.

And, in the meantime, while this discussion was going on, Mr. Grimshaw was in Fullwood's study, in the Remove passage. As soon as the door closed behind them, Fullwood grabbed the visitor's hand.

"Jolly good, Sam!" he said. "I didn't think you could do it so well!"

"It's nothing to me!" grinned the visitor lightly. "I've acted all sorts of parts in my time. But still, I think I spoofed the young idiots pretty well, didn't I? And it was the right stuff?"

"Rather!" said Gulliver. "It was marvellous!"

"You looked like an old solicitor to the life!" declared Fullwood. "Of course, you look like him now—but you spoke like one, too. Well, you'd better shift off as soon as you can."

Mr. Grimshaw nodded.

"You bet!" he agreed. "I was a bit of a mug to come in at all. If any of the masters collar me, it might be blamed awkward. So I think I'd better hook it while I've got the chance. See you in Bannington some time, I suppose?"

"Of course," said Fullwood.

"Just one minute," said the visitor. "What's the idea of this silly business? You coming into a fortune, and me handing you bundles of notes—which are really pieces of blank paper? What's the big idea?"

"Just a little strategy, Sam," grinned Fullwood. "You see, I want to spoof the chaps over somethin', an' I'm doin' it, too. It would have been very different without you—but now I'm all right."

"Some of your little tricks, eh?" said Mr. Grimshaw, grinning. "All right, I won't ask any more questions. No time. So-long, laddies!"

The supposed solicitor made his way out down the passages, and as he crossed the Triangle his progress was followed by many eyes. And at last he vanished. And the juniors who were out in the open looked after him enviously.

"I wish a blessed solicitor would come for me!" said Armstrong. "I'd like to have a fortune—and bundles of notes, and banking accounts! Just fancy a cad like Fullwood having such luck."

"Disgusting!" said Doyle.

All the fellows were discussing the situation. They took it for granted that everything was quite straight and above board. At first, perhaps, a few fellows had been rather suspicious. They had suspected Ralph Leslie of spoofing them. But this latest development took away all doubts.

Not quite all, however.

For I was by no means convinced.

I had heard the facts—and I caught a glimpse of Mr. Grimshaw as he was leaving the Triangle. There was something about the man that seemed slightly familiar. And I was quite sure that his aged walk was assumed. I came to the conclusion that the man was disguised.

But, unfortunately, I was not able to get a close-up view of him. In spite of this, however, I felt certain that there was something fishy about this whole business.

"If Fullwood thinks he can spoof me, he's made a mistake," I said grimly. "All this theatrical business doesn't go down."

"What theatrical business?" asked Watson.

"Why, that solicitor fellow coming here with all his talk about banking accounts, and the bundle of notes——"

"But some of the chaps saw the notes," said Watson.

"They were intended to see," I said. "If this thing had been absolutely straight, the solicitor would have gone right in to Fullwood; and, besides that, he would have seen the Housemaster, too. No, my sons, this is simply a part of Fullwood's plan to hoodwink the Remove."

"But why should he do it?" asked Watson.

I smiled.

"For the simple reason that he wants to pose as a big pot," I said. "By doing that he'll make his position more secure. He'll make the chaps kowtow to him, and he won't be in such danger of losing their votes. The whole thing's obvious."

"Dear old boy, I believe you're right!" said Sir Montie. "I do, really!"

"I know it!" I said firmly. "And, what's more, I'm going to look into the whole affair. I'll say nothing—but I'll be watching!"

CHAPTER 13.

Getting Serious!

ENOCH SNIPE insinuated himself through the doorway of Study A. Snipe was a most peculiar fellow. He seemed to cringe his way through life. Every time a fellow spoke to him, he cringed back as though he were afraid of something. And now he blinked in at Study A, and contorted his face into what he thought was a smile.

"Oh, I—I am so sorry to interrupt——" he began.

"Good!" said Fullwood. "Shut the door after you!"

"I was wondering——"

"Wonder outside!"

"Please let me speak!" said Snipe, standing there and rubbing his hands together. "Do—do you think you could convenience me with a slight loan? Only for a temporary period, let me hasten to say——"

"You're wasting your breath, and if you want to wash your hands, use some water!" interrupted Fullwood. "I'm not lending any cash this evenin'?"

Snipe stepped foward eagerly.

"Only—only a matter of a few shillings," he exclaimed. "I will do anything I can in return. I know you have plenty of money, because I saw the gentleman hand you a great amount of notes."

"You see too much!" said Fullwood grimly. "An' it doesn't matter whether I've got two hundred notes or two thousand! I don't choose to lend you any. But if you come some other time I might be in a different frame of mind. Now you can scoot!"

"Oh, really! I thought——"

"Buzz off!" roared Fullwood.

"But I—I——"

Fullwood took one step towards the door, and Enoch Snipe uttered a little squeal and vanished. Fullwood saw that he completely disappeared down the passage, and then he came back.

"Little worm!" he said. "That chap gets on my nerves. Long's bad enough, but Snipe is like one of those bally creepy, crawly things."

Gulliver and Bell looked at their leader curiously.

"Well, what about the great wheeze?" asked Gulliver.

"Eh?"

"It doesn't seem to be working very well."

"What do you mean?" asked Fullwood.

"Well, you've just had an example of it," said Gulliver. "It's no good pretendin' to have a lot of money—it's worse than havin' nothin'. If you've got nothin', fellows won't come round tryin' to borrow."

"Well?"

"But by makin' out you're all over quids—by showin' the chaps that spoof packet of notes—you simply make them think you're rollin' in tin," went on Gulliver. "Snipe thought you had lots—that's why he came."

Fullwood nodded.

"Yes, I admit that's a drawback," he said. "There might be one or two others comin' for loans, an' I shall have to make some excuse. I needn't lend any cash unless I choose to. An', anyhow, everybody believes that I'm wallowin' in filthy lucre."

"An' yet, as a matter of fact, you're broke?" asked Bell.

"Not quite. I've got about fifteen bob——"

"By gad!" said Gulliver. "Fifteen bob! An' you've made the chaps believe that you've got two hundred quid! I'm blessed if I can see the reason for it. It's all so useless."

"Don't be so dashed impatient!" snapped Fullwood. "You don't know what the scheme is yet. Of course, I've got to have some money—plenty of money. Then I can flash it about, and the chaps will never know that that package was a spoof one."

"It's all very well to say you must have money, and plenty of it," said Bell, "but where's it comin' from? You can't grab money out of the air, I suppose? You're not a wizard!"

"There are other methods of gettin' it easy," said Fullwood. "I've thought it all out—I've got it all planned. An' I've got a scheme that absolutely can't fail. You can take it from me that it's absolutely a dead certainty. An' on Saturday I shall have tons of money."

"It seems jolly decent," said Bell, unconvinced. "But I've heard of your schemes before——"

"Oh, don't be so confoundedly clever!" snapped Fullwood. "I wasn't goin' to tell you about it, but I think I will. You've got to keep mum, because if a word gets out we shall be sacked."

Gulliver and Bell looked startled.

"Is it—is it somethin' shady?" asked Bell quickly.

"No, of course not," said Fullwood. "Some silly snobs might call it shady, but there's nothin' in it at all. Look here!"

He took a key from his pocket, went over to the desk and unlocked it. And from the desk he took a neat little cash-box. He unlocked this, too. And there, inside, were a number of pound and ten-shilling notes and quite a lot of silver."

"There's eighteen quid there!" said Fullwood. "To be exact, eighteen pounds, three an' six."

"Yes," gasped Gulliver, "but it's not yours!"

"I know it isn't," said Fullwood calmly. "It's the funds of the Remove Sports Club, and I'm in charge of it."

"Yes, I know!" panted Bell. "But—but you can't touch that!"

"Why can't I?"

"It—it would be criminal!" said Bell, in a scared voice. "I've heard of other chaps takin' club funds, an' all that sort of thing, an' they always came a fearful cropper."

"Yes, if you're found out," sneered Fullwood. "I mean to borrow these funds—an' I'll put every quid back, an' have about four times as much for myself."

Gulliver and Bell were looking rather scared.

"But—but you can't do it!" protested Gulliver. "It wouldn't be right, Fully. Why, it would mean the sack for all of us——"

"Rot!" put in Fullwood. "It would mean the sack for me, but you chaps wouldn't suffer. You can't be blamed for anythin' I do. Bein' skipper of the Remove, I've got charge of these funds. That's one advantage of bein' captain."

"Look here, old man, don't touch it!" urged Gulliver earnestly. "Goodness knows, I'm not squeamish. But don't touch it! If anythin' goes wrong, an' you can't put it back, you'll get in a shockin' mess!"

Fullwood brushed him aside.

"Don't talk piffle!" he said curtly. "I'm takin' a chance, I'll admit; but as I'm standin' the racket, why should you worry? An' this thing is practically a dead certainty. It'll be absolutely a cinch. I can put the club funds back, and line my own pocket at the same time."

"But how?" asked Bell.

"At Helmford—on Saturday afternoon."

"You—you mean the races?"

"Of course!" said Fullwood. "You can't get easy money any other way!"

"But—but it's mad!" shouted Gulliver. "To take the club funds, an' to put all the money on horses——"

"Don't yell, you fool!" snapped Fullwood. "Do you want the whole passage to hear? I wish I hadn't told you now. I might have known what a pair of weak-kneed idiots you are!"

But Gulliver and Bell were genuinely alarmed.

"I—I didn't mean to shout," said Gulliver. "But I'm worried, Fully! This thing might end horribly for you——"

"Don't be an idiot!" snarled Fullwood, exasperated. "There's every chance that I shall win the lot. An' if the worse comes to the worst, I'm bound to get it back—even if I shove money on four or five losers! I'm bound to get the original capital back."

"Well, it's almost certain, anyway!" admitted Bell.

"Then what's the need to worry?" demanded Fullwood. "An' if I lose every giddy penny—well, I shan't worry even then."

"But the funds will be gone, you ass!"

"Exactly," said Fullwood calmly. "An' then I shall fake up a burglary, an' make out that thieves took the club funds, an' all my cash as well. See? That'll account for me havin' no money—an' I can't be blamed for what burglars do. In fact, it'll be covered by insurance—the whole school is insured—and I shall click in that way!"

Gulliver and Bell felt somewhat calmer. Fullwood's cool assurance was rather wonderful. He had absolute confidence, and he seemed to brush aside difficulties as though they never existed.

"I've looked at it from every point, an' it's all settled," went on Fullwood. "But there's no reason to fear the worst, because I shall win. There's no question about it. I've got to win. Have you been studyin' the papers lately?"

"Yes, every day," said Gulliver.

"Have you noticed the second favourites?" asked Fullwood keenly.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you can always tell from the bettin' forecast," said Fullwood. "An' you can pick out the second favourite of each race without any trouble. Have you been watchin' 'em?"

"Yes, they've been winnin'."

"Every day!" said Fullwood. "Sometimes two or three in a day, but always one. I've watched it for weeks, an' it's never failed. Not on a single day has it gone wrong!"

"But what's the idea?"

"Why, when we go to Helmford Races on Saturday, I'm going to work on a system," said Fullwood confidently. "It's a system that can't fail. I must win—absolutely must!"

Gulliver and Bell began to get excited.

"You mean on the second favourites?" asked Bell.

"Yes, of course," said Fullwood. "We'll get there in plenty of time for the first race. We'll back to win every time. On the first race we'll shove ten bob to win on the second favourite. If that goes down, we'll double up on the next race."

"Double up?"

"You know what that means, you ass!" said Fullwood impatiently. "I'll double the stake. That is, I'll put a pound to win on the second race. If that goes down, I'll put two pounds to win—an' then four pounds to win. If the two-quid horse doesn't come home, the four-quid one is bound to! An' think what it'll mean if it's a decent price—say six to one. That'll be twenty-four pounds clear winnin's. An' we've still got some races left."

"But are you sure it'll work?"

"Sure! I'm dead certain of it!" said Fullwood. "Don't I keep tellin' you that it can't go wrong? It's quite likely that we shall lose until we've got eight pounds on a single horse. An' it might come in at seven to one!"

"Phew!" whistled Gulliver. "That would mean over fifty quid clear winnin's, you know!"

"Of course it would!" grinned Fullwood. "That's just the beauty of it. I tell you, I can make a fortune like this! All I've got to do is to put some money aside after this meetin', an' then go even heavier on the next. I can keep us all supplied with tons of cash through the whole giddy term."

"By jingo!" breathed Bell. "I believe you're right! I remember somebody talkin' about that second favourite stunt! Some chap in Bannin'ton made two hundred quid at one meetin'!"

"Of course!" said Fullwood. "It's easy. It's money for nothin'! There's no risk at all in takin' these club funds—absolutely none for you, an' precious little for me. An' not a soul will know that I haven't really got a fortune behind me. It's the greatest thing that ever worked!"

And Gulliver and Bell, greatly impressed, were at last beginning to realise that Fullwood was on what they term a good egg.

But all eggs look alike on the outside.

The "nuts" of the Remove would have to be very careful that this particular egg did not turn out to be decidedly rotten.

CHAPTER 14.

Real Cricket!

"IT'S nearly two o'clock," announced Reggie Pitt, glancing at his watch. "It's time those Eastwold chaps were here."

It was Saturday afternoon. Dinner was over, and many of the juniors were enjoying the sunny warmth of the Triangle.

"I expect they'll be here in a minute," I said. "In fact, this looks like them!"

While Pitt and I were chatting in the Triangle, a number of cyclists appeared in the gateway.

"Here they are!" exclaimed Tommy Watson. "Good! Well on time, and we shall be able to start before two. That'll leave us a nice long evening afterwards. They look a decent crowd."

Dalton and his men came forward, and I went to meet them. But before I could even say a word, a shout came from the Ancient House steps.

Fullwood & Co. had just come out, and they were in Norfolks and tweed caps, evidently bent on cycling. As a matter of fact, they were just about to start for Helmford, and they would have to put a hustle on to get there in time.

But Fullwood scowled as he saw the visitors.

"Who told those cads to come here?" he snapped.

"Goodness knows!" said Bell. "They're that rotten set who refused to finish the game earlier in the week."

Fullwood strode forward.

"You chaps can clear out!" he shouted. "You're not wanted here."

I turned.

"What's that, Fullwood?" I asked sharply.

"I wasn't talkin' to you!" retorted Fullwood, as he came striding down. "These young blackguards are not wanted——"

"You—you rotter!" shouted Dalton hotly. "How you've got the nerve to stand there and call us blackguards, I don't know. Why, it was you and your pals who acted like cads——"

"That's enough!" snapped Fullwood curtly. "I'm the captain of the Remove, and I don't allow any Eastwold juniors here. The sooner you clear out, the better. Understand?"

Dalton looked at me.

"It's all right. I'm sorry this has hap-

pened," I said quietly. "But I asked you to come, Dalton, and you'll stay. We've fixed it all up, and the full Remove Eleven is all ready to give you a game."

"Oh, is it?" snapped Fullwood harshly. "Who said so?"

"I did!"

"And what right have you got to say anythin'?" raved Fullwood. "You're nobody! You've got no more say than a kid like Long! I'm skipper, an' if I don't choose to allow this match, it won't be played!"

"It will be played!" I said grimly. "I don't want to do anything drastic, Fullwood, but if you persist in this caddish attitude——"

"Are you callin' me a cad?" roared Fullwood.

"Yes."

"Then take that!" he thundered.

Crash!

Fullwood staggered back, howling, and sat down in the Triangle with fearful force. He had certainly invited me to take something, but before he could even get his fist up, my own was planted fairly between his eyes. My blood was up, and I put some strength behind that blow.

"That, as it were, is somewhat priceless!" observed Archie Glenthorne, strolling up. "What-ho! The mighty skipper chappie grovels! Of course, he's been fairly yelping for a large dose for some time. Absolutely!"

Fullwood scrambled up, breathing hoarsely.

"You'll pay for that!" he snarled. "I'll show you who's master in the Remove! I'm not goin' to allow these dirty cads to play! Understand? I'm not goin' to let this filthy set of——"

"Fullwood!"

The cad of the Remove gulped and turned. It came as a great surprise to him to find that Nelson Lee was just behind him. And Nelson Lee was looking very stern and severe.

"Just—just a little argument, sir," said Fullwood sullenly.

"I think not!" said Nelson Lee. "To whom were you referring when you used the terms 'dirty cads' and 'filthy set'?"

"I—I didn't say that, sir——"

"How dare you, Fullwood?" asked Lee grimly. "You shouted the words so that everybody in the Triangle could hear them."

"He was referring to us, sir," said Dalton.

"These fellows are from Eastwold College, sir!" I explained. "I asked them to come over for a match this afternoon. But Fullwood's the junior skipper, and he objects."

"Oh, indeed," said Nelson Lee. "What cause have you for objecting, Fullwood?"

"They're a rotten crowd, sir——"

"If you dare to speak that way in my presence again, Fullwood, I will take you indoors and flog you!" exclaimed the Housemaster-detective. "I have heard a few rumours concerning a game you played with Eastwold College earlier this week. I will not ask for any particulars, but I think I am safe in saying that any faults during that game were entirely on your side."

"They were, sir," said Dalton promptly.

"I am very pleased to welcome you to St. Frank's, boys," said Nelson Lee, turning to the Eastwold juniors. "You may certainly play this match, and I hope you will not take too much notice of this insolent young fool!"

"Thank you, sir," said Dalton gladly.

The other Eastwold fellows were equally pleased. Fullwood stood there, clenching and unclenching his fists, and hardly able to contain himself.

"As for you, Fullwood, I am ashamed that one of my boys should make such a disagreeable exhibition of himself," went on Nelson Lee coldly. "Unless you can conduct the affairs of the Remove in a much better way, I shall take matters into my own hands, and deprive you of the captaincy. You will write me one thousand lines for insolence and disgraceful behaviour. You may go."

"But I—I——"

"You may go!" repeated Lee sternly.

Fullwood crawled away—utterly squashed It was certainly not a very pleasant position for a Form captain to be in. And as soon as he had gone, Nelson Lee turned to the visitors, and all his frowns vanished. He made them very welcome, and promised to come and have a look at the match itself.

"My hat!" said Dalton, as he went towards Little Side. "And we thought all the St. Frank's chaps were the same. We didn't know there were any fellows like you about."

"It is not wise to judge by first appear-

ances," I smiled. "Fullwood and his set are—well, you can judge what they are by what you've seen. There's no need for me to say much."

"No—we can size them up all right," said Dalton.

"And now, you've got to forget that rotten crowd and enter into this game for all you're worth," I went on. "We're rather out of form, because we've had practically no practice. Still, we'll do our best to whack you."

"Good!" said Dalton. "I'm beginning to like St. Frank's tremendously."

"You mustn't think any school can be composed of rotters alone," I said. "Even in the worst place you'll find a number of very decent chaps. Here, the majority are splendid. Fullwood & Co. are only a minority."

By now we had reached Little Side, and before very long both teams were ready. I tossed up with Dalton and lost. The Eastwold skipper naturally decided to bat.

A few minutes later I led my side on to the field. They were certainly a much better lot than the team that had faced Eastwold on the last occasion!

We had five good batsmen in Tommy Watson, Pitt, De Valerie, Grey and Yorke. While, besides myself, Bob Christine, Sir Montie, McClure and Armstrong could all bowl. And behind the stumps Handforth very often put up a good show.

Morrow of the Sixth had kindly offered to umpire at one end for us. And the same umpire who had come over with the visitors on their last appearance was officiating again.

The Eastwold first pair of batsmen came out, and I put on Bob Christine to bowl. I was going on at the other end myself.

The first over was rather dramatic. Christine slung down a couple of fast ones. They were blocked. His third was a real beauty. It fairly hissed down the pitch!

There was a click, and the batsman's leg-stump jumped clean out of the ground and went head over heels towards the boundary. We had got one of the Eastwold wickets with not a run on the board!

But our triumph was short-lived. The next man in played very quietly but very surely. He did not try to hit the cover off the ball. He was content to keep it out of his wicket. Christine's bowling he found quite easy, and when he faced me it was the same.

Over after over we sent down, but the two men got stuck. Twenty runs appeared on the board. Then 30—40—50!

A cheer went up from various Eastwold supporters who had turned up as the half-century was signalled.

But we were not disheartened. I had taken myself off, but not Christine. I realised he was bowling very well, and meant to persevere with him. And I was justified.

A 4 was hit off him through the slips. Then the batsman hit out at the next ball and it shot up into the air towards cover-point. Grey was fielding there, and he watched the flight of the ball like an eagle. It soared up a tremendous height. Then down it fell, straight into his cupped hands! Grey had made a splendid catch!

Two wickets were now down with 64 runs on the board.

It was now Dalton's turn to come in, and the fieldsmen watched him keenly as he took guard. They knew he was a good bat. And they were right.

From the very first ball he received, Dalton played well. All the bowling seemed to come alike to him. He scored boundaries with ease. It was a great display. The 100 went up, and then disaster befell Eastwold.

Dalton's partner was clean bowled by one of Sir Montie's leg breaks. And from the next ball the new man was wonderfully caught by Handy at the wicket. He had snicked the ball to leg, and Handy had to fling himself to the left, and just managed to hold the chance one-handed.

A storm of cheering went up at Handy's feat, and the wicket-keeper tried to look modest.

"It was really quite a simple catch," he explained to the team as they stood round congratulating him. "Anybody who was any good could have held it. All it needs is a sharp eye and a safe pair of hands and——"

"Next man in!" called Morrow and Handy had to stop.

From now on the luck went our way. Only Dalton made many runs. The last wicket fell at 181, and Dalton was still undefeated with over 70 to his credit. He had played a splendid innings, and as he

walked back to the pavilion, the St. Frank's juniors, lined round the boundaries, gave him quite an ovation.

Dalton went quite red as he ran into the cool pavilion. I could see he was very pleased at the sportsmanship shown by the spectators. And I was particularly glad about it when I thought of what had happened in the previous match.

The Eastwold fellows knew well enough now that the Remove were mostly decent chaps.

Now it was our turn to go in to bat.

Sir Montie and Yorke went out to open the innings, and I sat with the others watching. I felt the match was going quite well. We stood a sporting chance of winning. Nearly 200 runs was not a small score to get. But the pitch was in perfect condition, and we had some good batsmen.

As the two Removites walked out to the wicket I felt a heavy hand smite me on the back. I looked up and found Handy bending over me with an indignant look on his face.

"Do you want to throw the match away?" he asked truculently.

"Not that I'm aware of," I replied. "Why?"

"Well, what on earth do you mean by it, Nipper?" he roared. "I've just looked at the batting list. You—you've had the nerve to put me in last!"

The leader of Study D looked very wrathful. As a matter of fact, I knew as well as the rest of the team that he was no good as a batsman. He was a terrific hitter—when he hit the ball. If he got hold of it the leather usually went for a 6. But he was just as likely to miss the ball altogether.

But I knew it was no use trying to explain that to Handy. He was convinced he was a fine batsman, and nothing in the world would shake him in that belief. So I was tactful.

"We must have someone who can stick in, to go in last," I explained. "I expect we shall have to fight for our runs. I want the last man in to be someone we can rely upon to stick in and hit up a few. That's why I chose you for the job. It's a very ticklish business."

"Oh, if that's the idea," replied Handy, quite mollified, "you can rely on me. I'm your man. I won't let you down!"

And, quite content, the leader of Study D strolled off.

Meanwhile, the St. Frank's innings had started. From the first it was easy to see that we should not have things all our own way. But Sir Montie, and Yorke batted very calmly.

They took few risks, but the score crept up and up. Thirty went up on the board, and the pair were settling down. Then we had a stroke of misfortune.

Sir Montie hit a beauty round to square leg, and Yorke called him for a run. The ball looked to be speeding to the boundary, but a white figure leapt out and stopped it with his right hand. The figure was that of Dalton, one of the best fielders in his school.

He picked the ball up and flung it with all his might at the wicket. There came a crash and a shout.

"Howzatt?"

Up went the umpire's finger and Yorke was given "run out." There was no doubt about it. It was a perfectly fair decision.

Tommy Watson went in next and he soon settled down to his usual stolid game. But he did not have his study mate for company after the first over.

Sir Montie, who was by then quite set, hit out at a widish ball, and it slithered off the edge of his bat into the slips. One of the Eastwold fellows leapt into the air and held the chance—a wonderful catch!

Two wickets were now down and there were only 43 on the board.

I went in next and determined to play cautiously. With Tommy Watson doing the same we were putting up rather a tame show. But it was all in the game. Until the bowling is mastered it is silly to lash out at everything.

We put on another 10 runs; then Tommy Watson dragged his foot a fraction over the crease and was stumped!

That was a slice of real bad luck, for Watson was one of the safest batsmen in the Remove. Pitt came in, but it was not his lucky afternoon.

He was always a bit of a slogger, and after sending two deliveries to the boundary he got himself caught off a skier. De Valerie followed him in and began to play a quiet game.

De Valerie was also something of a hitter

as a rule, but he realised that the game at the moment was to stop in. So he played each ball carefully and refused to be tempted by what looked like bad balls.

In this way the score gradually began to mount up. Eighty runs were on the board. And ten minutes' later 90 appeared. I managed to get a couple of fours, and only another two was needed for the century.

And then De Valerie was given out l.b.w.! It was a correct decision. He stepped right across his wicket and mis-timed a ball from Dalton. The ball was quite straight and De Valerie was certainly out!

So that now half the side had been got rid of for under a hundred!

This was not at all good. After dismissing Eastwold for 180 we had expected to hit off the runs without too much difficulty. Things had altered by now.

Of the batsmen yet to come only the next man in, Grey, was much good. He was rather a nervous batsman, and took a long time to settle down. I could see, as he faced the bowling, that he was all out to do his best, but I knew it would be some time before he settled down.

And so I tried to get as much of the bowling as possible. This was not out of selfishness. For I had now got my eye in. And as we ran an easy single Grey showed that he appreciated my move.

"Get as much of the bowling as you can," he whispered. "We want the runs as quickly as we can score them!"

That was quite true. There was now only just over half an hour to go, and we had only scored 124. We wanted over 50 runs, and there were no good batsmen to follow in.

Grey put up a dogged fight. He refused to be rattled, but it was no use. Dalton got down a beauty that shattered his stumps. And he had to go with the score only 130.

Four more men to come in—and none of them much good! Things were getting exciting now! As the next man in, McClure, walked out I got the chance of a whispered word with him.

"You try and stick in," I said. "I'll try and hit off the runs!"

McClure nodded and walked to his wicket. He stopped the two last balls of the over and I was able to score ten off the next. The board now read 140!

Then McClure had to face Dalton again, and once more the bowler was too good for the bat. A beauty took away McClure's off stump and another wicket was down!

Bob Christine came in, and between us we put on another 20 runs. Then he was out to a catch in the slips. Armstrong followed, and only survived a single ball.

The next shattered his stumps!

A groan went up from St. Frank's spectators as they saw him turn to leave for the pavilion. There was only Handy to come in now and there were 22 runs to get for victory.

It seemed a hopeless job! But Handforth showed no signs of being nervous. He had to face the last ball of the over, and he stood up to it coolly!

Down it came dead on the middle stump. Up swung Handforth's bat and away soared the leather. Up into the air it went in a tremendous curve. Then came a crash. The ball had gone clean through one of the windows in the pavilion!

A great roar of cheering came from round the ropes. A moment ago the St. Frank's fellows had been on the verge of despair. Several had begun to walk away. They were certain that the game was lost.

But that wonderful hit of Handy's had altered the whole aspect. Now all the spectators were watching keenly. The match was not yet lost!

I had to face the next over and I felt quite jubilant. The balls were not too difficult. I was able to hit two to the boundary. Altogether I got ten runs off the bowling.

Then it was Handy's turn to bat again—and another half-dozen runs were wanted for victory!

There was dead silence round the field as the bowler started his run. The ball flashed down, and Handy opened his shoulders. He stepped out and hit—nothing!

There was a click behind him and a shout from the fieldsmen.

"Howzzatt?"

But he was not out. He had missed the ball entirely, and it had clicked into the wicket-keeper's hands!

A gasp of relief came from the St. Frank's fellows and then down came the next ball. Once more Handy's blade flashed in the sunlight. This time there came the loud clack of bat meeting ball.

Up went the leather, and the spectators strained their eyes upwards to follow its flight. It looked as though it was neve coming down.

Then the ball began to fall. A fieldsman on the edge of the boundary stood ready, waiting. A moment later he jumped high into the air, his hands up-stretched!

But he was not tall enough. The ball was a foot beyond his reach. It crashed into the spectators behind him—another six for Handy!

The match was over. The Remove had won by one wicket. And Handy had won the match!

I had made just over 80 runs; and as Handy and I started to walk back to the pavilion a great crowd swarmed to meet us and we were lifted shoulder high!

"Good old Handy!"

"Good old Nipper!"

There was terrific cheering and shouting all round us. It was quite a relief to get into the pavilion!

A short while afterwards Dalton and his team were ready to return to Eastwold. It was as I shook hands with the skipper and said good-bye that he took the opportunity of remarking:

"I'm glad we had the match, Nipper. I know that the chaps at St. Frank's are a decent lot. We must fix up another game later on in the season over at our ground."

"A jolly good idea," I replied.

And I meant it. The Eastwold fellows were a sporting lot, and I was glad they wanted to play us again. But what gave me the greatest satisfaction was the knowledge that they now knew our reputation for sportsmanship was not a myth.

The harm done by Fullwood and his pals had been undone. The Remove at St. Frank's could once more hold up its head!

CHAPTER 15.

The Marvellous System!

"JUST in time for the three o'clock race!" said Fullwood briskly.

The Nuts of St. Frank's had only managed it by rushing. After reaching Bannington on their bicycles, they had been lucky enough to catch a fast train to Helmford. And now they were on the racecourse, and the time was close upon three o'clock. They had plenty of time to put their money on

The course was crowded.

It was a fine afternoon, and the scene was an animated one. Fullwood & Co. had paid extra to go into one of the reserved enclosures. And even this was well packed. The bookmakers were shouting on all sides.

"Better to come in here," said Fullwood. "We shall be certain of our money—no chance of being swindled by a rotten welsher. I shall bet with a big bookie, an' stick to him!"

They looked about, and the most substantial stand was near by. It was a grand affair, with brass fittings, and bore the name of "Sam Riddell, Clapham," in huge letters. Mr. Riddell was using his voice to good advantage. He was a stout, cheery-looking gentleman.

Fullwood pushed up, and studied the bookmaker's board.

"No giddy trouble with this second favourite business," he said, with a grin. "You can't make a bloomer. There you are—evens Long Jack. He's the favourite, an' no good to us. Three-to-one Sandbag. That's our horse, my sons."

"I don't think much of him," said Bell. "We backed Sandbag two weeks ago——"

"An' he went down," interrupted Fullwood. "All the more reason why he should romp home to-day. I'm stickin' to this system, anyhow. It's the only safe way. We're bound to click sooner or later."

Fullwood went up to the bookie's stand, and soon came back with a little oblong card—a rather gaudy affair, with big numbers on it, and with Mr. Riddell's photograph in the centre.

"How much did you bet?" asked Gulliver.

"Ten bob."

"That's not much," said Bell. "Even if you win, you'll only get thirty."

"I couldn't put more," said Fullwood. "I've got to be prepared for losing, an' if I double up every time it soon runs into a lot of money. There are five races, an' if we lose the first four, I shall have eight quid on the last—which means fifteen-pounds-ten in bettin' altogether. An' I haven't got much more than that."

Gulliver looked doubtful.

"An' if the eight quid goes down, what then?" he asked. "All the club funds——"

"Shut up, you fool!" snapped Fullwood.

"Don't talk about that here! An' I shan't lose. You needn't get scared. Great Scott! What does it matter to you, anyway?"

"Well, we don't want you to be sacked——"

"Don't talk blitherin' rot!"

Fullwood turned away, scowling, and he studied the race-card. And a few moments later the three o'clock race was run. Long Jack cantered in an easy winner, and Sandbag was unplaced.

"I knew you'd lose," said Bell.

"Oh, don't croak," growled Fullwood. "There's plenty of time."

The second favourite in the next race was a horse named Little Tess, and Fullwood made a bet of one pound—to win. He obtained a fairly good price—six-to-one. And he was very hopeful of winning, for Little Tess was a good horse, and was fancied by several racing experts. Fullwood saw this by studying the early edition of the London evening papers.

The time soon passed, and the three-thirty started.

"They're off!" said Gulliver tensely.

"Good!" exclaimed Fullwood. "Our colours are green an' yellow. You'll see Little Tess runnin' away from the other giddy horses——"

"She's leadin'!" shouted Gulliver. "She's leadin'!"

The horses came thundering along the turf. There was a great hush among the crowd. Then the field went shooting past, with Little Tess an obvious winner. Gulliver and Bell were in high spirits, and greatly excited. Fullwood remained calm.

"I knew she'd win," he said easily. "No. 5—that's Little Tess. You'll see the number come up——"

"Golden Rose wins!" said a bookmaker near by.

"Eh?" ejaculated Fullwood, turning.

He had brought a pair of binoculars with him—borrowed, without permission, from a Sixth Form study. And Fullwood uttered a growl of disgust as he read off the numbers on the board.

"Three—seven—five!" he said. "Well I'm dashed! Little Tess came in third! I thought she was a certain winner!"

"But she's got a place——"

"What's the good of that when we backed her to win?" demanded Fullwood tartly.

"Oh, my hat!" said Bell. "Why, she was well in advance. There must be some swindle about it. I jolly well know she was the winner——"

"Don't be an idiot!" interrupted Fullwood. "The judges on a racecourse don't swindle. It's always difficult to judge when the gee-gees are flashin' by. I expect the rotten horse stumbled or somethin', just in the last second."

"That's thirty bob gone west!" said Gulliver. "Thirty bob that ain't yours——"

"You—you rotten croakers!" hissed Fullwood savagely. "You've got no more pluck than two lumps of mud! Supposin' the money has gone west? I've got plenty more. Before the afternoon's out I shall have pots of money. Just you see. If you want to make any more grumbles an' growls, you'd better clear off."

Fullwood's chums said no more.

And now the bookmakers were making busy preparations for the four o'clock race. This was the big race of the afternoon on this course, and there were a large number of runners.

The bookies were shouting the odds with great vocal strength, and the punters were putting their money on readily. It was most difficult to pick out a winner with such a large field. But Fullwood was not worried over matters of this kind. He simply went for the second favourite.

This was a horse called Blue Gown, and he had picked it from the forecast in the racing edition of the London paper. It was far safer to pick the horses in this way, for it was difficult to judge by the bookmakers on the course. The various bookies differed greatly in their prices.

Besides, the second favourite system, as watched by Fullwood & Co. during the past three or four weeks, had always been gauged from the newspaper. So it was only following it up in the right way to do the same here.

So Fullwood put two pounds to win on Blue Gown.

"She's the second favourite, according to the papers," said Raph Leslie. "An' she's ten-to-one, too! What do you think of that, my sons? If she wins, it'll mean twenty quid for us, in addition to the stake. So we'll be well in pocket."

"You ought to have backed a quid each way!" said Gulliver.

"I don't want any advice," said Fullwood sourly.

The four o'clock race was soon off.

The time seemed to pass very quickly on the course. In fact, almost before Fullwood & Co. could realise that four o'clock had arrived, the crowds were shouting. And then came that same expectant thrill.

The horses swept by with a thud of hoofs, and a flash of various colours.

"Hang it!" snapped Fullwood harshly.

"She hasn't lost, has she?" gasped Bell.

"Yes."

"But—but I didn't see——"

"The blessed horse is a donkey!" said Fullwood curtly. "Right behind, among the last three! Now, don't you chaps croak! I've lost three-pounds-ten, so you needn't tell me! I know it! But I'll get it back before the last race!"

Gulliver and Bell said nothing.

Blue Gown had lost—in fact, the horse had never stood an earthly chance, by the look of it. Probably it had started badly, and this had finally spoilt its chances. Anyhow, the money was gone.

"Only two more races!" said Bell. "Look here, Fully, you'll be mad to double up now. Fancy shoving four quid on one horse! It's mad! Take my advice, an' only shove a quid each way. There's nothin' like safety."

"That's what I say," agreed Gulliver.

Fullwood frowned.

"I've started on this system, an' I'm goin' through with it," he growled. "If a chap loses his pluck, he loses everythin' Many an' many a fellow has done himself out of a small fortune by goin' into a funk when the stakes get high. But I'm not like that. I'll see the thing through!"

"Just as you like," said Gulliver. "It'll be your giddy funeral if you lose!"

"If you don't like to take my advice, you can jolly well go down!" said Bell. "I'm gettin' fed up with the whole thing!"

"All you can do is to growl an' growl!" exclaimed Fullwood savagely. "Instead of givin' a chap a bit of encouragement, you do just the opposite. I tell you this system can't fail——"

"It's failed three times this afternoon!"

"It hasn't!" yelled Fullwood. "Why, I've noticed it day after day. Sometimes it's not until the last race—but it always comes off sooner or later. You silly asses! It's all the better if we win now! We shall have a lot more money on—therefore, we shall win a lot more."

"Yes, if the horse comes in first," said Bell doubtfully.

"Oh, rats!"

Fullwood turned away, and he studied the newspaper.

"Pictureframe is our horse," he said. "An' you chaps can do what you like—but I'm puttin' four quid to win on him."

"It's your own look out!" said Bell. "I've finished."

Fullwood went up to Mr. Riddell's stand, and his eyes sparkled as he noted that Pictureframe was put down at twenty-to-one. Mr. Riddell stared when Fullwood put four pounds to win on the horse.

"Sure of this, young gent" he asked curiously.

"Yes."

"Four quid to win, Pictureframe?"

"Yes," said Fullwood.

"All right—if you're fond of backing losers," said Mr. Riddell pleasantly. "I'm not making any objections to raking in four quid. Here you are, my lad—it don't matter if you lose it!"

He handed Fullwood the ticket with a grin, and Fullwood strolled off. Gulliver and Bell had heard the little conversation, and they did not know how to smile. They looked at Fullwood in a rather scared way.

"There's another four quid gone!" exclaimed Gulliver. "Why, even the bookie jeered at you. He didn't want to take the money at first——"

"You fools!" said Fullwood curtly. "Can't you understand? The bookie didn't want to take it because he stands a chance of paying out eighty quid! I shall keep my giddy eye on that stand."

"He won't run away!" said Bell. "All I can say is that you're a mug to bet four quid on a rotten outsider. Far better back the favourite two-to-one an' be pretty certain——"

"The horse isn't an outsider!" interrupted Fullwood. "It's second favourite in bettin' in the London papers. Hallo! There you are! He's altered the price! I thought he would! Only fifteen-to-one now!"

"Well, that's a good sign," admitted Gulliver.

They waited in a kind of fever until four-thirty arrived. And then it seemed that an age had passed before the shout came.

"They're off!"

"Thank goodness!" muttered Fullwood. "We'll soon know now."

He and his chums watched. Fullwood was trying to remain calm and impassive. But, try as he would, he couldn't manage it.

He was excited, and worried.

If this horse went down, there was only one other race left—and it would be a terrible risk to put eight pounds to win on one horse. But it was the only thing to be done. He had to stick to the system.

But he was hoping against hope that Pictureframe would win.

And then the horses came thundering by. It was a small field—only seven horses running. And this ought to have told Fullwood that Pictureframe was not much good—otherwise the price would not have been so high.

The horse came past fourth—and finished fifth.

Fullwood looked absolutely crushed.

"I—I thought it was goin' to win!" he muttered. "Well, I don't care! I'm goin' the whole hog now!"

Gulliver and Bell looked thoroughly scared this time.

"Chuck it up, old man," said Gulliver earnestly.

"I'm not goin' to!"

"But can't you see that your luck's right out?" asked Gulliver. "It's no good fightin' against Fate. You've been losin' all the afternoon, an' it's a dead certainty you'll lose on the last race, too."

"The last race is always uncertain," said Bell.

Fullwood set his jaw doggedly.

"I'm goin' through with it," he declared.

"But——"

"I'm goin' through with it!"

"Don't be an ass, Fully——"

"I'm goin' through with it!" said Fullwood, for the third time. "If you rotters try to say any'hin' more, I'll walk away. Ever since we came you've done nothin' but sneer an' growl. I'm fed up with you! The next time I come to a race meetin' I'll leave you behind!"

His chums dried up.

They had only spoken because they were worried—because it scared them to see him betting so rashly. If it had been his own money he would not have risked it in this way. Even Fullwood, reckless though he was, very seldom had a bet of more than a pound.

And then, too, he nearly always picked a favourite, and bet for a place as well as a win.

Gulliver and Bell were quite keen on a little flutter themselves, but when money was put on at this rate it took all the go out of them. They didn't like it at all. But Fullwood ignored them.

"I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," he muttered. "What difference does it make, anyway. I'm seven-pounds-ten down already. I can't make it up, an' I might as well risk the other eight quid. If I lose, I'll stand the racket. If I win, we shall be O.K."

"What's the name of the horse?" asked Bell.

"Theodora," said Fullwood.

"What!" exclaimed Gulliver. "Theodora's ten-to-one! It's an outsider! The second favourite on Riddell's board is only three-to-one——"

"I don't care about Riddell's board—I'm goin' by the paper," said Fullwood. "An' ten-to-one's better than three-to-one, any day."

For one minute he hesitated, and then he took his courage in both hands and strode forward. He wasn't going to back out now! If he lost his courage, and only put a miserable pound on, the horse would win! That was just the way of things. So Fullwood was determined to go right through with it. Although he was several kinds of a cad, he had plenty of will power.

So he put eight pounds to win on Theodora.

Again Mr. Riddell stared.

"What's the game, young man?" he asked. "Eight quid to win on Theodora?"

"That's what I said," replied Fullwood.

"Right you are—just as you like," said the bookmaker. "I stand to lose eighty quid, but I'm a sportsman! Take my advice, and put the money on Winter Lily.

I'll offer you six-to-one, and you'll have a good chance of clicking."

Fullwood shook his head.

"I want the money on Theodora," he insisted.

"You won't touch the Winter Lily?"

"No."

Fullwood received his ticket, and felt slightly better as he joined his chums. He even found it possible to grin.

"Did you hear that?" he asked. "Riddell offered to put the money on Winter Lily! A bookie, mind you! That jolly well proves he expects Theodora to win."

"Rats!" said Bell. "If he expected Theodora to win, he wouldn't be offerin' ten-to-one. You've shoved your money on a stumer."

"All right—you see."

Again came that wait—which seemed so interminable. The course was much clearer now, for a large number of people had not waited until the last race. It is quite possible that many of them had no more money left.

But at length came the signal.

"Hurray!" hissed Gulliver. "They're off! Now we shan't be long!"

"Yes, we shall go home broke!" said Bell.

Fullwood uttered no word. He knew that the colours of Theodora's jockey were red and green. And he was watching for them with a fever of anxiety which he had never previously known. He had not believed it possible that he could be so worried over the result of a race.

He could hardly contain himself.

For everything depended upon this minute.

If he won, he would be in luck's way—he would have money to throw about, as he so dearly loved. But if the horse lost, the heavens would crash down. He would be utterly and absolutely finished.

He had talked confidently to his chums about faking up a burglary to account for the lost club money. But his own common sense told him that a ruse of that sort would never succeed.

Even if the police were fooled, Nelson Lee wouldn't be fooled. Lee was on the premises, and would soon jump to the truth. Fullwood's reputation was none too good—and Fullwood was aware of this. He hardly knew what he would do if Theodora failed to win.

He wouldn't think of it.

He made up his mind that Theodora had to win. There was no question of it. He couldn't look upon any other possibility.

And then, before he could let his mind wander further, the horses came tearing past, their hoofs thundering upon the soft turf. One horse was leading by a clear length—and the jockey wore red and green!

"Oh, my goodness!" gasped Bell. "Theodora's leadin'!"

"So she is—so she is!" muttered Fullwood tensely. "It's goin' to win—I know it! It's bound to win! The system can't go wrong—it never goes wrong! We'll win, you chaps!"

"They're past the winnin' post by now!" said Gulliver thickly. "It's all over—one way or the other! But Theodora was winnin' all right—she was goin' like a giddy streak of lightnin'! A ten-to-one outsider. By gad!"

Fullwood held his glasses so that he could read the numbers when they came up. His face had an unhealthy flush, and he could hardly hold the glasses steady enough to see.

Then suddenly he became rigid.

"Number three's the winner!" he shouted, in a cracked voice.

"Number three!" panted Gulliver. "Are—are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure—three—seven—one!" said Fullwood. "They're the first three. By glory! An' number three is Theodora!"

"Then—then you've won!" gulped Bell.

"Of course I've won!"

"It—it's too good to be true!" said Bell. "Eight quid on a horse at ten-to-one! Why, you've won eighty quid!"

Every ounce of Fullwood's confidence returned.

"Of course!" he said calmly. "Eighty quid, my sons—an' that fat bounder can afford to pay it, too. He's been rakin' in money like dead leaves all the afternoon!"

Gulliver and Bell could hardly contain themselves. They were flushed and excited. They were absolutely trembling with the whole thrill of it. After taking it for granted that Fullwood was going to lose all the club funds, he had not only re-

covered all his losses, but had won a small fortune.

He could replace the funds, and still have over sixty pounds. It was almost too marvellous to be real. But that is just the way with betting. One may become comparatively rich in a minute.

"An' now to collect the cash!" said Fullwood pleasantly. "I'll bet old Riddell will be sorry to see me."

"He'll be sorrier when he has to pay out!" grinned Bell.

They went up to the bookmaker's stand in a body. Mr. Riddell was paying out a few small punters, and he affected to take no notice of Fullwood as the latter pushed up.

But at last the others were cleared away, and Fullwood handed up his card.

"Eighty-eight quid, please!" said Fullwood.

Mr. Riddell stared hard.

"None of your little jokes, young man!" he said gruffly. "You clear off."

Fullwood started.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "I backed Theodora, an' I've got eighty-eight quid to come."

"You'd better think again, my lad!" said the bookmaker pleasantly. "You backed Winter Lily, unless I'm mistaken, and Winter Lily came in fifth! Now sheer off before things get unpleasant!"

CHAPTER 16.

The Depths of Despair!

RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD stared at Mr. Sam Riddell, and all the colour fled from his cheeks. For one flashing instant he wondered if he had, indeed, backed Winter Lily. But it was only for a second.

He knew that he had put his money on Theodora.

"You're wrong!" he exclaimed hotly. "What's the game? You know well enough that I backed Theodora! I came into this enclosure because I thought I should be able to back with a reliable bookmaker ——"

"If you say anything against me, young man, there'll be trouble!" interrupted Mr. Riddell angrily. "I always pay—Sam Riddell's never been known to do the dirty on anybody! If you backed Theodora, I'll pay you. I'm a straight man—the straightest on the whole course!"

"In that case, you'll pay," said Fullwood. "I don't want to be nasty, but you scared me for a minute. You've made a mistake, that's all. You did talk about Winter Lily, but I didn't put the money on Winter Lily."

"All right, we'll soon have this clear!" exclaimed Mr. Riddell grimly. "Jim, let's have a look at that book. I'm not having these youngsters saying things against me with other folks listening! And they needn't think they can come round with any yarn they like!"

Quite a little crowd had collected by now, and they had been listening to the altercation with interest. Fullwood was feeling better. He knew that Mr. Riddell had made a mistake. He had certainly backed Theodora—and the book would prove it, for the clerk had entered the bet down in the ordinary way.

"Yes, here we are," said Mr. Riddell. "Eight quid to win, Winter Lily!"

"What!" shouted Fullwood hoarsely.

"In black and white!" said the bookmaker.

He held the book up, with his finger on a certain place. And not only Fullwood, but a number of other people, including Gulliver and Bell, could see that the entry was made out for Winter Lily. Fullwood stared at it, and breathed hard. He was pale with consternation and fury.

"It's a lie!" he shouted wildly.

"What the thunder——"

"It's a rotten lie!" yelled Fullwood. "You twister—you thief! I put the money on Theodora, and, as soon as Theodora won, you must have rubbed the entry out and substituted Winter Lily. It's a filthy trick to swindle——"

"One more word, my lad, and I'll call a policeman!" exclaimed Mr. Riddell hotly. "If you think you can accuse me——"

"Yes, you'd better get off while you're safe, my lads!" said one of the spectators.

"But—but I put the money on Theodora!"

"That sort of game won't work!" said the man. "I'm not particularly in love with bookmakers myself—I've lost thirty bob this afternoon But this kind of game won't work. You can't expect the man to pay out when you didn't back the horse!"

"I did back it!" howled Fullwood. "I've got to draw over eighty quid——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd roared with laughter.

And Fullwood & Co. found themselves pushed away from the vicinity of Mr. Riddell's stand. They stood some little distance away, and Fullwood tried to collect his scattered wits.

"I say, we're going to clear off!" muttered Gulliver. "Everybody's takin' notice of us, an' we might be recognised. Fancy you makin' a bloomer like that, Fully."

"What do you mean?" snarled Fullwood harshly.

"You put the money on Winter Lily——"

"You mad fool!" snarled Fullwood. "I put it on Theodora!"

"But it's in the book——"

"Yes—in pencil!" panted Fullwood. "That rotten thief rubbed the entry out as soon as he knew that Theodora had won! He knew that he'd have to pay eighty quid, an' so he adopted that trick! Only a few people backed on the last race, an' he was able to do it. By gad! But I'm not finished with him yet!"

"I say!" said Bell. "Are you really sure about this?"

"Of course I'm sure!"

Fullwood was fairly panting with anger. And, certainly, he had every cause for fury. He had put the money on Theodora, and Theodora had won. Even so, he had lost the eight pounds!

This was one of the delightful risks of betting on horses.

He had picked a winner, and he had a big sum to draw. And yet, owing to the rank dishonesty of this bookmaker, not a penny would be forthcoming. Surely this ought to have convinced Fullwood, more than anything else, of the utter futility of backing horses.

It was a mug's game—a fool's practice. There was absolutely no certainty of getting any money. Even if he won, probably the bookmaker wouldn't pay. And there was no redress.

The only certainty about betting was that the money went. It was very doubtful if any ever came back. Only fools back horses. Even those who have an occasional bet generally come out on the wrong side at the end of the season. It is impossible to beat the bookmakers.

"This—this means that everythin's gone!" said Gulliver dully. "What the deuce will you do, Fully? I mean, about that money? You've got to put that eighteen quid back. They'll want the club funds on Monday. I heard one of the fellows sayin' this mornin' that there was goin' to be a meetin'——"

"I've got the money—an' tons more!" panted Fullwood. "This—this rotten swindler has got to pay me yet! If he thinks I'm going to stand by and take this kind of thing lyin' down he's mistaken!"

"You'd better come home with us——"

"I won't!"

"But it's no good tryin'——"

"Go home by yourselves!" snarled Fullwood fiercely. "You're nothin' but a pair of rotten cowards! If you had any pluck you'd help me to expose this chap!"

"Expose him? How can you?" asked Gulliver. "The crowd won't believe a word, and if we apply to the police it will be just the same. We can't prove anythin'!"

"Besides, we should only get our names taken, an' all that sort of thing," put in Bell. "An' then there would be inquiries at St. Frank's. It would mean the sack for the three of us. The chap won't pay, so the best thing you can do is to come home with us."

Fullwood grunted, and went back to Mr. Riddell's stand. It was now being pulled to pieces and the crowd had disappeared. Mr. Riddell paused, and took a big cigar out of his mouth as Fullwood approached.

"What do you want?" he demanded curtly.

"You know what I want?" replied Fullwood. "I want eighty quid from you, an' I'm going to have it!"

"If you don't clear off, my lad, I'll call a policeman quick!" thundered Mr. Riddell. "Of all the infernal nerve. Coming round here expecting to pull off a fool trick like this!"

"I put my money on Theodora!"

"That's enough!" interrupted the bookmaker. "I'll give you just one minute to clear!"

Even Fullwood realised the hopelessness of the position.

It was quite useless for him to remain—for Mr. Sam Riddell was very obviously a scoundrel. And if Fullwood remained he would only make things worse. He had to force himself to the conclusion that the money was gone—and that he would never get any of it back—or any winnings, either.

Fullwood turned away, sick at heart. Even now the full realisation of the whole thing had not come to him. His brain seemed dull. The shock was really too much for him, all at once. If the horse had lost it wouldn't have mattered so much. But it had won! And, after being in the seventh heaven of delight, he was now cast down into the depths of despair.

And still he had to pay the price of his folly!

He had to put eighteen pounds back. That money belonged to the Remove Sports Club, and it would be required on Monday. Eighteen pounds had seemed a mere trifle to Fullwood a short time earlier—just a little proportion of the eighty he had won.

But now, suddenly, the figure seemed enormous.

Where could he get eighteen pounds from? How was it possible for him to obtain such a sum in time for the club meeting? It was, of course, out of the question. And Fullwood knew what would happen if the fund was not forthcoming. The matter would be reported to the Housemaster—and then to the Head.

And after that the whole thing would come out.

It would mean exposure—disgrace—expulsion!

Fullwood gritted his teeth with fury and savage hatred. And it was all because of this swindling bookmaker! That was what Fullwood told himself. He didn't realise that the fault was entirely his own—for having had the dishonesty to touch the money in the first place.

Like many another, he had been certain of getting the cash back. But now it was too late. The panic which had been rising within him died down. He felt desperate. And he was resolved that if he fell, he should not fall alone.

Gulliver and Bell had been with him—and they would share his disgrace.

Fullwood was not one of those generous individuals who would admit his own fault, and shield his companions. He would rather take glory in the fact that they should be dragged down with him. Why, indeed, should he suffer alone? Why should he allow them to go free?

He found the two juniors by his side—although he did not remember joining them.

They knew exactly what had happened, for they had been standing fairly close by. And instead of sympathising, and offering him their condolences, they adopted another attitude.

"It was your own mad fault—right from the start!" declared Gulliver, in a kind of panic. "We told you what would happen—we knew it! Eight quid on a horse! Why, it's absolutely insane——"

"Of course it is!" put in Bell frantically. "An' now that money's gone, an' you won't be able to put it back! There'll be an inquiry, an' all the facts will come out."

"Of course they will!" snarled Fullwood. "Oh, yes! All the facts will come out, you miserable worms! You'll be drawn into it, too! You'll be shoved on the carpet, an' I'll take good care that you cop out!"

"You—you rotter!" shouted Gulliver thickly. "It was your scheme all along—we didn't want to come here—you know we didn't! It was your idea right from the very start——"

"Don't snivel!" snapped Fullwood. "If you chaps had shewn a different kind of spirit I might have won! But you've been nothin' but wet blankets all the afternoon! An' you'll get the same as me!"

"Oh, shall we?" grated Gulliver. "We'll see about that! Bell an' I will deny that we ever came to the rotten place! It'll be your word against ours, an' we haven't got such a reputation for lyin' as you have!"

"You—you——"

"Besides, you're captain of the Remove, an' the club funds were in your possession—not ours," went on Bell bitterly. "We don't have to answer for anythin'. Besides, I thought you said it was all right? I thought you said you'd fake up a burglary——"

"Don't be such idiots," said Fullwood hotly. "That's no good—you ought to have had sense enough to know it. You can clear off—I'm fed up with the pair of you! I don't want to see your beastly faces any more."

Gulliver flared up.

"All right—we'll go!" he shouted fiercely. "You can dashed well get out of this mess yourself! It's your trouble, anyway!"

"Of course it is!" said Bell. "We've finished with you!"

They walked off, leaving Fullwood staring after them with glittering, burning eyes. His fists were clenched, and his teeth set. Even his own chums had deserted him. He didn't realise that he had practically driven them away.

He felt that he could get hold of any object and smash it to atoms. Anything to relieve the fearful rage which surged within him.

And he walked off the racecourse, and made his way to the railway station. But he went slowly, and just missed a train for Bannington—a train which carried Gulliver and Bell. And Fullwood had to wait an hour for the next.

And he was so utterly lost in his bitter thoughts that when the train got to Bannington he sat there and continued his way onwards to Bellton—quite forgetting that his bicycle was in the town.

When he got out of the train at Bellton it was growing dusk. The sky was overcast, and one or two fine spots of rain were

falling The very evening was depressing in the extreme.

There seemed to be nothing which could possibly bring a spark of hope to the miserable junior.

He had had flutters before, and he had lost as much as three and four pounds at a time.

But never had he lost such an amount as this—particularly when it was money which did not belong to him. The money was the property of the Remove. He was the captain of the Remove, and the cash had been placed in his care. And now it had vanished! And he had no means of putting it back.

A number of juniors had already remarked about the fact that Fullwood was not the kind of fellow to trust money to. Indeed, at the forthcoming meeting it was going to be suggested that a special treasurer should be appointed, so that the Form captain would not be bothered with the financial affairs of the club. On Monday, however, it seemed that no treasurer would be necessary!

The exposure would come—and then the crash.

Fullwood walked from the station to the village, wondering dully—turning over all sorts of wild and impossible schemes in his mind. He thought of everybody he knew, wondering if it would be possible for him to borrow such a sum. But his commonsense told him that there was not a soul to whom he could turn.

He might borrow a pound here, and a pound there—but eighteen, never! And even if he was only a fiver short the trouble would crop up just the same. He would have to explain.

He felt desperate—absolutely maddened with despair. And soon after he had passed through the village another thought came to his head—a thought which was even more horrible than any of the others.

His father had once told him that if ever he got himself into trouble and disgraced the name of Fullwood, he would be turned off. He would be sent away from home as though he were an outcast. His father had sworn that he would never allow him to enter another school.

And Fullwood knew that his father had been serious. If this exposure came about, it would be the final smash. There would be no going up to Oxford for him—no future of any sort. It was like the end of all things. And this had come about owing to his insane folly. His vanity was at the bottom of it, for he had liked to boast that he was rich. And he thought that he could get money easily by backing horses with the Remove funds. But he had found out, to his cost, that even if he put the money on the right horse—which was purely a matter of luck—he had to reckon with the honesty of the bookmaker before he would see his money again.

And now he was broke—and he couldn't replace the stolen cash.

Just for a few minutes Fullwood went into an absolute panic. Everything seemed to be closing in upon him—to his distorted mind it seemed that hands were clutching out of the gloom. And the river suddenly had an awful fascination for him—for he was walking home by the towing path, and the Stowe flowed swiftly and silently by.

And he was just at the point where the water was deep—deep, with treacherous currents In that panic he hardly knew what he was doing. In all probability it would have passed over in a few minutes—he would have gained his right sense of proportion again.

And then he would have gone to the school, and would have schemed in his old cunning way—desperately trying to avert the coming catastrophe.

But he didn't get over that panic.

He saw the river—he saw nothing but blackness and disgrace ahead. And with a wild cry, half of rage, and half of terror, he leapt from the bank.

Then, with one splashing plunge, he went into the deep water, and disappeared below the surface.

This was the price of his folly!

CHAPTER 17.

Archie's Way!

"WHAT-HO! What-ho! Sundry drops of wetness, and all that kind of stuff!" murmured Archie Glenthorne. "Dash it! I mean to say, this is somewhat fearful, and so forth!"

Archie was just coming out of the post office in the village, and he had been thoughtless enough to venture out without a mackintosh or an umbrella. But the rain was only very slight, and Archie needn't have worried.

However, he decided to get off home by the shortest cut—and this, of course, was by the towing-path.

Archie hastened along at a pace altogether faster than his usual elegant mode of travel. He was wearing a favourite suit, and the thought of this suit getting soaked made him shiver slightly. And any moment the rain might increase. One glance at the sky unnerved him.

"I mean to say, this is positively poisonous!" he muttered. "Huge quantities of inky clouds in the offing, and all that! How the dickens can a chappie exist in such a filthy climate? The whole thing is most frightfully frightful. Absolutely! But here goes—a huge dash, as it were."

And Archie proceeded to dash.

He gathered himself up and trotted along the towing-path as fast as his patent leather boots would permit him. And then out of the gloom came a curious kind of sound.

It was like a cry of sheer anguish and terror.

And it seemed to come from a point just beyond some willows ahead. Archie peered through the gloom, but it seemed to him that he was utterly alone. He paused, and jammed his monocle into his eye.

"This, as it were, is decidedly strange!" he murmured. "The old wail, and all that! Floating on the breeze, so to speak! It seems to me that some poor chappie is in the most awful kind of ag.!"

Seeing nothing of an alarming nature, he went on again.

He peered straight ahead, and did not even think of looking towards the river. But just then he heard a gurgling gasp, and, turning, he was utterly startled to see a head protruding from the water about ten yards from the shore. The face was white and drawn and terrified. An arm broke through the water and splashed wildly.

"Gadzooks!" gasped Archie, his monocle dropping.

One glance had been sufficient to tell him that somebody was in bad trouble. He didn't recognise the face. He had no idea, in fact, that it was the face of a St. Frank's fellow.

But he did know that he was required to do something.

And Archie, with all his peculiar ways, was a fellow of action when it came to the point. Without wasting a second he waved his hands as a signal to the drowning figure in the water.

"Hang on, dear old laddie!" he shouted. "It's all serene—I'm here. Absolutely on the old spot! It seems to me that large lumps of rescue stuff are required. Well, here goes, so to speak. The good old trucks are finished, but no matter!"

He dived in promptly, and struck out with

powerful strokes across the deep water. He could feel the current tugging at him below the surface.

For at this point the current was very deadly. There was a kind of undertow which had the effect of dragging inexperienced swimmers down. And Fullwood was not famous for his swimming.

Archie, however, was like a fish in the water. He reached Fullwood's side in a very short time, and grabbed the desperate junior by the back of the neck. And Fullwood was now clinging to life with a desperation which was frantic.

The shock of the cold water—the fear that he would die within a few seconds—had brought him to his wits with a jerk. And now he was striking out weakly and feebly.

He knew that he could not save himself—he knew that it would be death.

And then, when all hope seemed gone, Archie had appeared. The genial ass of St. Frank's seized Fullwood and held him up.

"Well, that, as it were, is that!" gasped Archie. "Absolutely! It's all right, laddie—kindly cease the old struggles! Archie will yank you to the good old land! Everything is frightfully O.K.!"

"I—I'm drownin'!" gulped Fullwood wildly.

"My dear old scream, you're doing nothing of the sort!" said Archie. "The idea is not only absurd, but absolutely ridic.! If you will cease the gyrations everything will be top-hole! I mean to say, that's better! That, in fact, is the real stuff! Good lad! Now we're on the go!"

Fullwood had ceased struggling, and Archie made his way towards the bank with deliberate, powerful strokes. By this time he had seen the identity of his companion. It came as a bit of a shock to him, but it made no difference to his actions.

And at last he managed to get Fullwood ashore.

The leader of Study A was breathing hard. His face was deathly white, and he looked just about spent. But, after all, he had not swallowed very much water The cause of his condition was mainly fright.

"Absolutely!" exclaimed Archie. "Here we are, old bean! Pull for the shore, sailor, and so forth! There's absolutely nothing to get the wind up about! Of course, we're bally wet, and so forth, but a chappie has to——"

"You—you saved my life, Glenthorne!" muttered Fullwood thickly.

"Absolutely!" exclaimed Archie. "That is, of course, don't be prepos.! A mere helping hand, old lad! I don't mind telling you that I think you're a most fearful person, but there you are. A chappie can't let another chappie buzz down into the

depths without shoving forth the assisting fist, what?"

"I—I meant to kill myself!" said Fullwood.

"What? What? But, really, old thing——"

"I tell you, I did!" said Fullwood fiercely, his eyes still burning. "I meant to finish it all—but as soon as I got into the water I wanted to live! Oh, Glenthorne, I—I'm done!"

Fullwood buried his face in his hands. He was soaking wet, but he didn't care. And the juniors were not likely to come to much harm, for the evening was warm.

Archie looked at his companion very queerly.

"I mean to say," he said. "What? You, as it were, deliberately hurled the old carcase into the wetness?"

"Yes!" muttered Fullwood. "I wanted to finish it all!"

"But, my dear old onion, the whole thing's priceless!" observed Archie, shocked. "I mean to say, what a perfectly ghastly scheme! Hurling yourself into the flowing tide, as it were! I can't help thinking, laddie, that you're in some particularly poisonous predic.!"

"I—I'm ruined!" moaned Fullwood brokenly.

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "Pray confide in me, old lad. Trot forth the yarn, and Archie will listen."

Fullwood was not himself yet. He still felt panicky, and he also had a feeling of intense gratitude towards Archie. It was most unusual for Fullwood to have such feelings. But even the worst of us have our good points—our good moments. Just now Fullwood was like any other boy.

"I—I've lost all my money!" he muttered brokenly. "Everythin'! I went to the races this afternoon, an'——"

"But that's fearful!" said Archie severely. "I mean to say, a chappie who goes backin' horses is really a fearful cad! Of course, no offence, old bean! But there you are! I'm forced to speak the old mind. So you've been hurling money into the pockets of various bookmakers, what?"

"The—the rotten scoundrel——"

"Absolutely!" put in Archie hastily. "But there you are, laddie. If you don't want to lose your money, you mustn't deal with the blighters. Absolutely not! It's a foul proposition, if you grasp the old trend. But what about it? I mean, hardly bad enough to do the old river business——"

"It—it wasn't my money—it wasn't my money!" said Fullwood desperately. "I had eighteen quid—do you hear? Eighteen quid!"

"A somewhat formidable sum, as it were!"

"It was the club funds, Glenthorne!" muttered Fullwood. "The money belongin' to the sports club, you know. It was in my charge—I'm skipper of the Remove, and—an' I took it to use for—— Oh, but why should I tell you?"

Archie considered for a moment.

"Well, that, as it were, is somewhat extraord.!" he admitted. "Why, I mean to say—most unexpected from you, laddie. But, still, in moments of stress a chappie does strange things. But, I say! I say! I say! The club funds, what? That's most horribly fearful!"

"I—I'm ruined—I shall be sacked!"

Fullwood sobbed with remorse and terror. He was absolutely unnerved. He only knew that somebody was here—somebody he could babble the story out to. Under any ordinary circumstances, Ralph Leslie would have cut a finger off before admitting such things to Archie Glenthorne.

But now he was desperate—he hardly knew what he was doing or saying. And, after all, he was only human.

"I say—buck up, you know!" said Archie. "Of course, we're getting frightfully chilled. In fact, we're positively insane to stay out here, old thing. But what about it? I mean, what about this cash? Eighteen pounds of club money, what? You seized it, so to speak, and dropped it into a bookie's bag?"

"The—the man swindled me——"

"Well, there you are!" interrupted Archie. "A chappie has to be prepared for such things when it comes to betting. But the cash has gone? Absolutely trickled away and staggered forth? That, I take it, is the posish?"

"Yes," muttered Fullwood. "An' I—I couldn't stand it, Archie! I knew that there would be an inquiry—I knew that the Head would know all about it. An'—an' then I should be sacked! The pater will get to know, an' he'll turn me off——"

"My dear old onion, kindly desist!" said Archie. "Betting is a most frightful piece of rot. Chaps who bet are nearly fit to go into the jolly old luny bin. I mean to say, they're candidates for Colney Hatch, and so forth. The fact is, you ought to be bally well whipped!"

"Oh, don't growl at me!" moaned Fullwood. "I shall be flogged, in any case—an'—an' then sacked! Oh, it's—it's——"

Fullwood couldn't continue. He sobbed convulsively—too unstrung to take a good hold on himself. And Archie looked at him with a sort of compassion. Archie didn't like Fullwood, but to see him in this condition was a revelation. And Archie's heart was very soft.

"Buck up, old thing!" he said softly. "Dash it all! I mean to say, this makes a chappie feel most frightfully uncomf.! And you've made a bloomer. In fact, I might say with truth, that you've made a most frightful bloomer. You're absolutely off the rails, old bean."

"I—I don't know what you mean——"

"Well, the fact is, about the club funds," said Archie. "What priceless rot! Gadzooks! You're dreaming, laddie. The bally old funds are intact. Absolutely! Tucked away in the old what-do-you-call-it—that is to say, the cash-box!"

Fullwood looked at Archie dully.

"I—I don't understand!" he muttered.

"But, my dear old sportsman, it's most frightfully clear," said Archie. "I take it that the jolly old funds are cortained in some kind of a beastly box?"

"I—I kept the money in my desk—in a little cash-box."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "And that box is in your desk now?"

"Yes, but it's empty!"

"Absolutely not!" put in Archie. "Eighteen quid, I think you said, laddie? Eighteen of the best, what? Well, as a matter of absolute fact, and between you and me and the little birds, the cash is there. To be precise, the cash is positively intact!"

Fullwood looked at Archie, and his heart gave a great leap. An expression came into his eyes which caused Archie to turn away—it was a look of hope, of wild, wonderful relief.

"You—you mean——"

Fullwood paused, gasping.

"I mean, old son, that we've got to buzz along like the very dickens," said Archie. "Dash it all! The old glad rags are positively clinging to me like the deuce! We've got to make distinct tracks for St. Frank's. And after you've changed, just stagger down into your study, and I shall be most frightfully surprised if the good old cash-box is still empty."

Fullwood understood.

"Oh, Archie—you—you don't mean it!" he muttered brokenly. "I—I didn't expect anythin'——"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "But that, of course, is beside the point. This affair, laddie, is between ourselves. Just you and I, and that's all. I mean to say, there's no need for a chappie to go hurling chunks of unnecessary information around."

"You—you mean that you'll say nothing!"

"Well, there you are!" said Archie. "I'm an easy-going kind of bounder, and talking is a most bally bore. So why talk? You get me?"

"I—I didn't think you were such a real brick!" muttered Fullwood. "This—this will save me from disgrace—from expulsion! An' I'll remember it, Glenthorne! I'll never do anythin' like it again."

Archie helped Fullwood to his feet. The leader of Study A was still rather unsteady, and it was nearly dark. But by the time the pair had got off at a trot towards the school they were feeling much better in every way. Fullwood began to recover some of his old spirit.

He had passed through a time of horror in the river—for he had thought that death was certainly upon him. And now the whole horizon was clear and bright. Archie would let him have the money. The danger was averted. And for once Fullwood found gratitude within him.

"I—I don't know what to say," he muttered, as they trotted along. "I've never done anythin' to make you like me, Archie."

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "To be quite exact, old bird, I've always considered you to be a particularly foul proposition. That, of course, is speaking plain. But a chappie needs to remove the old gloves when it comes to a thing like this. Absolutely! You grasp the trend?"

Fullwood nodded.

"Well, that, so to speak, is something," said Archie. "If a chappie realises it at times, he can't be absolutely fearful all through. But I must say that horse-racin and betting is a frightfully rotten sort o game."

"I—I know it!"

"So there you are—we'll say no more, went on Archie. "But there's just one littl thing, old chappie. I hate to mention it The old tissues wither at the thought, bu it's got to be done. It's an unpleasant sub but I must be firm. To be exact, about th captaincy, what?"

"You—you mean I must resign?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie promptly.

Fullwood gulped.

"Of—of course I'll do it!" he said huskily "After—after this I can't refuse. I'll resign Glenthorne, an' ask Nipper to take over th captaincy."

"Well, that's absolutely topping," said Archie. "And just one other little thing, old sport. It pains me to bring it up, but it's got to be done. About the fortune, what? The rolling in quids stuff? That, I take it, is off?"

"I—I was trying to fool the chaps," muttered Fullwood.

"Dashed unwise!" said Archie. "And don't forget, you've got to broadcast the old news that there's no fortune. That, I mean to say, is most essential. Absolutely! You agree?"

"Yes!" whispered Fullwood.

They had just come within sight of St. Frank's, and they hurried as quickly as possible across the playing-fields until they were in the Triangle. By great good fortune they managed to get into the Ancient House without being observed. For most of the fellows were in their studies or in the Common-room, owing to the spitting rain.

Fullwood went into the dormitory, and Archie into his own little bed-room. As a rule, Archie took a long time over dressing, and he generally had Phipps—his valet—to help him.

But on this occasion he beat his own record. He had changed his clothing completely and was downstairs before Fullwood. He hurried straight to the Remove passage, and entered Study A.

He had been half afraid that Gulliver and Bell would be there—but the study was empty. Two minutes later Archie emerged, smiling urbanely. Then he went upstairs again to put the finishing touches to his attire.

He met Fullwood on the landing.

"All serene, old lad!" he smiled. "You gather the trend?"

"Yes, I—I think so," he said quietly. "I—I don't know how to thank you, Archie—you've done too much——"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "Cheerio, laddie!"

He passed on, and Fullwood went downstairs. He had recovered his composure, but was a changed being. His soaking had not done him much harm, and in all probability he would suffer no after effects.

In the lobby he met Gulliver and Bell. They looked at him curiously.

"Come into the study!" said Fullwood quietly.

They went. Even Fullwood himself trembled a little as he took out the cash-box and opened it. There in a neat pile were eighteen pound notes. Archie Glenthorne had made up the loss, and had saved Fullwood from disgrace.

OUR MAGAZINE CORNER.

BIG HITS!

Writers of fiction, when describing a thrilling cricket-match, generally make the dashing hero a mighty hitter. He smites the unoffending ball to every corner of the ground; he sends it up water-pipes, in express trains, through glass-houses, and in many other strange places that may one day include an aeroplane. But truth is stranger than fiction, and if some people are inclined to think that such mighty hits are impossible, it may interest them to know that several big and freakish hits in real cricket put those of the story-teller in the shade.

At Hawkes Bay, New Zealand, in 1898, a player hit a ball out of the ground and through a shop-window, with the result that an irate tradesman walked on the field of play a few minutes later armed with an account for the damage. At Bangalore, in India, too, a terrific swipe neatly and quickly cleared the glasses off a near-by saloon-bar.

"Good Shot!"

In days of long ago, when the rule was that the ball was not lost so long as you knew where it was, a hit made into a post-chaise bound for the next town enabled the batsmen to cross over about 100 times, and would have been good for many more runs if they had been able to run any farther. The same rule was the cause of the trouble on the historic occasion when an Australian batsman sent the leather into the fork of a jarrah tree, and about 200 runs were made before it was shot down with a gun.

On another memorable occasion during a college match in Ireland, the ball was despatched to a far corner of the ground, where it passed under a heavy roller, which, as the fates would have it, was being trundled along by a groundsman. The fielder dashed up and endeavoured to dig the embedded ball up with his fingers, but without success. He was a man of resource, however, and having purloined a stump from one of the wickets he promptly proceeded to gouge it out. Of course, during all this time the batsmen had not been standing still, but the number of runs they had piled up would have been far greater if they had concentrated on the business in hand, instead of joining in with the laughing spectators.

The Longest Distance.

It would seem that we have few batsmen to-day who can compare with the giants of the past; such mighty hitters as Gilbert Jessop, C. I. Thornton Albert Trott, and Lord Hawke. As if to prov this we have to go back more than 70 years t find the biggest hit in the history of cricket. Thi record was set up by the late Rev. W. Fellows, wh at practice on the Christchurch ground at Oxfor in 1856, sent the ball 175 yards before it touche ground. This is seven yards farther than Mr. C. Thornton's effort of 168 yards on the Susse ground at Brighton, in 1871. The longest distan a cricket-ball has been despatched, the distance rolled being included, stands to the credit Mr. Roupell, who sent the leather 240 yards wh playing for Trinity Hall against Emmanuel Colle in 1865. This stroke realised ten runs, and just show it was no fluke, perhaps, he followed it with hits for nine and eight.

The Lucky Stone!

Another hit for ten was once scored at W chester off the bowling of Mr. P. F. Warner, t old Middlesex captain, though on this occasi the batsman had more than his share of luc The ball, which was apparently speeding strai for the boundary, suddenly struck a stone a flew off at a tangent to a distant part of the fie taking about half the side to return it.

Lords, the Mecca of cricketers, has been t scene of many a magnificent hit. Three men sh the credit of having sent the ball on to the roof the pavilion. They are the late Albert Trott, Middlesex, Mr. V. T. Hill, of Somerset, and Mr. G. Jessop, of Gloucester, who performed the feat 1899, 1900, and 1901 respectively, while the sma ing of the pavilion clock by Mr. A. W. Ridley t place about the same time. Another alm incredulous record is one which Mr. R. F. Fos made in 1900, when playing for Oxford Universi Receiving four balls from the great W. G. Grace, sent them clean out of the ground one after anot —a feat calculated to turn any bowler's hair gr

Two other examples of terrific hitting seem stand out among all those made by the stalwart old. In 1900, at Bradford, Gilbert Jessop s seven balls—all delivered by W. Rhodes, the cr Yorkshire bowler—out of the ground; while M I. Thornton on one occasion sent the ball to su height that the batsmen had run the second by the time it came down, and the fieldsman judged the catch by five yards.

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Printed and published on the first Friday in each month by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., E.C.4. Subscription Rates: Inland and Abroad, 4½d. each. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Sole Agents for South Africa: Central News Agency, Limited. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Limited, and for Canada: The Imperial News Co. (Canada), Limited.

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