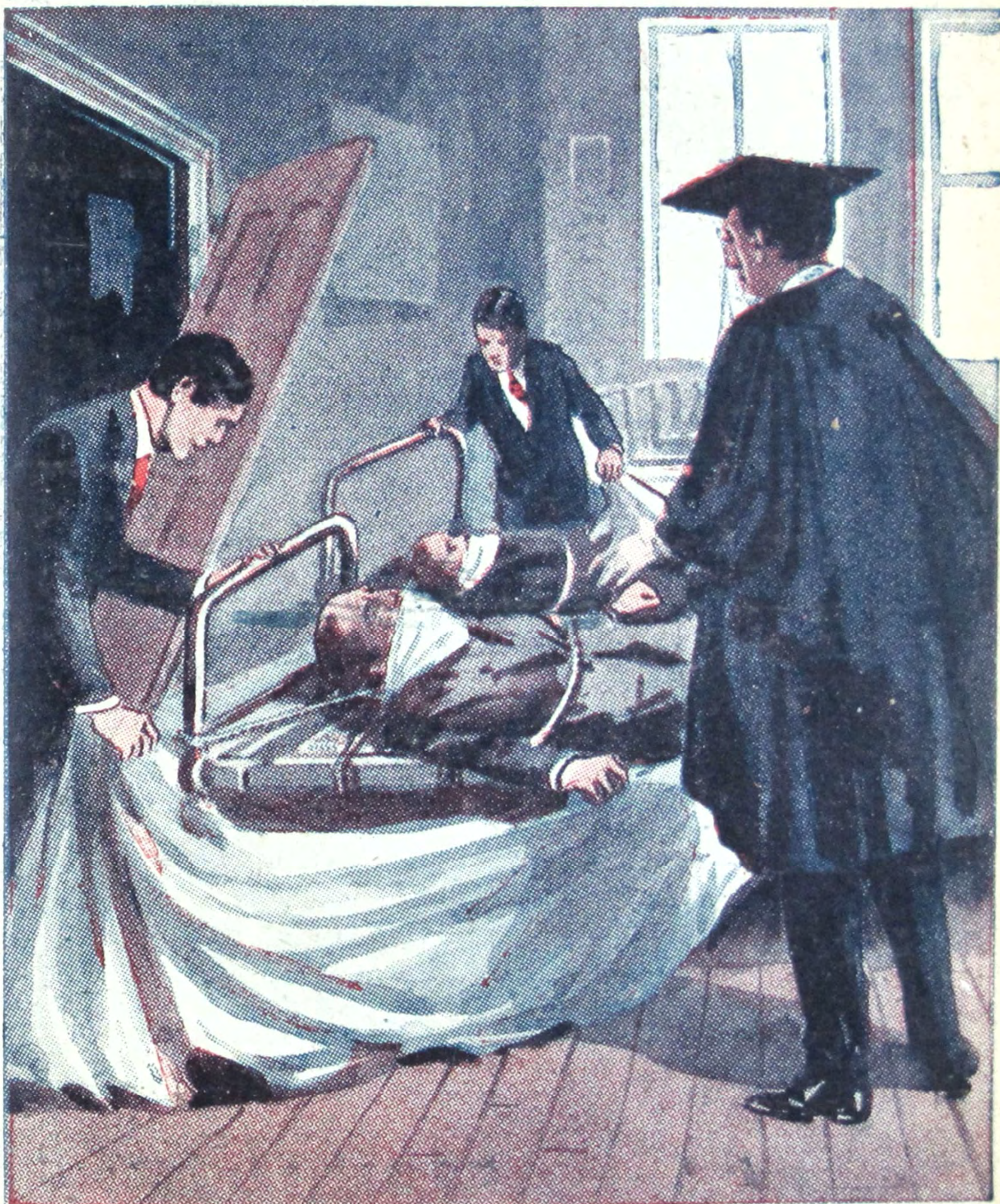


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A Tale of NELSON LEE and NIPPER AT ST. FRANK'S. Specially written by the Author of "The Remove in Revolt," "Hunter the Hun," "The New Housemaster," etc.



AUTHOR'S NOTE.

Nelson Lee and Nipper are at St. Frank's College, to escape the attentions of the murderous Chinese Secret Society, the Fu Chang Tong, whose hatred they have incurred. Although living in the great school in the characters of master and pupil, Nelson Lee and Nipper nevertheless find many opportunities to utilise their unique detective ability in various mysterious and adventurous cases.

CHAPTER I.

(The narrative commenced by Nipper.)

IN WHICH THE REMOVE REVOLUTIONARY ARMY COMES INTO BEING—WAR.

REVOLUTION!

RIt's not a very nice word, as I am fully aware, but the Remove Form in the Ancient House at St. Frank's was in a very real state of revolution on a certain never-to-be-forgotten evening in spring.

The die was cast, and it was to be war to the knife.

A meeting was being held in the Remove dormitory. As a matter of fact it was a compulsory meeting, for all the fellows had been sent to bed fully two hours in advance of the regular time.

There had been exciting times at St. Frank's, and matters had reached a head. Every junior in the Remove had decided that the time for resistance had come, and that it was beyond human endurance to stand tyranny any longer.

Mr. Kennedy Hunter, M.A., had gone a step too far.

Owing to his harsh treatment the Remove had been driven to desperation, and now the whole Form had voted unanimously for a barring-out.

A barring-out!

The very thought of it was thrilling. I for one was all in favour of such a drastic step. A barring-out is the last resort—the only hope of gaining justice and liberty.

I don't propose to go into full details of all the exciting events which had resulted

in this somewhat dangerous rebellion—too much space would be wasted. But my memory is fresh, and I can easily set down the chief facts.

At St. Frank's I was Dick Bennett, of course. Just in the same way my esteemed guv'nor, Mr. Nelson Lee, went under the name of Mr. Alvington, and he held the appointment of Housemaster of the Ancient House.

For some little time he had been away, having left school for the purpose of taking up some special Secret Service work. I now had reason to know that the guv'nor was still in the neighbourhood in disguise, and that the object of his special work was Mr. Kennedy Hunter.

This latter gentleman was filling Nelson Lee's place—he was our new Housemaster. But, not content with this, Mr. Hunter had practically appointed himself Headmaster of the whole school. For Dr. Stafford had been called away, and Mr. Hunter had calmly stepped into his shoes.

Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson and I had found out some queer things about Mr. Hunter. We knew that he met mysterious strangers in the old tunnels of the disused quarry near by.

We had been found in the crypt beneath the old monastery by Mr. Hunter. The tunnel led into this place, and the Housemaster had assumed that we had been following him and spying upon him. As a matter of absolute fact we had followed him; but we had discovered nothing for our pains.

We had been treated drastically. Believing that we knew something dangerous, Mr.

Hunter had imprisoned us in the tower of the Ancient House, and we had received nothing but bread and water—and precious little of it, too.

Meanwhile the school had been told nothing, and the Remove, already reckless, decided to make a search for us. They had been sent to bed early in the evening as a reward for their pains.

But while all this was going on, I and my chums had found a way out of the old tower. We had escaped from our grim prison by breaking through the roof, and by slithering down a rope of blankets to the Remove dormitory window, which lay immediately beneath.

Thus we had arrived upon the scene in the midst of all the excitement, and with one voice the Remove elected to revolt against the tyranny of Mr. Hunter. Mind you, we had very excellent grounds for this drastic step.

Mr. Hunter had made our lives a misery at St. Frank's. Cricket was banned, the playing-fields were out of bounds, study teas were abolished; in fact our liberties had been interfered with and taken away from us.

The wave of indignation which swept through the Remove when the fellows learned of our treatment in the old tower proved to be the last straw. It was simply impossible to put up with Mr. Hunter's despotic rule any longer.

One thing was quite certain. When the Housemaster found that Tregellis-West and Watson and I had escaped from the tower he would be mad with fury. He would recapture us, and our former treatment would be mild in comparison with that which would inevitably follow.

Under no circumstances should we consent to undergo further Hunnish imprisonment. Mr. Hunter's idea of punishment consisted of keeping us confined in close quarters and practically starving us.

There were two courses open. One, we could allow ourselves to be caught and imprisoned afresh; or, two, we could organise a determined revolt. There was nothing in between—it was one or the other.

With the Remove in such a state there was no question as to which course would be chosen. Revolution had already come, in fact, and the prospect of defying Mr. Hunter, openly and boldly, was a sheer joy.

A reckless, "don't care" spirit had settled upon us all. We were not keen upon defying the ordinary school rules. If Mr. Hunter were prepared to conduct the Ancient House as it had been conducted by "old Alvy," there would be no question of a barring-out. But it would have been a sheer farce to suggest such a thing.

Until Mr. Hunter realised that the Remove was as determined as himself he would not give in. We were simply standing up for our just rights; he was attempting to rule the Ancient House with a mailed fist.

The result was—revolt?

Really it was the natural result of all

that had passed before. It takes a great deal to arouse a people to rank revolution. Well, the Remove was comparable to that. We had been aroused at last—and war had come.

"I don't want any fellows to take part in this business unless they feel justified in doing so," I said quietly. "You've just got to choose one way or the other. Those chaps who like to stand out had better say so at once."

Not a single voice replied, and I looked round with approval. The dormitory was fully illuminated, and the majority of the boys were half undressed. Upon every face there was an expression of flushed, eager excitement.

"It's surprising what a difference you make, Bennett," said De Valerie coolly. "Before you came down that rope we were all nervous and undecided. But you seem to buck us up wonderfully—what?"

"Rot!" snorted Handforth. "I wasn't nervous—"

"Dry up!"

"Smother that ass, somebody!"

"Go it, Benny!"

"Look here!" roared Handforth. "I ain't going to be— What the dickens is the matter with you, McClure? What are you making those silly faces for?"

McClure nearly exploded.

"Can't you keep quiet, you ass?" he hissed. "If you go yelling about like that you'll have Starke or Kenmore in here in half a tick! You don't want the whole thing messed up before we start, I suppose?"

"Dry up, Handy, there's a good chap," I said seriously.

Handforth nodded. He didn't say another word, and I realised that he was more sensible than I had given him credit for being. As a matter of fact there was a great deal in what De Valerie said. I don't mean to imply that my leadership was anything wonderful, but it's a positive fact that the juniors looked to me to decide things—to give the casting vote, so to speak.

Not unnaturally, I felt responsible. I was the recognised leader of the Form—the skipper of the cricket eleven—and just now I was firmly determined to lead the Remove to victory and freedom.

"If you don't speak up now it'll be too late," I went on grimly. "I want you fellows to realise that a barring-out is a jolly serious business, and I'm not going to lead you into it blindfold. We shall have trouble about the grub, for certain—"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Teddy Long, in dismay.

"And there'll probably be a great many discomforts," I continued. "It's no good thinking that we're going to have a high old time, because it won't be anything of the sort. And if we fail—which won't happen—we shall all get it in the neck. A barring-out ain't to be treated lightly."

I looked round and saw that all the juniors were impressed by my words. The intense excitement had left them, and they

were a trifle uneasy. But their determination was as keen as ever.

"I'm prepared to stand the racket, for one," said Handforth bluntly.

"Same here!"

"Rather!"

"We're all in it, Benny!"

"As long as you all understand, it's all right," I said. "If we are compelled to suffer discomforts and disappointments, don't turn on me. We're all starting this revolt with our eyes open, and that's good enough. It's the only way to bring Hunter to his senses."

"Hear, hear!"

"Any objections?" I asked, looking round. Nobody replied.

"What about you, Fullwood?" I asked.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood, the elegant leader of the Ancient House Nuts, shrugged his shoulders.

"Go ahead!" he said coolly. "I ain't a pal of yours, Bennett, but I'm willin' to stand by you in this affair. When it comes to a matter of the whole Form you won't find me laggin' behind. I'm in with you."

"Same here!" chorused Fullwood's nutty pals.

"Good!" I said heartily.

For, to tell the truth, I had half suspected that Fullwood and Co. would elect to stand out. And that would have been rotten; it was far better to have the whole Form unanimous. Teddy Long had been wavering, but when he found that nobody was going to back out, he cast in his lot with the majority.

"What's the programme, dear old boy?" asked Sir Montie, yawning.

"Well, we mustn't think of doing that!" I replied crisply.

"Doin' what?"

"Yawning!" I said. "We shall probably be up half the night, so you'd better prepare yourselves for it, my merry revolutionaries. Now, look here, it's practically certain that Hunter will come nosing about here before long. As soon as he finds out that we've escaped there'll be ructions. And we've got to be ready for him. Understand?"

"How can we be ready?" asked Watson.

I looked round grimly.

"Well, at present we're a rabble!" I declared. "A rabble——"

"A what?" snorted Handforth, glaring. "Don't you call me a rabble—I—I mean——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear old Benny's frightfully complimentary, begad!"

"It's the truth," I persisted. "What would happen if Hunter and half a dozen prefects came in? We shouldn't be able to do a thing, we should be just hustled into bed like a pack of kids. A rabble, in fact. The first thing to do is to prepare ourselves for trouble. We've got to organise."

"That's a good word," said McClure heartily.

"It's the only word to use, anyhow," I retorted. "We've got to organise—at once."

The first thing to be done is to appoint a Commander-in-Chief."

"By George!" exclaimed Handforth. "That sounds like business!"

"Rather!"

"A Commander-in-Chief to lead the Remove Revolutionary Army," I went on firmly. "How's that? We might as well call ourselves something big while we're about it, and that fits the case to a T."

The juniors were becoming excited again. They were being filled with enthusiasm and eagerness.

"There's no need to look far for a Commander-in-Chief, if it comes to that," said Handforth. "Lemme see, you were speaking to me, Benny, weren't you? I'm open to take the post——"

"Shut up, ass!"

"Rats!"

Handforth glared round aggressively.

"What's the matter with me?" he roared.

"I've been wondering that for months past," exclaimed Tommy Watson deliberately. "But nobody seems to know what is the matter with you, Handy. 'Swelled head' seems to be the general verdict."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" shouted Handforth wrathfully. "I'll——"

"You'll do nothing!" I snapped. "Can't you chaps be serious for once? This ain't the time to start squabbling. In any case the Commander-in-Chief will have to be appointed by the whole Form."

"You're the chap for the job," said De Valerie quietly.

"Rather!"

The murmur of approval seemed to be unanimous.

"Let's put it to the vote," said Watson.

Every fellow in the dormitory raised his hand, and I was thus informally elected Commander-in-Chief of the Remove forces. Rather to my surprise, De Valerie was the next favourite, being Chief of Staff by a big majority. Nobody knew exactly what the post was, but De Valerie would have to take orders from me and use his own discretion when he thought fit.

Still more surprising was Handforth's appointment as chief of the commissariat department—in other words, it would be his job to see after the grub. Handforth was as surprised as anybody, but he was mightily pleased. I believe he was elected simply because the fellows wanted to put a stop to his interruptions. Anyhow, he was as pleased as Punch.

Watson and Tregellis-West preferred to remain among the rank and file, so to speak. They were not anxious to secure responsible positions.

"Well, that's settled," I exclaimed. "Now you've got to understand that my orders are to be obeyed without question. You've appointed me Commander-in-Chief, and I'm going to command you. That's fair, isn't it?"

"Of course!"

"Rather!"

"Well, then, if I give an order which isn't exactly liked, you've to do it all the same," I said firmly. "Unless we're absolutely in unison we can't hope to gain the day."

"You're the chap to lead us all right," said Hubbard admiringly. "Blessed if I could jaw like that! What does unison mean, anyhow?"

"Why, that we've got to stick together, you ass!" I replied. "This barring-out is going to be one of the greatest events of St. Frank's history, and we don't want to make it a terrific frost. We've got to win!"

"Say, you're dead right, Bennett," agreed Farman. "Guess we'll make things hum good an' proper once we git goin'. But, say, I'm kinder worried some. I'd hate myself real bad if I was to start raisin' objections. But I'm sure puzzled over one thing, chief."

"What's that?" I asked.

"Waal, say, how in thunder are we goin' to have this all-fired barrin'-out right here?" asked Farman. "I'd sure be pleased if you'd make that clear. Guess this dormitory ain't a dandy place for convertin' into a stronghold. An', say, we just can't live on blankets an' fixin's!"

I nodded.

"You're right, Farman," I said. "We can't remain in the dormitory. Hunter would best us in next to no time. But I've got an idea in my head that's worth quids. We'll entrench ourselves in a fortress——"

"My hat! That sounds good!"

"A fortress!"

"Rats! He's only gassing!"

"Don't interrupt!" I said severely. "This stronghold of mine can be made into a regular fort. We shall be able to resist all attacks with ease. You're looking doubtful, I can see."

"With jolly good reason!" growled Conroy minor. "There ain't such a place."

I looked round at the eager faces steadily.

"What about the monastery ruins and the old vaults?" I asked. "We couldn't possibly have a better place for a barring-out."

There was a moment of breathless silence.

"Great guns!" breathed Tommy Watson.

"That's a ripping idea, Benny. But—but how are we going to get there?"

Everybody else was full of enthusiasm, especially when I pointed out that the vaults were quite dry, and would provide ample seating accommodation and good living quarters. Once settled there it would take an earthquake to shift us.

"Toppin'!" said De Valerie. "Bennett, you're simply a wonderful chap for ideas. This barring-out's goin' to be a success."

"Hear, hear!"

"Down with Hunter!"

"Three cheers for Liberty——"

"Shut up, Handforth, you ass!" I hissed. "Haven't you got more sense than to call for cheers now? I'm expecting Hunter every minute, and we've got to be ready for him. Understand, his orders ain't to be obeyed. We're just going to ignore him. And if he

starts any of his tricks we'll squash him!"

"Good!"

"And don't forget that we've got a tremendous lot of work before us. To do the thing thoroughly we shall have to be at it nearly all night. There won't be any rising bell in the morning—for us—and so we can sleep late and make up for lost time. From this moment, gentlemen, the Remove Revolutionary Army is an accomplished fact. Hunter, and everybody with him, is to be regarded as the enemy."

"Hurrah!"

It was a subdued cheer, but all the voices quivered with intense eagerness and excitement.

"Now, as regards our immediate plans," I went on. "We'd better——"

"Cave!" came a gasp from near the door.

Everybody stood stock still, and all eyes were turned towards the dormitory door. Quite clearly we heard the key turn swiftly in the lock.

CHAPTER II.

(The narrative continued by Nipper.)

IN WHICH MR. HUNTER INTERFERES, BUT WISHES HE HADN'T.

WILSON, of the Sixth, strode into the dormitory.

A general sigh of relief went up. Even now, as I could easily see, the juniors were still afraid of the tyrannous Mr. Hunter. We all believed that Mr. Hunter had been at the door.

Wilson didn't worry us at all. He was a prefect, certainly, but a good-natured fellow in every way. He was frowning now, and he looked round severely.

"Why aren't you kids in bed?" he asked. "It was a bit rotten, being sent up so jolly early, but I expect you deserved it. If you take my advice, you'll tumble in as quickly as possible."

"We might!" said Handforth mysteriously.

"What do you mean—you might?"

"Oh, nothing, Wilson," said Handforth, with a careless air. "We ain't going to stand much more of Hunter's rot—that's one thing. There's going to be——"

"Shurrup!"

Whiz!

A pillow shot across the dormitory, and Handforth stopped it with his face. He rolled over on to his bed, and then sprang up excitedly.

"Who—who threw that?" he bellowed.

"Watson threw it, and he'll take fifty lines," said Wilson. "If you're not careful, Handforth, I'll give you a hundred!"

"I don't care if you give me five hundred!" said Handforth defiantly. "Or a thousand, if you like. They wouldn't be done, in any case."

"You cheeky young bunder!" exclaimed the prefect, grinning in spite of himself. "Tumble into bed, and don't have any more of this nonsense. Why, hallo! Where the deuce did you youngsters spring from?"

Wilson had suddenly caught sight of Sir Montie and Tommy and me. And he was staring at us with real surprise. We grinned in return. Naturally Wilson was somewhat at a loss, for he was under the impression that we were suffering punishment in the tower—or, at least, in some other part of the building.

"We got tired of solitary confinement, Wilson," I said smoothly.

"How did you get out?"

"Oh, we found a way, dear old boy," beamed Sir Montie. "It was quite an excitin' trip, begad! It was, really."

"Well, it's nothing to do with me," said the prefect. "If it comes to that, I wish you luck. Hunter's too severe, to my mind. If it was left to me, I'd have him booted out of the school."

"Good old Wilson!"

The prefect grinned, and waved his hand.

"Take my advice, and get into bed," he said. "Hunter will be along presently, you can take it from me. And if he finds you in this state, there'll be more trouble. That's just a tip. And don't make any more noise."

He was walking out of the dormitory when Starke appeared. Starke was another prefect, but a hated bully, and one of Mr. Hunter's henchmen. He simply gaped when he caught sight of me and my chums.

"What the deuce—How did you get out?" he roared. "Hold on, Wilson! Help me to drag these three young rotters out!"

Wilson shook his head.

"No, thanks," he said shortly. "I'm not having any, Starke."

"But they've escaped—"

"All the better," said Wilson. "Don't make an ass of yourself, Starke!"

He half pushed out of the dormitory, and we heard the key turn in the lock again. The buzz which immediately arose was promptly stopped by me.

"Starke knows that we've got away," I exclaimed crisply. "It's rotten, but it can't be helped. You can bet your boots that he'll rush down and report to Hunter at once. That means trouble."

"My hat! What's to be done?"

"We've got to get into bed at once," I exclaimed. "No, don't trouble to undress. Slip between the quilt and the blanket, and pretend to be asleep. There's one thing certain—Tregellis-West and Watson and I ain't going to be hauled away. This is where the battle starts, so be ready for action!"

"Hurrah!"

"Long live the barring-out!"

Within two minutes every fellow was in bed—or appeared to be. Sir Montie and Tommy and I tumbled in with the rest, and we were only just in time. For a few seconds later the door opened violently and Mr. Kennedy Hunter strode in, with Starke at his heels.

"Ah! It is lucky for you, my boys, that you thought fit to get into bed," exclaimed Mr. Hunter, controlling his temper with an effort. "Now, Starke, didn't you say that Bennett and—"

"They're in bed, sir," exclaimed Starke, striding over to our corner.

Mr. Hunter followed him. He grabbed my quilt and tore it back. I lay revealed, fully dressed, and Mr. Hunter's teeth snapped together with fury and triumph combined.

"You infernal young rogue!" he rasped out hotly.

I jerked myself from the bed and stood facing Mr. Hunter, the bedstead itself intervening.

"I wish to give you fair warning, sir," I said steadily. "Tregellis-West and Watson and I don't intend to be taken away. We refuse to undergo any more starvation and imprisonment."

"You—you refuse!" thundered Mr. Hunter, nearly choking.

"Yes, sir—we refuse!"

"I'm with you, Benny!" exclaimed Sir Montie, from behind me. "I'm starvin' now, an' I'm not goin' to put up with any further Prussianism, begad!"

Mr. Hunter swore furiously, and an angry hiss passed down the whole dormitory. The Housemaster had lost the last vestige of respect which any fellow might possibly have felt for him.

"Starke!" raved Mr. Hunter. "Help me to seize these young cubs—"

"If you touch me, sir, or if Starke touches me, I won't be answerable for what follows!" I shouted quickly. "The Remove is with me, and we're not going to stand any more of your brutality."

"Seize the young hound, Starke!" belowed Mr. Hunter madly.

I dodged back with set teeth.

"Get ready for the attack!" I shouted. "Back up, Remove—charge!"

The fellows responded nobly. Mr. Hunter's display of fury had aroused all their indignation again, and they were only too ready to obey my order. Moreover, this was to be the crucial moment of the revolution.

It was a complete triumph.

The juniors tumbled out of their beds on every side. Before Mr. Hunter could take a breath he was grabbed by dozens of hands and flung face downwards upon a bed. Handforth, McClure, Burton, and several other fellows occupied every inch of seating accommodation which Mr. Hunter's person afforded.

He was literally squashed; he couldn't even struggle, and his cries were drowned in the depths of the pillow. Starke was treated in a similar manner, and the whole business was over in less than a minute. Our first two prisoners had been captured without a casualty.

"Don't yell!" I hissed warningly. "We don't want anybody else on the scene."

I was only just in time, for several fellows were getting ready to shout their hardest. The train had been fired now with a vengeance. There was no backing out—no retreat.

The revolution had commenced in deadly earnest.

"Oh, my goodness!" panted Handforth.

"What are we going to do now? We can't sit on 'em all night!"

I had been thinking rapidly, and my mind was made up. It would be as well to be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and there was no sense in half doing a thing. We couldn't let Mr. Hunter go without endangering our whole scheme.

Therefore—Mr. Hunter would have to stay!

"Tear up two of the sheets into strips," I said quickly. "Watson, De Valcrie, you two can see after that business. And make haste!"

The sheets were torn up in record time.

"Now then, turn Hunter over on his back," I continued crisply. "Have a pillow handy, Montie, and shove it on his face as soon as he's over. We don't want any bel-
lowing."

"Oh, great pip!" gasped Watson.

"We shall all get the sack if we fail," muttered Gulliver.

"We sha'n't fail!" I snapped. "Look lively, my merry soldiers!"

With a heave Mr. Kennedy Hunter was turned over. His face, red with mad fury, showed for a moment, and he drew his breath in to emit a terrific roar of anger. But then the pillow descended and smothered it.

"Tie him to the bed," I said grimly. "Don't hurt him—we don't want to copy his own methods. Just tie him securely, and—I'll do it myself."

With nimble fingers I twisted the improvised ropes round Mr. Hunter's ankles. Having secured them to the lower bedposts, I applied the same treatment to his arms, ending up by placing an extra rope completely round the bed so that it caught Mr. Hunter in the middle.

"He'll never free himself now," I said, with a nod of approval. "I'm afraid we shall have to gag him, though."

"Gag him?" gasped Watson.

"If we don't he'll yell the place down," I said. "Get a scarf, somebody!"

Montie found one, and again Mr. Hunter's face was revealed. He had heard all that was being said, of course, and he knew that we were in deadly earnest. And he made no attempt to yell.

"Boys—boys!" he panted huskily and with desperation.

"Well, sir?" I asked.

"I beseech you to cease this mad conduct—"

"I dare say you do!" exclaimed Handforth. "You can beseech all you jolly well like, though! We've got you—"

"Dry up, Handforth," I cut in. "Now, Mr. Hunter, I'm willing to hear what you have to say. I am the Commander-in-Chief of the Remove Revolutionary Army—"

"The—the what?" gasped Mr. Hunter amazedly.

"If you wish to say anything, sir," I exclaimed, "I'm ready to hear you."

"You—you infernal young hound!" raved the prisoner. "I'll—I'll—"

"Gag him!" I ordered sharply.

"Stay—stay!" panted Mr. Hunter, controlling himself with an almost superhuman effort. "I am willing to speak with you, boys. Why have you done this? Why have you rebelled in this disgraceful fashion?"

"It isn't disgraceful, sir," I said calmly. "We're doing it as a protest. But there's time, even now, to have matters set right. If you will agree to our terms, we'll set you free, and everything will be all right."

"Your—your terms?" breathed Mr. Hunter, writhing.

"Exactly, sir."

"What are your—your terms?"

I almost grinned. To hear the Tyrant of St. Frank's speaking in this fashion gave me—and every other fellow—sheer joy. Mr. Hunter was actually asking me to outline my terms.

He could see with half an eye that the situation was desperate—for him. And he wanted to save himself, if possible. I wasn't going to trust him, of course. But he would never be able to say that we had not attempted to come to an arrangement with him. I meant to state my peace terms at once. It would be clear then that the rebellion was not an unreasonable one.

It cost Mr. Hunter a huge effort to remain calm, but he succeeded.

"I'll tell you what we want, sir," I exclaimed briskly. "To begin with, Tregellis-West and Watson and I are not to be punished in the slightest degree, neither is any other chap in the Remove to be punished."

"Well?" snarled Mr. Hunter, on the point of bursting.

"You are to remove the ban on the cricket and place the playing-fields within bounds again," I proceeded. "In fact everything at St. Frank's is to go on exactly as it went on under Mr. Alvington's rule. That's all we want."

Mr. Hunter breathed with difficulty.

"Oh," he panted. "Oh, indeed! That is all you want, eh?"

"If you will guarantee—"

"You mad young fool!" hissed the House-master, glaring at me wildly. "Do you think for one moment that I will consider these preposterous demands? By heavens, you shall be expelled from this school tomorrow! You and half-a-dozen other wretched boys. You shall be flogged until you are raw—"

"That's what you'd like, you brutal Prussian!" interrupted Handforth indignantly. "You've half-starved these poor chaps, and you'd like to—"

"Silence, you infernal dog!" raved Mr. Hunter.

"By George!" roared Handforth.

He picked up a pillow, and brought it down on Mr. Hunter's face with more force than comfort. He held it there, his face red with wrath.

"Infernal dog, eh?" he gasped. "I don't care what happens now, Bennett! We gave the cad a fair chance, and he's only got himself to blame for the result. Jolly good luck to the revolution!"

"Hear, hear!"

I was in hearty agreement. Mr. Hunter had chosen to ignore my peace terms—as I had fully anticipated. Perhaps he would be more reasonable when he was made to fully understand that the Remove was grimly determined to resist.

To give in now would be madness. We should have committed suicide, so to speak. All the ringleaders would have been expelled, without the slightest doubt. The die had been cast, and it was absolutely necessary for us to proceed. We were fighting for our rights, and we meant to win.

The last shadow of doubt was driven away from the most uneasy mind. Every Remove was now eager and anxious to commence the barring-out.

"Gag him!" I exclaimed grimly.

The pillow was removed, and before Mr. Hunter could say another word the scarf was clapped over his mouth and bound tightly round his head. I attended to this task myself. In dealing with criminals, on certain notable occasions, Nelson Lee and I had learned the trick of gagging a man thoroughly.

By the time I had finished with Mr. Hunter I was perfectly satisfied that he would never be able to work his mouth free, however much he tried. He was in no pain, and would come to no harm whatever. Indeed, it can scarcely be said that he suffered any particular discomfort. He was covered over with a couple of blankets, and there was no fear of his getting cold.

Starke, who was being severely sat upon, was treated in a similar manner, and then we surveyed the pair with intense satisfaction. The revolution had started well, for we had been given the opportunity of showing Mr. Hunter that we were in deadly earnest.

It was now past the ordinary bedtime, so there was little prospect of any further visitors in the dormitory. But I took the precaution of locking the door on the inside. Any prowling prefect who might still be about would now be unable to enter. We should thus have a clear time for our preparations.

"Every fellow has got to dress himself," I said, looking round. "Shove all your clothes on, and be ready within five minutes. The sooner we're out of the dormitory the better."

"How are we going?" asked Tommy Watson breathlessly.

"By the window."

Fifteen minutes later, exactly, everything was in readiness for the departure of the Remove. I lined the fellows up in orderly fashion, for it was most necessary to prevent any larking about. Some of them did not exactly like taking orders from me, but they would soon get used to it.

A good many spare blankets from the big cupboard in the corner of the dormitory had been knotted together into a rope which would bear a couple of giants. And

this was fastened securely to the bed immediately against the window. One by one the Removes swarmed down to the Triangle.

Every boy took his own bedding with him, by my advice. And not only the bedding, but the mattress as well. Each junior rolled his own mattress round the bedding and made a large bundle of it.

These were thrown down into the Triangle, one by one, each fellow following his own particular bundle. In this way there was no confusion, and the exit proceeded without a hitch.

There were two or three extra beds in the Remove dormitory, so no fellow went short owing to Mr. Hunter and Starke. I was the last to leave the ship, as the Bo'sun put it. Being skipper, this was only right and proper. I switched off the light, went to the window, and stepped out upon the ledge.

Before descending I soft'y lowered the sash, and then swarmed nimbly down into the Triangle.

The Remove Revolutionary Army had commenced operations—the great barring-out had started in earnest!

CHAPTER III.

(Nipper continues the narrative.)

PREPARING THE STRONGHOLD—THE DEFENCES ARE COMPLETED—READY.

SO far everything had gone smoothly. Mr. Hunter's visit to the dormitory had been opportune in the extreme. We now knew that he was safely out of harm's way, and I felt comfortable. But we should have been hampered enormously had we been uncertain as to the Tyrant's movements. As matters now stood, hours of quietness lay ahead.

And they were necessary, too.

The majority of the juniors did not realize the tremendous amount of work which had to be done. They only thought of the barring-out and the natural excitement which accompanied it.

But I was leader—I was Commander-in-Chief.

And I found it necessary to plan out my campaign carefully and in detail. A slip or an act of carelessness would ruin the whole scheme, and our great venture would end in ignominious defeat.

It was only by careful organisation that I hoped to win through. Fortunately I was quite capable of the task, for Nelson Lee had always trained me to use my own resources and to rely upon my own judgment. I was stirred, too, by the thought that all these boys placed their trust in me.

De Valerie perhaps would have proved

an able leader, but nobody else in the Remove was capable of conducting a barraging-out save we two. It needed coolness, ingenuity and prompt action. Cecil de Valerie was proving himself to be a first-class fellow, and I was delighted with him.

Sir Montie Tregellis-West, too, came out of his shell, so to speak. He made many suggestions which were shrewd and useful, and I was quick to adopt them. One of these was to send Handforth, with nine men, on a food-hunting expedition immediately. Whilst we were preparing the defences Handforth could look after the grub.

I gave him a free hand, and told him to do just what he liked—always providing he didn't raise an alarm. I was rather curious to see how Handforth would succeed, and, I must admit, a trifle doubtful as to the result.

But, important as the food question was, it was still more important to prepare the defences.

I led my army silently across the Triangle to the old monastery ruins. Everything was still and silent. The College House lay perfectly quiet in the peaceful spring night. A fairly stiff breeze was blowing, but there was no sign of rain, and all the stars were shining and twinkling.

Reaching the ruins, I advised every member of the party to take a rest. It had been a bit of a struggle for some of the fellows with their mattresses and bedding, but there had been no real delays. And now I discovered that a feeling of uncertainty had settled upon my army. The boys were silent and thoughtful, and had completely lost their enthusiastic excitement.

The full seriousness of our step had been borne upon them, now that we had left the dormitory, and I had been fully expecting this reaction. It was really quite natural.

"Now, look here," I said quietly. "I know just what you fellows are thinking—at least, some of you. You've got the idea that we've made a giddy mistake."

"Well, it does seem a mug's game," muttered Hubbard uneasily.

"You won't say that to-morrow," I replied. "We're all in a muddle now. We're in the position of a family which has just arrived in a new house, with everything upside down. As soon as the furniture's set a bit straight and we've got some grub inside us we'll be as cheerful as sandboys. So we don't want any grumbles."

"How the dickens are we going to see down in those old vaults?" asked Church, shivering. "I suppose you didn't think of that?"

I knew that quite a number of chaps were a bit nervy. Now that we were actually in the ruins, the prospect of spending the night in the vaults did not seem at all desirable.

"Yes, as it happens, I did think of it," I replied. "I went down there a day or two ago with Tregellis-West and Watson, and we took a big parcel of candles with us. They're there now, and they'll easily last the night. We can see about getting a fresh supply to-morrow—although it may not be necessary

to spend a second night out of the dormitory. Hunter may give in."

"And supposing he doesn't?"

"Then we shall have to carry on—or give in ourselves."

"We shall simply be trapped in this fat-headed place!" growled Gulliver. "Hunter will be able to block the entrance, and we sha'n't be able to do a thing. He'll starve us out—that'll be the end of it!"

"By George," exclaimed De Valerie, "some of you are changin' your tone—what? Why not let Bennett go ahead, an' make him cheerful. I've got perfect faith in him, if you haven't!"

"Hear, hear!" murmured several voices.

"Leave it to Bennett!"

"It's not too late, even now, for some of you to back out," I said. "Of course you'll be punished, but that'll be your look-out."

"Rats!" snorted Handforth. "We're all in this, Benny! If any fellow talks about going back, I'll jolly well punch his nose!"

"Let's get downstairs," I said briskly.

There was a general move at once. Tommy Watson led the way, and it took us fully twenty minutes to convey all our bedding material down the narrow, circular stairway. By the time I arrived I found that half the candles were lit, and that the fellows were in an altogether more cheerful spirit.

With plenty of light all about, the vaults were turned into quite decent sleeping and living quarters. The air was pure, and the place was as dry as a bone. One or two juniors wanted to get to bed at once, but I would allow no slacking. Teddy Long was the only junior who went to sleep—and he was of practically no use, anyhow.

Without delay I despatched Handforth and his nine men to rout out some grub. Sir Montie and Tommy and I were terrifically hungry, but we were quite prepared to wait until the others were able to share a meal with us.

The Bo'sun, with several others, was left below in the vaults to see about the bed-making and the general arrangement of things. Meanwhile, I led the rest of my army up into the open air again.

"We've got to make this place a stronghold," I declared. "It's no good doing things by halves, and I'm ready to go to any lengths to get the job done thoroughly. First of all, we've got to surround ourselves with an impregnable outer defence."

"That sounds all right, begad!" remarked Sir Montie. "But we can't build walls in a night, dear old boy. It's askin' rather too much, although, goodness knows, I'm willin' to do my best."

I grinned.

"There's a little idea in my noddle," I replied. "Now let's map out the circle on which the wall is to be built."

This was rather a long task, for it was my idea to surround the fort completely—encircle it so that no intruder could possibly get within the defended zone. In two or

three places the ruins themselves formed part of the encircling wall; but it was mainly open ground.

"I've got heaps of faith in you, Bennett," said De Valerie; "but I'm hanged if I can follow your idea. How, in the name of wonder, are you goin' to surround the ruins with an outer defence, as you call it?"

"Quite simple," I said, looking at the doubtful crowd. "They're over by the woodshed—piles and piles of them."

"Piles of what?" asked Watson.

"Faggots."

"Faggots?" gasped Tommy. "Are you dotty?"

"Not at all," I said cheerfully. "They'll form the wall."

"The—the faggots?" asked De Valerie.

"By George! I see the wheeze now!"

Justin B. Farman slapped his thigh.

"Say, that's sure a dandy notion!" he exclaimed. "Guess you're the real goods, Bennett."

"Nothing easier," I went on. "All we've got to do is to cart those faggots here and make a wall of them. There are five or six coils of barbed wire in the woodshed, and we can string the faggots together and make them absolutely impassable. It all depends upon the way we fix the things up."

It wasn't long before we were all at work. The juniors went into it with a will, and a full hour passed in this way. By the end of that time we were hot and grimy, but all the faggots had been carried to the ruins—to say nothing of the barbed wire, heavy wooden stakes, and all sorts of other things.

"We're getting on!" I said approvingly. "By the time we've finished we shall be able to stand any old onslaught."

"I suppose it's really necessary?" asked Watson.

"My dear ass, what would happen if we didn't protect ourselves like this?" I asked. "We should simply be hemmed in the vaults, with no chance of giving battle or anything. Our plan is to hold out until Hunter gives in."

The work of constructing the defences commenced, and I was pleased with the way in which the Removites worked at their task. By this time, of course, there was no possibility of interruption—unless Mr. Hunter happened to get free, which wasn't at all likely.

However, this might chance to happen, and it was highly necessary to hurry with all speed. The faggot-wall was not so very difficult to make, for we had all the materials at hand, with plenty of barbed wire to help us.

And at last the encircling defences were completed. I had been so busy that I hadn't had time to think of Handforth, and I wondered how he had been getting on. I was rather anxious, in fact.

But, as it happened, I needn't have been. The one and only Edward Oswald was making history in his own little way, and was proving that I couldn't have set a better man to that particular task.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOOD-HUNTERS—HANDFORTH AND CO. ARE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL.

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH was inclined to be somewhat important.

He set off upon his very important task with the fixed determination to collar every ounce of food in the whole school.

"It's no good having a barring-out if we can't feed ourselves," he declared firmly. "We've got to lay our paws on all the tinned stuff we can—to say nothing of biscuits and bread, and that sort of thing."

"How are we going to do it?" asked McClure.

"Why, we're simply going to—to commandeer it," replied Handforth. "Yes, by Jove, that's the word—commandeer."

"It's all very well to bring out long words," said Church, "but I don't see how that's going to help us. The grub's all in the larders—"

"You leave it to me," said Handforth, nodding. "You won't be disappointed if you place your trust in me."

Handforth had amazing faith in himself, but the other juniors were not quite so certain. In addition to Church and McClure, the party consisted of Hubbard, Conroy minor, Owen major, Canham, Merrell, Kemp, and Griffith. About the only two out of the whole lot who really believed that any good would come of the expedition were Handforth himself and Conroy minor. Conroy was confident because he fully intended taking charge of affairs himself if Handforth messed them up.

"We'll give you a fair chance, Handy," said Conroy minor. "We'll—"

"Eh? You'll do what?"

"Give you a fair chance—"

"What do you think you're talking about?" snorted Handforth. "I'm leading this expedition, Conroy minor, and I don't want any of your rot! Give me a fair chance, indeed! If you ain't careful I'll leave you behind on sentry duty in the middle of the Triangle!"

"Look here—"

"I don't want any insubordination!" said Handforth firmly.

"You—you—"

"You seem to forget that I'm your commanding officer," went on Handforth, taking full advantage of his new powers. "Bennett has trusted me with this job, and I'm going to see it through. And, mind you, if any of you chaps disobey my orders you'll be reported to the Commander-in-Chief. That'll mean a court-martial, and you mustn't forget it's war-time. If any chap deserts, he'll be shot!"

"You—you ass!" snorted Conroy minor.

"What did you call me?" demanded Handforth, stopping dead.

"A fatheaded donkey—"

"I won't punch your nose here, Conroy minor, because officers don't demean themselves by punching privates," said Handforth.

with a sniff. "But you'll be reported as soon as we get back to Headquarters, and I dare say you'll be sentenced to three days' C.B.!"

There was a chuckle. Handforth was pleased to be humorous—unconsciously. He was quite serious himself. As a matter of fact he wasn't quite sure what "C.B." meant, having hazy notions that it was some dire sort of punishment for unruly soldiers.

"I suppose it's no good trying to argue with the ass," remarked Griffith. "It wouldn't be a bad idea to leave him behind and go off by ourselves."

"Who's commanding this patrol?" demanded Handforth wrathfully.

"Nobody!"

"What do you mean, you silly idiot?"

"Nobody's commanding it," said Griffith. "You're supposed to be, but you're simply talking a lot of piffle. You'll end up by giving us all away or something. It's a jolly poor look-out for breakfast in the morning!"

"Wasn't I elected to this post by the whole Form?" snorted Handforth.

"The Form must have been dotty——"

"Oh, dry up!" interrupted the commander.

"A pity I couldn't have had some decent chaps with me, instead of a crowd of grumblers," he went on bitterly. "I'll make you change your tune before long, my bucks!"

And, as a matter of fact, Handforth did!

Nobody was more surprised than Church and McClure. Handforth, to be quite truthful, proved himself to be an able general, in spite of all his talk and bluster. At all events, he succeeded in performing his allotted task with unqualified success.

Arriving at the rear of the Ancient House, Handforth ordered his men to remain behind while he went forward, scouting. Upon receiving this order the party came precious near to mutiny, but Handforth had his way. Five minutes later he returned, quivering with excitement.

"Right turn!" he whispered sharply. "Quick march!"

"The thundering ass!" breathed Conroy minor, beneath his breath.

The party marched in Handforth's rear until they arrived outside a small window. It was standing half open, and upon the window-sill stood a lantern, with a tiny light in it.

"What have you been up to, you fathead?" murmured Owen major.

"It's your place to carry out my orders, and not to ask questions!" said Handforth importantly. "Just for this once, though, I'll disobey military etiquette, and let you into the wheeze. I've found the grub—tons of it!"

"Not—not really?" gasped Conroy.

"The store-room," explained Handforth triumphantly. "My dear kids, it's simply packed with tinned stuff—bully beef and salmon and sardines and fruits, and goodness knows what else! There must be twenty or thirty tins of biscuits, too, to say nothing of all the bread for to-morrow!"

"But the store-room ain't open, is it?" asked Conroy.

"It wasn't—but it is now!" replied Handforth. "I forced the door with a giddy poker. Didn't you hear a crash? I don't suppose the sound could be heard upstairs—anyhow, we'll have to risk it."

The juniors found that Handforth had not been exaggerating. The supply of food available was enormous, for the store-room of the Ancient House had been discovered. Handforth had broken in without scruples, for it was absolutely essential to the success of the barring-out that the Remove should be fed. And, as Handforth pointed out, their people paid for their grub, and it was only right that they should have it. This was certainly one way of looking at the matter.

The transfer of the food was a long, tedious job. As a preliminary, Handforth placed his men in a line, five of them being within the building, and the other four outside. The tins and parcels of food were then passed from hand to hand in a continuous succession, and a great stack was made outside, behind a clump of thick bushes. Close upon two hours elapsed before the entire transfer was completed, and then the store-room looked as though some particularly enterprising burglars had been busy.

"Handy, old chap, we didn't think you were capable of it," said Griffith breathlessly, when the last load had been carried out. "Personally, I'm willing to carry out your orders now without question. What's the next move?"

Handforth considered.

"We'll leave that grub where it is for the time," he said thoughtfully. "There won't be enough there to last for long——"

"Not—not enough!" gasped Conroy minor.

"There are lots of mouths to feed, my son!"

"But we ain't going to be in that old vault for a week!" protested Griffith. "Hang it all, Handy, we needn't trouble about any more. Besides, it wouldn't be the thing to raid the College House."

"Who's suggesting anything of the sort?"

"Well, there's no grub anywhere else."

"Isn't there?" asked Handforth grimly.

"What about Mrs. Hake's shop?"

The nine juniors stared.

"We—we can't burgle that——"

"Don't be such a fathead, Owen major!" snapped Handforth. "Burgle be blowed! We're simply going to break in, and we're going to clear the entire stock."

"Don't you call that burbling?" hissed Owen major fiercely.

"Certainly not!"

"Then what the dickens is it—in your queer mind?"

"We shall simply be commandeering the food for the military," replied Handforth, with a nod. "Nothing wrong with that, is there? I mean to leave a note on the counter requesting Mrs. Hake to prepare her giddy bill. And I shall tell her to add ten per cent. extra, as a kind of compensation for the added trouble of re-stocking the shop."

"Did you have a jaw with Benny before you started out?" asked Canham suspiciously.

"Yes. Why?"

"That accounts for it," said Canham. "I thought you hadn't got all these ideas out of your own head——"

"You blithering ass!" snorted Handforth. "Benny didn't breathe a word to me about it. If it comes to a question of ideas, I rather fancy that I can go one better every time. But about that note for Mrs. Hake. I shall also tell her to tender the account to the Commander-in-Chief to-morrow, when it will be paid."

"We ain't millionaires," remarked Canham. "That little bill would come to about twenty quid—perhaps more."

"A trifle!" said Handforth, waving his hand. "I've got—lemme see—I've got about four bob myself."

The other juniors grinned.

"Well, I dare say a whip round will go a long way," remarked Owen major. "Both Tregellis-West and Bennett are always rolling in tin, anyhow. Fullwood and Co., too, have got plenty of it when they like. But let's get to business!"

The party walked across the Triangle quietly. The time now was close upon midnight, and everything was strangely still. Certain crackling sounds came occasionally from the direction of the ruins, intimating that the defenders were hard at work. The whole Remove, in fact, were accomplishing their separate tasks in a smart, businesslike way. Nipper's organised system of work was panning out well.

Handforth was leading the way to Mrs. Hake's shop. Quite suddenly he came to an abrupt halt. Then, before the others could quite realise what he was up to, he pelted off at a tangent towards the wall.

"What the dickens——" began Owen major. "Oh, my hat! There's somebody there!"

They could dimly see a form attempting to scramble over the wall. But Handforth reached the spot just in time. He grabbed a pair of legs, and the next second the two were rolling upon the ground.

"Lend a hand, you chaps!" gasped Handforth excitedly.

Many hands were lent, in fact. Sundry gasps and groans came from the prisoner. He was turned upon his face, and a louder gasp than ever sounded.

"You're hurtin' me, young gents!" he muttered huskily. "Oh, my lor'! If I ain't fair knocked over with surprise!"

There was a general gasp.

"Tubbs!"

"Yes, it's me, young gents," exclaimed Tubbs plaintively. "I wasn't doin' no 'arm—I wasn't, straight! I couldn't sleep, my uncle 'evin' 'ad a drop too much to-night, an' so I come up 'ere to 'ave a look at the old place. But I'm fair shook up," he added. "What are you young gents a-doin' out 'ere at this time o' the night?"

Handforth suddenly gave a chuckle. Tubbs, of course, was the faithful Ancient House page-boy, liked by everybody. He had been dismissed at a moment's notice by the hateful Mr. Hunter, to make way for Bates, and he had been staying with his uncle in Bellton. Poor Tubbs had nearly cried when he took

his departure, and now the juniors could understand his feelings.

"Look here, Tubby, we've got a job for you," said Handforth calmly. "We're going to appoint you orderly to the mess."

"Oh, crikey!" gasped Tubbs, staring. "Ain't you feelin' quite well, Master Handforth? I don't know nothin' about no mess——"

"You seem to be in a bit of a mess yourself," remarked Church humorously.

"This ain't the time for fatheaded jokes, Private Church," said Handforth, with a glare. "Attend to your duties, and don't rot!"

"Keep your hair on, Handy—I mean Field-Marshal!" murmured Church.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth took no notice of the subdued chuckle. Tubbs, quite bewildered, was allowed to rise to his feet. His astonishment was very natural, for it seemed extraordinary to him that these Remove juniors should be walking about the Triangle as though it were midday.

"Yes, Tubbs, we'll appoint you mess-orderly later on," said Handforth briskly. "For the present you'd better make yourself useful. We're going to break into Mrs. Hake's shop, and clear everything out——"

"Oh, my lor'!" gasped Tubbs.

"Then we're going to cart the stuff over to the monastery ruins," went on Handforth. "You're a strengthly beggar, ain't you? You can carry——"

"'Adn't—'adn't you better see a doctor, Master Handforth?" asked the ex-page-boy breathlessly.

"You'll get a thick ear if you ain't careful, Tubby!" growled Handforth, as the others chuckled again. "Where the dickens are your brains? We've got to have grub to carry on a rebellion, I suppose? You're so blessed dense!"

Owen major pushed forward.

"I reckon I know who's dense!" he said meaningly. "Tubbs doesn't know anything about the rebellion yet, you ass! The fact is, Tubby, old son, we've jibbed against the Hun, and we're barring-out—see?"

"Barrin'-out?" said Tubbs vaguely.

Five minutes were wasted in telling Tubbs of the situation. But when he fully understood he was bubbling over with eagerness and delight. The prospect of being allowed to help filled him with undiluted pleasure. He thanked his stars that he had wandered near the school.

The food-hunters were very busy during the next half-hour. The task of breaking into Mrs. Hake's shop proved fairly easy, and then the stock was examined. It was not so large as the juniors had expected.

Handforth, in fact, was quite indignant.

"Silly rot, I call it!" he growled, with a sniff. "Why, this stuff is hardly worth carrying away. Mrs. Hake ought to be jolly well ashamed of herself! There ain't ten quids' worth here!"

"Well, it's worth having," said Conroy. "Every little helps, you know."

"There'll be enough for your brekker, anyhow. Handy," said Owen major reflectively.

"I don't want any of your insinuations, Owen major!" snapped Handforth. "You needn't tell me I've got a good appetite. It's healthy, ain't it? And now that we're on rations, so to speak, I'm willing to make do with just a snack for breakfast—such as half a tin of salmon, a pound or two of biscuits, and a few apricots chucked in as a frish."

"Nice sort of mixture, ain't it?" grinned Owen.

"And that's a snack, I suppose?" asked Canham.

"What do you call it, then?" demanded Handforth.

"Well, if I wasn't a polite chap, I should call it a food-hog's breakfast," said Canham firmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you— Look here!" snorted Handforth, glaring round him. "You chaps seem to forget who I am! You're privates, and I'm your commanding officer—understand? And I don't stand any nonsense!"

"Except your own?" suggested Owen major. "You can't help standing that, of course!"

"You—you blithering ass!" roared Handforth.

"Being a private, it ain't my place to make any remarks," put in McClure, "but I was just wondering how much longer we were going to mess about. I don't know about you, Handy, but I want to get some sleep to-night. It seems to me you're a jawing officer instead of a commanding—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It took some few minutes to restore order. Handforth positively insisted upon punishing McClure's nose, regardless of the fact that McClure was a mere private. Against all military rules, six privates seized their commanding officer firmly, jammed his back against the wall, and held him there until he agreed to get on with the business.

The business proceeded fairly smoothly after Handforth had recovered his lost dignity. Mrs. Hake's stock was cleared out, and the note was left in a prominent position on the counter—the note offering full compensation. As Handforth had scrawled it, it was extremely doubtful whether Mrs. Hake would be able to decipher it. When Church suggested this possibility, however, another violent row was only averted by the abrupt stoppage of Church's remarks.

"Now, the best thing we can do is to buzz back to the—the general headquarters," said Handforth. "Nine chaps ain't enough to cart all this stuff across the Triangle, and I suppose those other asses have finished the defences by this time."

"In addition to which," said McClure, "I suppose you're a bit scared of doing any work yourself? I'll bet you'll crawl off to bed as soon as you get back—kidding yourself that you've done your bit."

"Well, ain't I?" demanded Handforth warmly. "What about brain work?"

"Impossible!" gasped Owen major. "You can't do brain work without a brain, Handy!"

"Shurup!" murmured Church. "Don't start him off again, you ass! Besides, Handforth's proved that he has got a brain. It's been a bit doubtful up till to-night, but we know now all right!"

"I should think you do," snorted Handforth.

"It's a brain in a thousand," declared Conroy enthusiastically.

Handforth nodded.

"Glad you realise it——"

"It ought to be preserved in spirits and put on show," concluded Conroy. "Brains like yours, Handy, don't grow everywhere, you know."

Edward Oswald looked suspicious. He wasn't quite sure whether the juniors were making fun of him, or not. Any other fellow would have had no doubt about the matter; but Handforth was delightfully innocent in many ways.

"Let's get on with the business," he said.

The food-hunters had certainly been absent from the camp for a great length of time, and the defences ought to be well-nigh complete. And Handforth was not unreasonable in suggesting that it should be a case of "all hands to the pump," with regard to the transfer of the spoils.

So the successful band, with Tubbs in their midst, marched off to the monastery ruins. They were a bit startled by the change which had been wrought during their absence. The ruins were hidden, practically, by a formidable wall of faggots.

"Jolly good idea of somebody's, anyhow," declared Handforth, with approval. "Benny thought of this, I'll bet. Barring myself, he's the best chap for ideas in the Kemove. Personally, I should have been in favour of laying down ten or twelve feet of barbed-wire entanglements, like they do at the Front——"

"And getting 'em completed by next week?" asked McClure sarcastically. "My hat! Your idea fairly dazzles us, Handy! These faggots are simply ripping; they've been put up within a few hours, and they're impassable. The best idea going."

Handforth grinned, and continued walking round the defences. As a matter of fact, he was looking for the entrance. Presently, however, he arrived at the starting-point again, and he and his men came to a halt.

"The silly idiots!" snorted Handforth. "They've forgotten us! We're shut out—barred out by our own defences!"

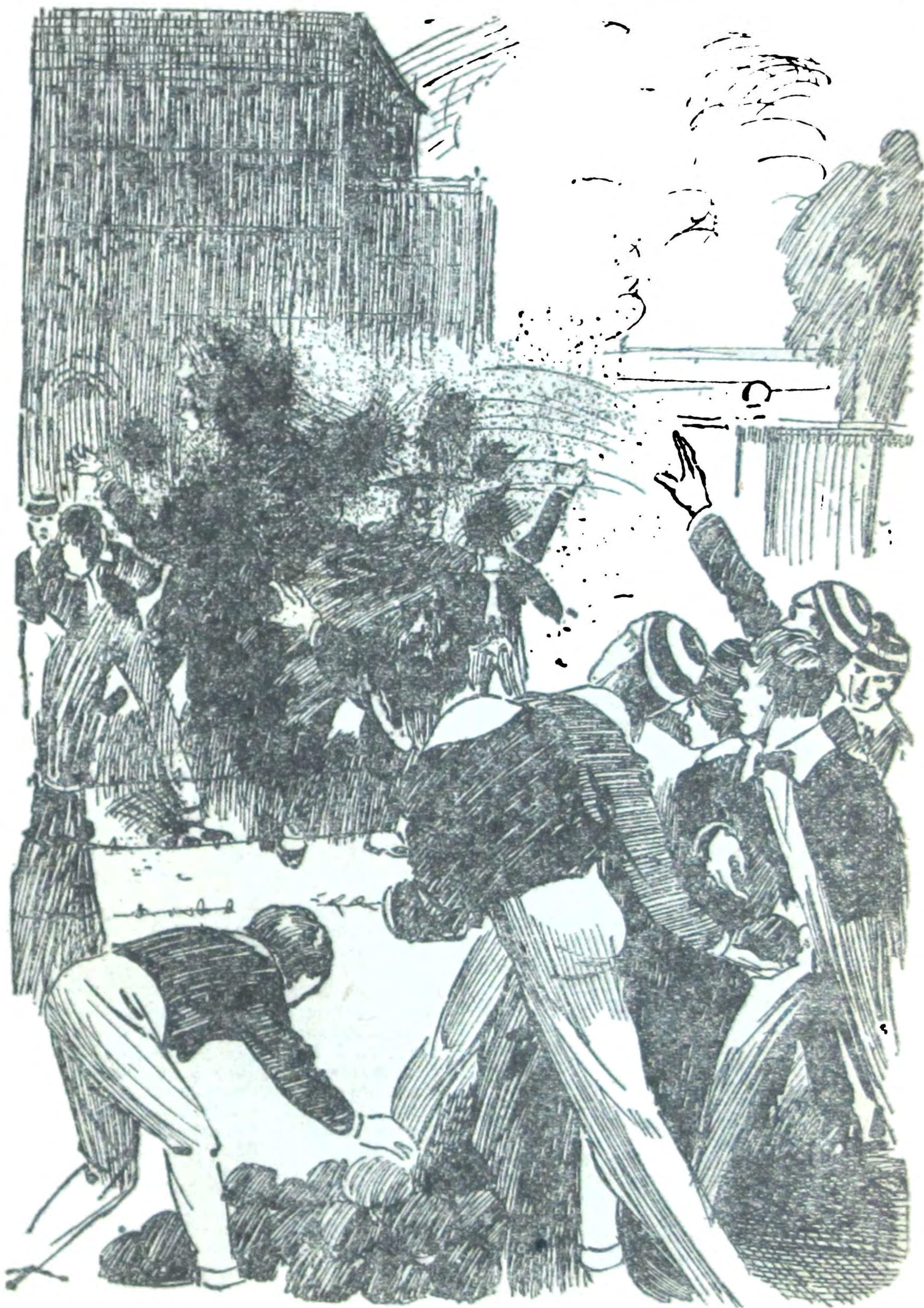
"Oh, my only aunt!" grinned Owen major.

"Nothing to grin at—— Hallo!" Handforth paused. "Who's that?"

"You chaps got the grub?" asked an anxious voice.

Handforth and Co. discovered an opening, fairly low down, and they all passed through. Tommy Watson, the Bo'sun, and several other juniors, were standing within the defended zone in their shirt-sleeves.

"Where's the grub?" asked Watson, looking round.



Whiz! Whiz!! Whiz!!!
The bombs shot through the air and burst violently over the attacking force, creating dire confusion.—(See page 23.)

"We've brought Tubbs along——"

"Tubbs!" echoed the Do'sun. "Shiver my mainmast! We ain't going to turn Tubby into salt-junk, are we? Housse me! Where's the skipper? Shove your head down the companion, somebody, and call him on deck——"

But Nipper, who had been "below"—to continue in Burton's nautical strain—now appeared at the "hatchway," and walked forward. The defences completed, the commander-in-chief was worried about the food supply.

"Got back, then?" he said crisply. "I thought you'd got lost, my sons. I can't see much grub knocking about—— Hallo, Tubbs! Where the dickens did you spring from, my merry boot-manipulator?"

Tubbs grinned nervously.

"I'm goin' to join the party, Master Bennett," he said. "Master Handforth sees I can be of some use orderin' the mess——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Doing what?" gasped Nipper.

"He's the very chap we want," said Handforth. "Moss orderly, Bennett. He can prepare breakfast, wash up the dirty things, and all that!"

"Yes, but where's the breakfast coming from?" asked Watson warmly. "Do you know I haven't tasted anything but bread and water for over thirty hours? I'm starving! And you chaps have the cheek to come back empty-handed!"

Handforth smiled in a superior fashion.

"There's grub enough to last us two or three days in the 'Triangle,'" he said, waving his hand. "It only needs fetching. We've come for help."

Nipper gripped Handforth's arm.

"You've done the trick, then?" he asked keenly.

"Didn't you trust me?" said Handforth, in an injured tone. "Of course I've done the trick. We've raided the store-room of everything, and Mrs. Hake's shop is as empty as Mother Hubbard's cupboard!"

"Look here——" began Hubbard warmly.

"Nothing personal intended!" grinned Nipper. "Good blo! You've proved your worth, Handy, and I'm proud of you."

"Well, I don't want to boast," said Handforth modestly, "but I certainly think——"

"My dear chap, if you don't want to boast, we're just as anxious not to hear you," interrupted Nipper. "It's time we were all snugly within the defences. Hunter may come raving out at any minute. Let's see about that giddy food!"

Reinforcements were called up from below, yawning. But a small army set off across the Triangle. And all the requisitioned food was transferred into the vaults within an hour. Several journeys were necessary, but the job was completed at last.

Tubbs helped like a man. He was everywhere at once, willing and eager. And Nipper was glad of him, for he would come in useful in a dozen different ways. He would be able to come and go unmolested—and that would be a great advantage.

At last the final consignment of food was

carried down into the vault, and the tired juniors prepared for bed. The mattresses were all laid down upon the dry floor in rows, and the beds made exactly the same as in the dormitory.

Everything was managed perfectly under Nipper's guidance. This barring-out was no hastily planned affair. It was perfectly organised, and the large supply of food which had been obtained put the finishing touch to the rebels' satisfaction.

They would be able to hold out for days, if necessary. If Mr. Hunter thought fit to attempt violence—— Well, Nipper would be ready. He had not organised defences without providing plenty of ammunition for the purpose of repelling an attack.

A bold step had been taken, and there was no backing out now without ignominiously surrendering. After food and sleep, the rebels would be ready for anything. There had been no wavering, except for a few moments at the first; and Nipper had soon settled that.

There was nothing to be done except await activities from the enemy. And the tyrannous Mr. Hunter would find the Rebel Remove ready for him!

CHAPTER V.

(The narrative resumed by Nipper.)

IN WHICH I RECEIVE A SURPRISE—THE TRAP IN THE TUNNEL—THE GUV'NOR'S EXTRA-ORDINARY CAPTIVE.

FOUR O'CLOCK boomed out solemnly from the great school clock tower.

It was really a disgraceful hour for juniors to be awake and out of their beds. Only Sir Montie Tregellis-West and myself, to be exact, were in this position, for all the other fellows were sleeping the sleep of the just.

It had been hard, gruelling work, but we had performed wonders. Mr. Hunter was at liberty to appear on the scene when he liked—and he would find that we were only too anxious to try conclusions with him.

For the first time since his arrival at St. Frank's we should be able to speak to him squarely. I had my "peace terms" formulated in readiness, and I was determined to accept no half-and-half measures. We were in the right, absolutely, and we were prepared to stick up for our liberties.

This barring-out had been decided upon as a last desperate resort. Mr. Hunter had treated Watson and Tregellis-West and myself with the utmost harshness, and we had every justification for rebelling. I was not troubled by a single qualm.

Personally, I'm a bit of a stickler with regard to the recognition of authority. I should have been dead against any defiance of the regular school rules. But Mr. Hunter's authority was nothing but a system of sheer tyranny, and we, as British boys, were not prepared to stand such Prussian treatment.

Matters had reached a grave crisis. It

was now a question of "holding out." If we won, Hunter's power would be broken. If we lost, then the Housemaster would be able to do just exactly as he liked. There could be no second rebellion.

Of course we didn't think of failure—at least I didn't. And, as leader of the rebels, I suppose the main responsibility rested upon my shoulders.

The perfect manner in which we had installed ourselves in our stronghold filled me with satisfaction. The defences were complete, and I couldn't see how we could be dislodged. There was no getting away from the fact that the best of good luck had attended our efforts so far. From the very moment that I and my chums had escaped from the tower prison we had met with nothing but success.

And now all was quiet.

Having worked for hours and hours, willingly and manfully, the Remove was taking its well-earned rest. In spite of the changed conditions, the fellows were actually sleeping in their own beds, too. Without decent sleeping accommodation, and without food, the Remove wouldn't have "stuck it" for six hours. But under the present conditions they were eager to continue the barring-out until victory was ours.

Although there was little prospect of a surprise, I deemed it wise to keep a constant watch. Therefore I was perched up on the highest point of the ruin—which the Bo'sun had aptly termed the crow's-nest. It was reached by a half-demolished stone stairway, and had been formerly a portion of the old chapel tower.

Whilst remaining unseen myself, I could see in every direction. The night was mild, but I had brought a couple of blankets up, and had wrapped myself up well. It was certainly more comfortable.

Sir Montie was on guard below with a single candle, and all the sleeping juniors for company. Perhaps it wasn't necessary to keep a watch in the vault, but I knew that a tunnel led to the old quarry, and we hadn't had time to barricade it yet.

At five o'clock I should awaken Yakama and Farman, who would relieve us; and so on until breakfast time.

I was fairly comfortable, and my hunger had been appeased satisfactorily. I kept myself awake by thinking of the various possibilities of the position. There would be trouble, certainly—huge trouble. But I should be ready to meet it. It was quite likely that Mr. Hunter would crumple up completely as soon as he found how securely we were entrenched. Dreading publicity, he might knuckle under at once. But somehow I didn't expect to win the day without a grim struggle.

Handforth had done well. In spite of his little ways—and these were exasperating at times—he was the owner of keen wits, and he knew how to use them when a real urgency arose. This was a test for many fellows—

My thoughts were abruptly interrupted.

Something had moved near a clump of bushes just beyond the outer defence system. I sat rigid, watching. My pulse was beating fast. A minute passed—two minutes. Yet the movement was not repeated. Had I imagined—

"By Cæsar!" I muttered. "There it is again!"

This time I saw the outline of a man—distinctly. He crept nearer and nearer, softly and stealthily. I rose noiselessly to my feet and leaned over the old stone-work. I half believed that Mr. Hunter had escaped and was now prowling round on the search.

At all events, it would be as well to know the truth.

"Who goes there?" I called out sharply, in a low voice.

Dead silence.

"Who is it?" I exclaimed, breathing rapidly. "Speak—"

The dark form revealed itself again, and stood still in the gloom.

"Are you alone?" came a clear, strange voice.

"Yes," I answered.

"Quite alone?"

"Yes."

"There is nobody else within hearing?"

"Not a soul, that I know of," I replied.

"Who are you?"

"I will tell you in a moment," came the voice. "You are sure that we are alone?"

"Yes, of course I am."

The figure moved a step nearer.

"Then, Nipper, for the love of goodness tell me what this means!" said the figure in a changed voice and with mild surprise.

I nearly fell off the ruin.

"Guv'nor!" I gasped joyously. "Oh, great guns! Guv'nor!"

I simply fell down the rough steps and tore to the secret "entrance" in the outer wall—in other words, the single loose faggot which served as a door. I hauled it away, and Nelson Lee crawled through.

He was disguised slightly, but I knew him at once.

"Fancy you turning up at this unearthly hour of the night, sir!" I said delightedly, wringing his hand with great warmth.

"And fancy my coming across you, Nipper, squatting up in a deserted ruin, at this unearthly hour of the night!" retorted Nelson Lee severely. "Upon my soul, young 'un, what will you be up to next? What is the meaning of it? What have you to say for yourself, you young rascal?"

"Oh, a tremendous lot, sir—"

"So I should imagine!"

The guv'nor tried to speak sternly, but he couldn't. I was filled with wonder and pleasure. This meeting was unexpected and altogether surprising. I knew that Nelson Lee was working in the district, and I knew that he had his eye on Mr. Hunter, as it were, but I hadn't expected this.

"Why are you not in your dormitory?" went on Nelson Lee.

"We've rebelled, sir."

"Rebelled?" repeated the gov'nor. "Do you mean—"

"The whole Remove—the Ancient House section, at least—is down in the old vault, sir," I went on. "We're barring-out. We're fed up with Mr. Hunter."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Nelson Lee in amazement. "You have actually had the utter audacity to revolt, Nipper? You have had the unparalleled impertinence to defy your Housemaster?"

"Oh, draw it mild, sir——"

"I am deadly serious, Nipper."

"So are we, sir," I said grimly. "You wait until you've heard what that beastly Prussian has been doing!"

Nelson Lee listened quietly while I told him of Mr. Hunter's tyranny. I didn't exaggerate anything, but related the simple facts. And I could see that the gov'nor was duly impressed—especially when I described Mr. Hunter's Hunnish action in imprisoning me in the old tower with Sir Montie and Tommy.

"So, all things considered, the Remove felt that it couldn't stand any further nonsense," I concluded grimly. "We're not butting against the regular school rule, sir, but only against Mr. Hunter. He's an absolute brute. And we don't intend to give in until he is willing to conduct the House just the same as you did."

Nelson Lee looked thoughtful.

"I'm afraid you're in for a stiff fight, my lad," he said gravely. "You may be well assured that Mr. Hunter will not tamely give in to your demands, which, I must admit, strike me as being reasonable and just. For the present moment my own connection with the school administration is severed, and so I am permitted to look upon this affair as an outsider. Honestly, I do not blame you for what you have done, but I am afraid you have not fully grasped the seriousness of your action."

"You needn't be afraid of that, gov'nor," I said promptly. "The Remove has elected me Commander-in-Chief, and I'm going to hold out until I've won the day. At any rate we're not going to stand sheer Prussianism at St. Frank's! And Mr. Hunter's a treacherous, bullying Prussian to his finger-tips."

"H'm! Things seem to have reached a pretty pass," commented Nelson Lee. "After what happened in the tower I cannot possibly censure you for taking this strong attitude, Nipper. From a worldly point of view I must condemn this revolt; but in my heart, and between ourselves, I wish you every success!"

I grinned.

"That's the talk, gov'nor," I said heartily. "I knew you'd understand how things were. But I'm a bit anxious. Will this barring-out affect your own affairs?"

"In what way, Nipper?"

"Well, I know jolly well that you're after Hunter for some reason," I said sagely. "You may be after a few other chaps, too,

but Hunter's being drawn into the net. You can't diddle me, you know."

Nelson Lee chuckled.

"My dear Nipper, I should not even attempt such an impossible feat," he said, laying a hand upon my shoulder. "Upon my soul, you seem to know far too much already. No, lad, your differences with Mr. Hunter will scarcely affect my own work. This barring-out is a school matter, pure and simple, and you must fight it out alone. I must warn you, however, not to interfere with my own work."

"I never have interfered," I protested. "But it's only natural that I should want to look into things, isn't it? Hunter's up to some queer game, and I've been trying to find out——"

"Ah! That's just the trouble," interrupted the gov'nor. "On two occasions you have penetrated these old tunnels, and you would have fared badly but for my timely aid. I assure you, Nipper, you will do no good by persisting in your investigation. Leave it to me. I understand the position, and you don't."

"Then why not tell me, sir?" I asked eagerly.

But Nelson Lee shook his head.

"I would do so in a minute, my lad, but when I accepted this commission I was sworn to absolute secrecy, and you would not have me break my word, I am sure. I can safely tell you, however, that the whole affair is of the utmost importance, and that there is much ticklish work to be accomplished yet. So leave me to it, Nipper, and conduct your own affairs in your own way."

I grunted.

"That's all very well, sir," I said. "If I get a chance of investigation I shall jolly well investigate! I don't mean to be disrespectful, sir, but—dash it all—I'm only human, and you've always taught me to be observant!"

"I am afraid you are incorrigible, you young rascal," said the gov'nor severely. "But I can quite understand your feelings, and I don't altogether blame you. But steer clear of this business as much as possible."

"Oh, I'll do that, sir," I agreed. "Why were you prowling about here to-night—or, rather, this morning?"

"To be perfectly frank, I intended taking a trip along the tunnel," replied Nelson Lee. "Naturally, I was greatly astonished to find the ruins surrounded by a respectable wall of faggots. And I was still more surprised when I heard you challenging me from the unknown darkness."

"I say!" I exclaimed, as a thought struck me. "I hope our being in the vault hasn't upset your plans——"

"Not in the least, Nipper," the gov'nor hastened to assure me. "I am not relying upon this tunnel to any great extent. But to refer back to the barring-out. Tell nobody that you have seen me——"

"Not even Tommy and Montie?"

"They, of course, are included in our select little circle," said Nelson Lee. "What you tell them, Nipper, is perfectly safe. The fact is, it will be far better for me to be in complete ignorance of this rebellion. Do you understand? I know nothing about it."

"Quite so, gov'nor," I grinned. "You've forgotten all I've told you?"

"My mind is a perfect blank in that respect," smiled the gov'nor. "And now I must leave you— One moment!"

He paused, and listened. Quite distinctly we heard the sound of footsteps ascending the stone stairway from the vault. Nelson Lee acted quickly. He dodged behind a jutting clump of faggots and crouched there. It wouldn't do for him to be seen by Handforth or any of the other fellows.

The climber reached the surface and emerged from the ruin.

"Benny boy!" breathed a panting voice. "Begad! Where are you, dear old fellow? I'm in a shockin' state of—"

"What's the matter, Montie?" I asked sharply.

"Oh, there you are," exclaimed Tregellis-West, hurrying to my side. "Come with me at once, dear boy. There's something happening—"

"Is anybody else awake?"

"No. That's why I want you to come down at once, dear old chap," said Sir Montie breathlessly. "I was keepin' watch — Begad! Who—who's that?"

Sir Montie received a bit of a fright, for Nelson Lee had suddenly emerged—after hearing that nobody else was awake.

"Do not excite yourself, Montie," said the gov'nor softly.

"Oh, great Scott!" gasped Tregellis-West. "It's Mr. Alvin'ton!"

He was far more surprised than I had been, but for some reason he asked no questions. He recovered his composure with surprising alacrity, and grasped Nelson Lee's arm.

"Nothin' could have been better, sir!" he exclaimed. "I was just goin' to tell Benny, but I'm glad you're here. I was sittin' in the vault, all in the dark. The candle had burnt out, you know. An' I suddenly noticed a point of light far away down the tunnel. There's somebody comin' along, sir—somebody walkin' up the tunnel."

"Oh, my hat!" I gasped.

Nelson Lee snapped his fingers.

"You acted wisely in reporting this to Bennett, Montie," he said quickly. "And I must compliment you upon your excellent common-sense in leaving the other juniors to sleep on undisturbed. Come, boys, we must not lose a second."

"You—you mean—"

"We are going to meet this gentleman in the tunnel," said Nelson Lee crisply. "I have an idea that he is the very man I am after—no, not Mr. Hunter. But come quickly, lads."

He led the way to the circular stairway, and descended swiftly. Sir Montie and I tumbled after him as quickly as possible, and we all arrived in the vault together. The Remove was sleeping soundly, and our movements disturbed nobody. And one glance up the tunnel showed us the figure of a man within a hundred yards!

Nelson Lee acted promptly.

If he had allowed the fellow to enter the vault, the ensuing struggle would have aroused the whole Remove, and that would have been decidedly awkward. So the gov'nor ran forward quickly, flashing a powerful electric torch at the same moment. Sir Montie and I pelted after him.

I guessed that this man had an appointment with Mr. Hunter. But the latter gentleman, for very obvious reasons, was not in a position to keep any appointments to-night.

"Ach, vot iss te madder?" came a sharp, startled inquiry from along the tunnel. "Himmel! You gif me te fright, friend Hunter—"

"A German!" I gasped, astounded.

The man behind the light was undoubtedly a son of the Fatherland, and he was taken completely by surprise. Even as he was speaking Nelson Lee grabbed his arm. The man realised his danger at that second; he knew that he had run into the hands of enemies.

"I advise you to give up quietly, Lieutenant Otto Reinhardt," exclaimed Nelson Lee sharply. "You have been out of internment quite—"

"Mein Gott!" panted the other desperately. "You cursed Englander, you me not make te prisoner!"

It was an exciting moment. The German struggled with mad fury. I don't suppose he would have got free but for the fact that he resorted to methods which were quite characteristic of his race. He hacked at Nelson Lee's shins with his heavy boots, and the gov'nor received several nasty kicks.

For a second he was at a disadvantage, and the man turned and fled. Sir Montie and I, owing to the confined nature of the tunnel, were unable to lend a hand at the crucial moment.

"The fool!" snapped Nelson Lee angrily. "He cannot possibly escape in the long run. Leave this to me, boys!"

And, without another word, the gov'nor set off down the tunnel at full speed. Sir Montie and I, totally disregarding his instructions, followed hard at his heels. It wasn't likely we were going to be left in the cold now.

Down the tunnel we tore, and I was rather glad that this chase was taking place. The German's voice had been loud and discordant, and, so close to the vault, some of the juniors might have been aroused. It would be better to continue the argument further away.

Although I thought a lot, my mind was

In a state of chaos. What did this new development mean? The fugitive was a German military officer—a prisoner of war, no doubt, who had escaped from internment. How was he connected with Mr. Hunter? The whole affair was sinister and mysterious in the extreme.

We rushed along, and I wondered if we should be led into the old quarry before the fugitive was overtaken. He was certainly maintaining his distance well. And then something happened.

I heard a splintering crash ahead, accompanied by a wild, frantic yell. After that came complete silence.

"Oh, begad!" gasped Sir Montie. "What's happened?"

Nelson Lee was still pelting on. But he came to an abrupt halt in a fairly wide part of the tunnel, and stood flashing his light down into a black cavity which yawned at his feet.

"Neat!" he exclaimed exultantly. "Very neat indeed!"

And then Sir Montie and I saw what had happened. The yawning cavity was really a deep pit—a trap. Right at the bottom, sprawling upon the rocky floor, was Lieutenant Otto Reinhardt. He glared up at us balefully.

"How the dickens did he fall down here, sir?" I panted. "He had a light with him, and this hole was big enough to see, I should think——"

"It was a trap, my boy," replied Nelson Lee, with a curious note of satisfaction in his voice. "These gentry had a suspicion, probably, that somebody was prowling about the tunnels—myself, to be exact. They accordingly set a neat little trap for me."

"But you wouldn't have fallen into this hole, sir?" protested Montie.

"I might have done, Tregellis-West," said Lee, shaking his head. "Five minutes ago it was invisible. A frail covering of wood and canvas, as you can see, was placed over the top, the whole being disguised with liberal supplies of sand. The thing, in fact, was a cleverly manufactured pitfall."

"And he fell into it himself?" I gasped.

"Exactly. In his excitement and haste he probably mistook the spot—or he may even have forgotten its existence," replied the gov'nor. "Well, boys, you may as well return at once."

"And how about you, sir?"

"I have a good supply of rope and handcuffs upon me," replied Nelson Lee. "I shall remove my prisoner by the quarry exit. No, boys, you cannot help me any further. I am very grateful for the aid you have already supplied. Proceed with your own affairs, and be prepared for exciting events before long."

And that's all we could get out of the gov'nor. We left him there with his prisoner, quite satisfied that he could deal with him

single-handed. Sir Montie Tregellis-West and I returned to the vault.

And the rest of the night passed uneventfully. But in the morning——!

CHAPTER VI.

MR. CROWELL IS PUZZLED—THE MISSING REMOVE—FOUND.

MR. CROWELL, the highly respected master of the Remove, was puzzled. He had every reason to be puzzled.

The rising-bell had rung as usual, and it was high time that the Remove came down. So far, however, there had been no sign of the juniors. Mr. Crowell concluded that they were unusually sluggish this morning. This was rather surprising, too, since Mr. Hunter was so harshly strict.

Chambers and Bryant, of the Fifth, strolled downstairs. Mr. Crowell, who was in the lobby, stepped forward.

"Do you know if the Remove is stirring, boys?" he asked. "I shall have to go upstairs with the cane——"

"Blessed if I know what's happened to the young beggars, sir," said Chambers, speaking with the loftiness of a senior, although he was only six months older than many Removites. "They must be all drugged or something."

"What nonsense are you talking, Chambers?"

Chambers stiffened.

"It ain't my habit to talk nonsense, sir," he replied. "I'm only saying what I think. The door of the Remove dormitory is locked on the inside, and there's not a sound within the room. I banged on the door, but only heard a few scuffles. I suppose the kids are up to some lark or other."

Chambers and Bryant passed on, and Mr. Crowell decided that the situation demanded an instant investigation. As he was about to ascend the stairs, however, Bates appeared at the top.

"I say, Mr. Crowell——" he began.

"If you wish to speak to me, Bates, you will come down here," said the Form-master sharply. "And please understand that I will not allow you to call me by my name in that fashion."

"Sorry, sir," said Bates, after he had descended. "But I'm worried, sir. 'Ave you seen Mr. 'Unter this morning, sir?"

"No, Bates, I have not."

"Then you don't know where 'e is, sir?"

"No."

"It's rather surprising, sir," went on Bates, scratching his head. "I've just bin to Mr. 'Unter's room, and 'e ain't there. The bed ain't bin slept in at all."

"Mr. Hunter's movements are no concern of mine, Bates," said the Form-master coldly. "If Mr. Hunter chooses to spend

the night out of his bed, that is his affair. Do not make a fuss over nothing."

And Mr. Crowell passed upstairs, leaving Bates with an uneasy expression upon his pasty, unpleasant face. Mr. Crowell was not at all interested in Mr. Hunter's doings—but he was interested in the Remove. And he fully intended routing the boys out of their beds if they had dared to ignore the rising-bell.

Arriving at the dormitory door, Mr. Crowell seized the handle. But the door refused to budge, being obviously locked upon the inside. Mr. Crowell hammered forcibly upon the panels. "How dare you lock this door?" he shouted angrily. "Ben-nett!"

Silence, except for a curious mumble from within.

"Upon my soul!" gasped Mr. Crowell, listening intently. "What on earth can be the matter? Boys—boys! Answer me at once!"

Still no reply.

Mr. Crowell was becoming positively alarmed. The Remove had certainly not appeared downstairs, and it was therefore obvious that the boys were still in the dormitory. But he knew well enough that they would not deliberately ignore him in this fashion. Something extraordinary must have happened.

"Ah! Fenton—Morrow!" exclaimed Mr. Crowell, as the two prefects appeared at the end of the passage. "Please come here at once."

Fenton and Morrow, considerably surprised, listened to Mr. Crowell's words. They could not quite believe that the Remove had locked themselves in their dormitory and were refusing to answer their Form-master's summons.

"Shall we force the lock, sir?" suggested Morrow. "It's only an ordinary one, and Warren can repair the catch in no time."

"We will give the boys one more chance," said Mr. Crowell sharply.

The two Sixth-Formers hammered upon the panels until the door shook. But the only result was a repetition of the strange muffled sounds from within the dormitory. Not even a whisper or a movement.

"Smash the lock!" ordered Mr. Crowell angrily, but with anxiety.

The two prefects placed their shoulders to the door, gave one heave, and it flew open with a crash.

Fenton and Morrow were precipitated into the dormitory, and Mr. Crowell strode in after them. And then all three came to an abrupt halt. The dormitory was empty! Not a single junior was to be seen. And, most amazing of all, the beds were bare, even to their springs!

Mattresses, blankets, sheets, quilts—all had vanished!

"Good—good gracious!" gasped Mr. Crowell faintly.

"What the deuce have the young idiots been up to?" said Fenton. "Hallo! There's somebody in one of those beds——"

Two beds were still looking as usual, and certain movements upon them suggested the idea they were occupied. Mr. Crowell and the prefects paced forward, and Morrow pulled the blankets from the first bed.

A fully dressed form lay there—bound to the bed, hand and foot!

"Great Scott!" gasped Morrow. "It's Starke! I wondered where he'd got to——"

He was interrupted by a roar from Fenton, who had uncovered the other form. The consternation was complete, for the second bound figure was recognised as that of Mr. Kennedy Hunter, M.A.!

"Re—release them at once!" panted Mr. Crowell, when he could speak.

The first shock over, Fenton and Morrow glanced at one another privately. Their glances were not exactly those of concern. It might have been possible to detect satisfaction in their expressions. Mr. Hunter had not confined his Hunnish habits to the long-suffering Remove.

It was plainly evident that the Remove had jibbed—and jibbed severely. Something unparalleled in the history of St. Frank's had happened, and Mr. Crowell and the prefects alike were too astonished for mere words.

A moment later they had no opportunity for voicing their views. Mr. Hunter saw to that. He was quickly unbound and the gag was removed. Starke was treated in the same way. Both were unhurt in the slightest degree.

"I'll skin those young rotters!" roared Starke violently. "I'll——"

"Silence, Starke!" ordered Mr. Crowell.

"That's all very well, sir!" shouted Starke. "I've been tied to that bed——"

"Starke!" screamed Mr. Hunter, his eyes glittering evilly. "How dare you speak before me? Hold your infernal tongue, boy!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Starke, cooled by Mr. Hunter's fury.

"I have been assaulted in the most outrageous manner possible!" burst out Mr. Hunter wildly. "I have been tied to that bed all night—and the accursed boys who are responsible——"

"You forget yourself, Mr. Hunter!" protested Mr. Crowell.

"How dare you question my words, sir?" roared the Housemaster, glaring at Mr. Crowell savagely. "Be silent! Those accursed boys, I say, are responsible for this gross outrage. They shall suffer—the ring-leaders shall be expelled from the school, and the others flogged until their backs are bleeding——"

"You are mad, sir!" shouted Mr. Crowell sharply.

"Better cool down a bit, sir," advised Fenton, with disgust. "When it comes to

talking about flogging the chaps until they bleed, I've done. Prussianism never did appeal to me!"

And Fenton walked towards the door, accompanied by Morrow. His words, spoken with such obvious contempt, calmed Mr. Hunter more than anything. He was still enraged, but the madness had left him.

"Fenton!" he shouted.

"Well?" said the captain of St. Frank's, turning.

"You made a remark just now," said Mr. Hunter, striding forward. "I will give you one minute in which to apologise, boy."

"Sorry, sir, I can't do that," said Fenton steadily. "I meant it!"

And Fenton walked out of the dormitory without another word. Morrow accompanied him, wondering what the end of this amazing affair would be. Mr. Hunter, his eyes blazing with fury, turned to Mr. Crowell.

"Apparently there is a wave of insane insubordination passing through the school," he snarled. "I have been too easy-going

"On the contrary, sir, you have been far too harsh," interjected Mr. Crowell curtly. "You have only your own brutal actions to thank for this appalling state of affairs. If you will listen to my advice——"

"I will take no advice from you, Mr. Crowell!" bellowed Mr. Hunter, turning white with renewed fury. "The Remove has signed its own death-warrant—the wretched boys shall suffer to the full penalty."

"But where are the boys?" asked Mr. Crowell tartly. "They have gone—you have succeeded in driving them out——"

"Bah! The young fools are hiding in one of the outbuildings," snapped Mr. Hunter. "In the gymnasium, probably. They shall suffer, the infernal young dogs! There will be such a flogging this morning that the whole school will talk of it with bated breath for years to come!"

And Mr. Hunter, afraid to trust himself to further speech, swept out of the dormitory, and went to his own room. Mr. Crowell was forced to appeal to Starke for an explanation of the amazing affair.

Twenty minutes later Mr. Hunter was in his study, and several other masters were with him. The Remove, in fact, was not to be found! Search parties were even now scouring the buildings for the missing juniors.

Half the Sixth were engaged in the search. The news had spread round like wildfire. Every fellow in the College House and the Ancient House was talking about it. The juniors, indeed, nearly went off their heads.

Tremendous excitement prevailed in the Remove—that portion of the Remove which boarded in the College House. Bob Christie and Co. could scarcely believe the story when they first heard it; but their enthusiasm and admiration knew no bounds.

"A barring-out!" exclaimed Christine with conviction. "That's the game, I'll bet a quid! Jolly good luck to 'em—that's what I say!"

And it was what practically everybody else said, too. It was recognised throughout the school that Mr. Hunter was completely to blame for this astounding development. Ever since he had arrived at St. Frank's he had asked for trouble. And now he had found it—plenty of it—more of it than he could do with!

The mystery of the missing Remove was engaging everybody's attention. But Mr. Hunter took prompt measures. The whole school was forbidden to go out-of-doors; the search-parties, in this way, had a clear field. Mr. Hunter had no real authority over the College House, but Mr. Stockdale had not interfered in this matter, since he himself deemed it advisable that the fellows should be kept within check.

"Frankly, Mr. Hunter, I am compelled to say that you are totally to blame for this disgraceful occurrence," said Mr. Stockdale, in Mr. Hunter's study. "You have imposed such restrictions upon the boys, and you have inflicted such unfair punishments, that an open rebellion was almost inevitable. Indeed, you received a warning only the other day—when you were forcibly ejected from your own House by your own boys—but you thought fit to ignore it. This fresh outburst is merely a natural outcome of the other, and, personally, I cannot suggest any solution——"

"Then Mr. Stockdale, I shall be very much obliged if you will leave the matter to me," interrupted Mr. Hunter curtly. "Furthermore, I do not wish for—and will not put up with—any criticism. You will allow me to conduct my own House in my own way. These juniors shall suffer very severely for their mad folly."

Mr. Stockdale set his lips and said no more. And some minutes later Wilson, of the Sixth, arrived with the report that the missing juniors were nowhere to be found. The news caused a little flutter of consternation amongst the masters. Even Mr. Hunter looked uneasy.

"Don't stand there, Wilson!" he snapped harshly. "Go back and search again—search everywhere! Be off with you, boy!"

Wilson went without a word—to his own study. He certainly had no intention of continuing the search after what Mr. Hunter had said to him. The spirit of rebellion was at liberty in the whole of the Ancient House.

"Is it possible that the boys have returned to their homes by the early morning train?" suggested Mr. Crowell perplexedly. "Really, Mr. Hunter, I think it would be advisable to telephone to the station——"

"Tut—tut!" snapped Mr. Hunter. "The boys are still upon the school property. I am convinced. Come in—come in!"

The door opened to admit the portly and agitated person of Mrs. Poulter, the house-keeper.

"Confound it, Mrs. Poulter, I cannot be bothered now!" snapped Mr. Hunter.

"But, sir," gasped the house-dame, with great agitation, "you must hear me—you must, sir! The store-room's empty—as empty as could be! I never saw the likes of it in my life before. Everything's gone!"

"The store-room?" asked Mr. Hunter sharply. "Food?"

"What else does one keep in the store-room, to be sure!" panted Mrs. Poulter.

Mr. Hunter simply danced with rage.

"You may go, Mrs. Poulter!" he roared. "Upon my word! The young rascals—the confounded thieves! They have taken food from the store-room, and there is not the slightest doubt that they are still upon the school property!"

Mrs. Poulter retired, more agitated than ever. Her news had certainly given Mr. Hunter a shock. He could understand why he had been made a prisoner all night. The Removites had been preparing for a siege!

"It is quite possible that the misguided boys are camping out in the woods," suggested Mr. Stockdale thoughtfully. "They must be brought back and punished. But I seriously deprecate any infliction of severe floggings, Mr. Hunter. I hate the very thought of dictating, but I have been at St. Frank's far longer than you have, and I feel partially responsible——"

The door opened abruptly, and Starke appeared, looking very excited.

"I've found the young rotters, sir!" he announced breathlessly.

"Oh, indeed—indeed!" said Mr. Hunter, his eyes gleaming. "Splendid, Starke. Have the wretched young rogues brought in——"

"But they're in the monastery ruins, sir," panted Starke. "They must have got down in the old vault."

"What!" roared Mr. Hunter, in a terrible voice.

"They've got faggots all round, making a wall," went on Starke, bursting with excitement. "The young sweeps mean to resist, I expect. By George, we'll give them resist!"

The Remove had been found! This was not very surprising, since the rebels were very near at hand. But the great hour had come!

Mr. Hunter gave orders in rapid succession, and ten minutes later Mr. Hunter led an attacking army against the rebellious Remove. Starke and Kenmore and a whole crowd of other Sixth-Formers were included—to say nothing of Bates and Warren, two or three grooms, and other school employees.

They marched across the Triangle, with Mr. Hunter at their head. Every window of both Houses was packed with faces. Mr. Hunter was off to bring in the Remove by the scruff of its neck, so to speak. He confidently expected to succeed.

But, although Mr. Hunter was unaware of it at the minute, he was soon to discover that his harsh rule had started a conflagration which was not to be easily subdued!

CHAPTER VII.

(The narrative concluded by Nipper.)

THE GREAT MOMENT ARRIVES—THE ATTACK—VICTORY FOR THE REMOVE.

"**B**EGAD! Here they come, dear old boys!"

Sir Montie Tregellis-West was quite enthusiastic. Every other fellow was half dotty with excitement, and I had had considerable difficulty in keeping them cool. For the great test was about to come!

The crucial moment had arrived, to put it in a nutshell.

Mr. Hunter was advancing upon our stronghold with a formidable army. Left to themselves, they would be able to tear down the faggot-defences, and we should be defeated at the outset.

Needless to say, I had a card up my sleeve.

Under my orders, every boy had taken his allotted place. The whole revolutionary army was placed behind the defences, with plenty of ammunition at hand, and with a fierce determination to resist the attack.

"Remember, chaps, that it's going to be a fight," I said grimly. "If we lose our nerves, it'll be all up. But don't forget that we're fighting for our liberties, and that we're not going to knuckle under."

"Rather not!" roared Handforth. "Down with Hunter!"

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for the Revolution!"

"Hurrah!"

I was glad to see the fellows so enthusiastic, for I must confess that I had had a few doubts as to the attitude the bulk of the rebels would take when it came to a real fight. The reckless spirit of open revolt had gripped them, although there were no signs of wildness and disorder. The fellows realised the necessity of keeping themselves under control.

It was impossible for me to command the whole army during an engagement with the enemy, so I had appointed De Valerie, Farman, and Handforth to the command of certain sections. Handforth had been thus honoured in recognition of his "food" services. Incidentally, he didn't seem at all flattered—he'd expected it!

"No sniping, mind," I exclaimed, looking round at my men. "Nobody must fire without receiving the order. If possible, I want to parley with Hunter before the battle starts. If he's willing to give in to us, we'll surrender."

"Without a fight?" roared Handforth, from his section of the defences.

"Certainly!"

"Rot! That's a potty idea!"

"You may be spoiling for a fight, Handy, and I expect we all are," I replied. "But it's only right to give Hunter a chance. If he won't agree to our terms—well, there'll be a nice little peck of trouble."

"Bushels of it, in fact, dear boy!" remarked Sir Montie languidly.

He and I were feeling no effects of our lack of sleep, for we had not got into bed until

close upon five o'clock. The excitement of the whole position kept us fully awake, and the other fellows had had quite a decent sleep, and were fresh enough for anything. As I had predicted, sleep and food had made a great difference in the rebels' state of mind. Everybody was keen upon continuing the revolution. Even Fullwood and Co. forgot to be caddish.

I was occupying a fairly prominent position upon a portion of the ruins. From here I could converse easily with anybody outside the defences. All the other fellows were lined up upon the walls and jagged stonework. We were firmly resolved to sell our liberty dearly.

Mr. Hunter called a halt a short distance away, and then came striding forward, with swishing gown. I could see that he was boiling with wrath, but this only made my determination stronger.

"You young fools!" exclaimed Mr. Hunter politely, and with just that amount of sting in his voice to work the fellows up to the pitch I required. "Every boy will at once step out of this mad barricade and line up before me."

"I don't think so, sir!" I said firmly.

"As for you, Bennett, you will be expelled this very day!" roared Mr. Hunter, his temper getting the better of him. "Handforth and Tregellis-West and De Valerie will also be expelled."

"Go hon!" said Handforth calmly.

"It's all very well to talk like this, sir," I said quickly, in order to shut Handforth up before he got fairly started. "We didn't start this barring-out in a hurry, and we don't intend to give in without——"

"Are you presuming to dictate to me, Bennett?" thundered Mr. Hunter.

"I am stating our terms."

"Your--your terms!" choked the Housemaster. "You miserable little idiot! Do you suppose for one moment that I am going to discuss terms with you?"

"I had that idea, sir."

"Then your Intelligence, Bennett, is even of a lower order than I imagined," snapped Mr. Hunter sourly. "You will at once step out here."

"Rats!" roared Handforth, unable to control himself. "Why the dickens don't you give the word, Benny?"

I turned sharply.

"I'm conducting this affair, Handforth," I said. "You've just got to remain quiet until you receive further orders."

"That's all very well—— Ow!"

Handforth had been seized from behind by several insubordinate privates, and he was held secure.

"Now, Mr. Hunter," I said, "we're quite willing to surrender——"

"What!" roared the Remove, in one voice.

"We're quite willing to surrender——" I repeated grimly.

Mr. Hunter recovered his temper.

"In that case, Bennett, I may be inclined to consider that instant expulsion will be sufficient in your case," he exclaimed benevo-

lently. "But you must lead the boys out in an orderly fashion——"

"Hold on, sir," I interrupted. "There are certain conditions."

"Conditions—conditions!" snapped Mr. Hunter.

"Certainly," I went on. "To begin with, nobody is to be punished—nobody is to be expelled and there are to be no floggings!"

"How—how dare you!" roared Mr. Hunter violently. "If you do not surrender at once, you infernal young ruffians, I will——"

"I haven't finished yet, sir," I interrupted. "Nobody must be punished, and we demand that all the restrictions you have imposed shall be removed. And the Ancient House is to be conducted in a British manner, and not on Prussian lines. That's all we want, sir," I concluded firmly. "If you are willing to grant these requests, we're willing to surrender without a fight."

Mr. Hunter gasped for breath. His indignation and fury was so great that speech was impossible for some moments. The Remove looked on grimly and with keen satisfaction. Every fellow could see that there would be no surrender without a fight!

"You—you impudent young hound!" shouted Mr. Hunter, shaking his fist at me. "I will not only expel you, but flog you until you cannot move for a week! I will teach you that——"

"In other words, sir, you won't accept our terms?" I asked sweetly.

"You mad young fool!" raved Mr. Hunter frenziedly.

"That's good enough!" I snapped, turning. "Now then, my merry rebels, let him have it! Down with the Hun! Long live the revolution!"

"Hurrah!"

"Fire!" roared Handforth triumphantly.

I gave the word at the same moment. Two dozen pea-shooters were levelled, and the next second the air sang with the hum of the "bullets." They battered against Mr. Hunter's head and face and chest. And even a humble pea, sent with sufficient force, stings in the most appalling fashion. To be spattered with them is by no means pleasant!

"Ow! Ow! Yaroo!" howled Mr. Hunter wildly.

He danced about, ducked, and attempted to regain a dignified attitude. But the second volley caught him at the right second, and he roared with pain afresh. Unable to face the fire, he fled to the spot where the others were waiting.

"By heaven, you shall pay for this!" he roared hoarsely, shaking a quivering fist at the rebels.

"Yah!" shouted a dozen voices. "Hun!"

"Brute!"

"Go over to Germany!"

Scores of taunts and jeers were flung by the juniors, and Mr. Hunter writhed as he stood beyond range. Whether he writhed at the taunts or from the effects of the peas was doubtful.

"Don't forget my instructions," I ex-

claimed grimly, addressing the rebels. "Peas first, then the bombs, and the liquid fire after that!"

"My hat! Talk about the trenches!" exclaimed Handforth, rubbing his hands together. "This is going to be something like a battle, my sons!"

I scarcely think it is necessary for me to explain that our bombs and liquid fire were harmless substitutes for the real articles. But, although harmless, they were quite capable of causing dire confusion and panic. One of the greatest problems of the barring-out had been the provision of suitable ammunition; but I was confident that the problem had been solved.

The next few minutes would decide matters.

My demands had been reasonable in every way, but Mr. Hunter had furiously rejected them without even giving them a moment's consideration. He demanded an abject surrender—and, naturally, we weren't taking any.

The position was quite clear. Mr. Hunter would not give in and the Remove would not give in! One result was inevitable—war! I had little doubt as to the ultimate outcome.

"Get ready for repulsing the enemy!" I shouted enthusiastically. "It's open warfare now, my sons, and I don't care a hang! We gave Hunter a chance, and he chucked it back in our faces."

"Bravo! We'll give him beans!"

"And peas, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a somewhat hysterical laugh, for the fellows were beside themselves with excitement. And while we were making our final preparations Mr. Hunter prepared his men for the assault, which he fondly imagined would succeed. Pea-shooters, after all, are not exactly formidable, and a determined attack would be successful in the long run. But I was not relying upon pea-shooters alone!

Lying all round, within handy reach, were hundreds of bombs. They had been manufactured the previous night and during the hour after breakfast. The supply was quite sufficient to deal with several determined attacks.

Mr. Hunter and his men did not realise the full strength of our position. They advanced without any attempt at formation, Mr. Hunter's idea being evidently to make a fierce frontal attack and break down the defences at one blow.

"Obey Order Number Two!" I shouted sharply. "Get ready—fire!"

Every fellow knew what I meant, and there was a great shout of approval. Watson, McClure, De Valerie—everybody, in fact—caught up the bombs and hurled them with deadly aim.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

The bombs shot through the air and burst violently over the attacking force. The air became thick with blacks, and there was dire confusion. The surprise was complete in every way. The bombs, I may as well explain, were merely bags of soot, with a few cinders added. Upon striking an object, the soot-bags immediately burst—with disastrous results!

Scarcely a single member of the party escaped. Starke and Bates, who were leading, were simply smothered from head to foot. They reeled back, choking and gasping, as black as niggers and utterly taken aback.

"Let 'em have it!" roared Handforth excitedly. "By George! Surrender, will we? On the ball, you chaps!"

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

The second volley completed the defeat. The attacking force fell back in confusion, and cheers rang out from the school, where hundreds of fellows were watching from the windows. Those cheers caused Mr. Hunter to grind his teeth with fury. He ran forward, waving his arms like mill-sails.

"Pull those faggots down!" he thundered. "Soot won't hurt you, you frightened babes! Are you going to be defeated by a parcel of mere juniors? Come, I will lead the attack myself!"

His taunt about being defeated by juniors rallied the Sixth-Formers wonderfully. The school servants could do nothing but obey Mr. Hunter's orders, in any case. And once again there was an onrush.

"Let 'em have the liquid fire!" I shouted grimly. "Now then, all together—bombs and liquid fire!"

The concentrated fire of the whole Remove was deadly. The soot-bags flew through the air in scores, bursting with dire effect. At the same time a dozen patent fire-extinguishers, which had been obtained from the school supply the previous night, were loosed off. These were the "liquid fire." Although harmless, the fierce jets of water wrought havoc amongst the attackers.

The streams caught Hunter and Co. fairly and squarely. Mr. Hunter himself was soaked to the skin in less than ten seconds. Soot followed the water, and the result can be imagined a lot better than I can describe it.

If the confusion had been serious before, it was absolutely complete now. Nobody could possibly stand against such a deadly fire as we sent out. Soaked, as black as ink, streaked with soot and cinders, Mr. Hunter's men broke into a wild flight.

And so the first episode of the great barring-out ended with a complete victory for the rebel Remove. Mr. Hunter was utterly foiled, and he had failed to shift us from our stronghold.

And every fellow in the Remove was confident that the Remove would gain the day at the finish!

THE END.

NEXT WEEK!—(See p. iv of cover.)

BEGIN THIS THRILLING SERIAL TO-DAY!

In the Grip of the Huns.

A Magnificent Tale of Thrilling Experiences in Germany.

By **CLEMENT HALE.**

NOTE.—As the title "In the Hands of the Huns" has already been used, we have altered the name of our Serial to the above.

The Chief Characters in this Story are :

GEORGE GRAY and his brother **JACK**, who are the English Staff of the Berlin Rovers, a football club in Germany. When war breaks out they are sent to an outdoor prisoners' camp at Oberhemmel. **Von der Klutz** is the Governor's name. He is a just but arrogant man, and he refuses to build shelters for the prisoners. George notices one evening that the sky is becoming overcast. He throws himself down for the night, but is unable to get any sleep. Suddenly a drop of rain falls on his forehead. It is followed by another and then still more. Then the rain commences in earnest, and the prisoners become frantic. Wooden huts are, however, soon erected, and the prisoners are more comfortable. One night George, Jack and Wilson determine to try to escape. George touches one of the live wires forming the first barrier, and finds the current has been cut off.

(Now read on.)

THE ESCAPE.

YES. George Gray had touched the barbed wires, which were supposed to be electrified, and contact with which, it had been said, meant death.

And he was alive! The tremendous significance of it went right home.

A hurried interchange of views, and the three men decided to take their chance. Such an opportunity might not occur again.

And so Jack went down upon his hands and knees and scrambled through the lower wires. On he crept, holding his breath, while the others followed. They reached the second of the wire barriers. George, muttering a prayer, got through here, and unscathed. Jack followed him. Wilson brought up the rear.

And so they advanced to the final wire fencing. What now? Would their luck still hold?

George, feeling sure that death would be

this portion now, gripped the wires firmly. And he remained alive.

So he looked up and down, trying to pierce the darkness.

Some distance away he heard a German sentry stirring. From afar came the murmur of guttural voices. Yet he could see nothing, and he judged from that that they could not see him.

The wires seemed very close that formed this last line of defence, and he felt them pricking into his clothes as he slipped through. With great patience, and without making a sound, he drew the cloth off the wire points, and at last stood upon the bare, damp earth, clear of the internment camp, free—free.

The thrill of joy that ran through him almost caused him to shout aloud, but he had the good sense to control his emotions, and to wait there for the others.

Nay, he did more than wait; he helped them until they both stood by his side, panting, a little excited, but free, even as he was.

Jack muttered something in George's ear, but the big footballer gripped him fiercely by the arm.

"Quiet, old man," he hissed. "We're not safe yet. Come on."

He led the way, pausing at every few steps to look and listen.

Jack and Wilson trod right upon his heels. Never had they known a darker night. Overhead the rain clouds hung. All around them lay the damp fields. Behind them was the hated camp.

On they crept, George believing that he was leading them right away from the hated place of confinement, yet wondering why it was he did not strike the main road.

At last he stopped irresolute. It would be useless for them to wander aimlessly. They must have some idea whither they were going. It was necessary for them to avoid the town, and to be out of range of the camp before the day broke.

And so they held councils in whispers. While they were talking Wilson voiced the regret he felt that they had not warned the other prisoners.

(Continued on p. iii of cover.)

"It seems hard to leave them behind, George, old man," he said.

"And yet we could not have taken them with us," sighed George. "Had we told them that the wires were no longer electrified, that the current had failed, they would all have got through, and we would all have been retaken. No, our only chance of getting clear away was to take the opportunity and say nothing."

Reluctantly they admitted that George was right; and Wilson, at any rate, knew that the others would not blame them, but would rejoice in the fact that they were free.

Suddenly a voice called suspiciously, echoing in German guttural through the darkness: "Who goes there?"

"A friend," George replied in the same tongue, and with ready promptitude. At the same time he strode towards the challenger.

Wilson and Jack followed him breathlessly. Soon they saw a German sentry with gun and bayonet levelled a pace or two to the left of them.

"It's rough weather, friend," George went on, while the others held their breath, marvelling at the perfection with which George used the proper accent. "You must keep a sharp a sharp look-out, or else you'll find these devils of British escaping under cover of the darkness. I hope your bullets are heavy and your aim true."

The sentry raised his rifle to the slope and laughingly replied: "Trust a Prussian for that. I've been itching to send a bullet among them ever since they put me on this job."

"Good-night, comrade!" called George, pacing slowly onward.

"Good-night! Sleep well!" came in response, and they hurried onward, breathing freely again.

From that moment they were more cautious, for the escape had been a narrow one, and they had blundered back right to the internment camp again, describing a half circle in the darkness.

George knew that the road to Oberhemmel was to the right of him, and so, making a deliberate right turn, he strode onward, picking his steps, until at last he stumbled up a bank, and found his feet ringing on the hard road.

"Ah! That's better, boys!" he remarked, a little above a whisper. "To the left is the town. To the right I know not what. Which way shall we choose?"

"The right," growled Wilson.

"The right it shall be, then, Jack," said George. "Come on. We must put a league or two between us and this place before the dawn breaks, or we are lost."

And then a shadow loomed before them, and a rasping voice hissed: "Who's that talking English? Who are you? What are you doing here?"

A CLOSE CALL.

GEORGE'S heart gave a great leap, and he crouched as if for a spring. Wilson and Jack were so overcome by surprise that they stood paralysed. It seemed as if they were to lose their chance after all.

George was the first to recover. He glanced eagerly about him, but could see no other shadow but the one immediately in front of him. Nor, though he strained his ears, could he catch any echo or sound near him which told of the presence of any other enemy.

"What's that to do with you?" he replied in good German. "Can't an honest man wander abroad at night without being taken for an accursed Britisher?"

The man advanced. They heard him laugh and breathe heavily.

"I am not satisfied," said he. "There's a mystery here. I don't believe you are German, and we're very near the internment camp. Let's have a look at you."

An electric torch flashed, and the light fell full on George's face.

A sneering laugh cut the night air. Then the light was focussed on the faces of Jack and Wilson in turn.

"So, George Gray," said the Hun. "It's you, is it, and your brother, and the other British fool, Wilson? I'm in luck, it seems. I shall earn promotion, and perhaps an Iron Cross, over this job."

George's blood ran through his veins like fire. Anger blazed in his heart. The man was Kutz, their enemy, but, luckily, the villain seemed to be alone.

"Well, and what do you intend to do about it, Kutz?" asked George in that quiet way of his which told those who knew him best that he was dangerous.

"I'm going to call the guard. I'm going to send you back to captivity, and perhaps the governor will order the lash now. Ho, there—guar—"

But the words were strangled in his throat, for George leapt upon him and got him by the throat, and, applying a neat back-heel, brought him heavily to the ground, falling with all his weight upon him.

Kutz fell heavily, and George Gray pinioned him, driving his knee into his chest, delighting in his task.

"Just go through his pockets, you chaps," said he, while he silenced the German's struggles. Take whatever he's got. The money and other things may prove useful. Quick, for he's strong."

Aye, Kutz was strong, strong to desperation. He struggled like a madman, writhing and twisting and turning, but in vain.

Wilson and Jack ran the rule over him. There was a chink of money and the jingle of steel keys.

At last the fugitives rose.

(Continued overleaf.)

"We've got the things, George."

"Right."

George Gray released the pressure on Kut's throat, and the half-strangled man sucked in gasps of air, his chest heaving fearfully.

"Help me to drag him up, Wilson," cried George, and together they hauled the rascal who had betrayed George and Jack into the hands of the Huns to his feet.

He faced them, quivering with rage, his eyes starting half out of his head with fright.

"Listen to me, Kutz," hissed George. "We're going to give you a chance. We're going to gag you and tie you up, but we intend to spare your life, because we are not murderers. It would be safer to kill you, I know, but we don't want your blood upon our hands. If we were wise, we'd kill you, perhaps; but we are fools, we Britishers, and so we're going to leave you free to injure some other poor devil. But, at the same time, I should advise you to study the lesson we've given you, and profit by it. We were friends once. That was when we believed you an honest man. Take my advice, and whenever you have any future dealings with an Englishman, play the game. Now, hold the rascal, boys, while I truss him up."

They held the trembling, cowering villain firmly, but just then Kutz's sharp ears caught the echo of approaching footsteps.

He could hear more than one man approaching, and from the steady and even ring of the boots upon the main road the Hun knew that a military picket was coming towards them.

Ah! He had still a chance to defeat the Britishers he hated, and to earn reward, ay, and perhaps promotion, too.

So, with only one thought in his mind—revenge—he struggled fiercely, swung Jack and Wilson off, and shouted at the full strength of his lungs, his voice echoing like a megaphone through the damp night air:

"Help! Help! Help! Prisoners are escaping. Help! Help!"

George Gray leapt at him, struck him, and sent him staggering.

"Where are you, kamerad?" roared a German voice about a hundred yards away.

"Here, here, along the road! Quick! Quick!"

Kutz's foot struck something that sent him flying headlong.

He uttered a glad cry, and, groping, found his rifle lying there.

He seized it, pointed it, fired, and the flash of flame located his whereabouts to the advancing patrol, whilst the explosion alarmed the guards at the camp and roused the prisoners interned there.

The bullet whizzed perilously close to George's head.

"Run—run for it!" he cried. "Quick, to the right, and make your best pace. It's our only chance."

So he set the pace, keeping close to Jack's side, while Wilson, speeding past them, gained a lead of a yard or two, calling on Jack to stick it.

"We'll never leave you, boy, but—we must hurry," he panted as he ran.

After them blundered Kutz.

"Shoot! Shoot!" he roared. "Don't let 'em escape. Shoot, kamerads!"

Kutz found his rifle a hindrance. He flung it aside, and pelted madly after the fleeing prisoners.

He could run, could Kutz. Nature had gifted him with speed, at any rate, if not with pluck, though he was brave enough now that he had an armed patrol to support him.

Now the sentries stationed round the camp began to blaze away at random in the darkness, while the patrol advancing along the road sent volley after volley after the fleeing fugitives. But the chase was not over yet!

(To be continued.)

NEXT WEEK'S STORY,

UNDER THE TITLE OF

"THE REBEL REMOVE,

Will deal with the further amazing adventures of NIPPER and his chums at ST. FRANK'S during the "Revolution" against the Hunnish Housemaster, Mr. Hunter.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY. WAR-TIME PRICE—THREE-HALFPENCE.

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