

No. 235.—STIRRING ACCOUNT OF ST. FRANK'S IN REVOLT!

1½^D **THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY** 1½^D

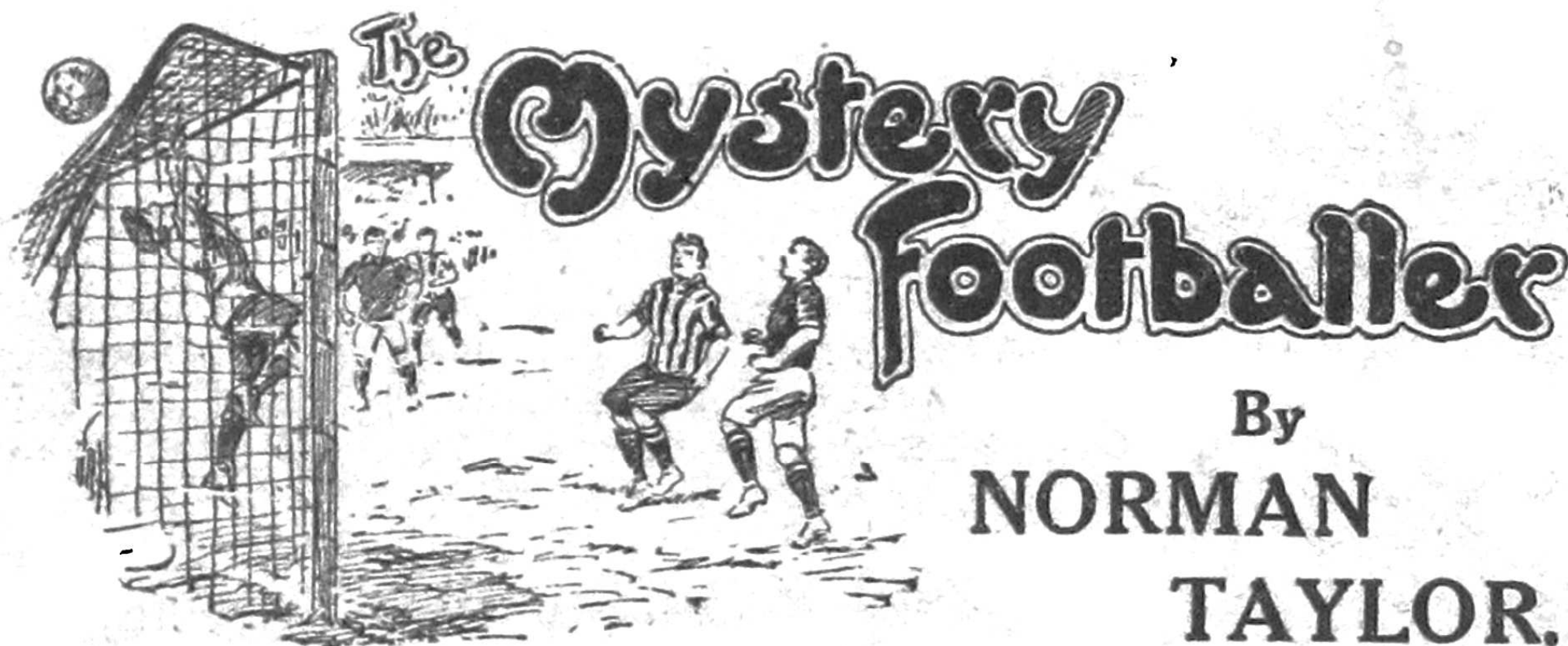


ABOUT TO JOIN THE REBELS WHEN—

VICTORY FOR THE **R**EBELS!

A Story of School Life and Detective Adventure at St. Frank's. Introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "The St. Frank's Rebellion," "Barring Out the Bully," "The Siege of the West Wing," etc. December 6, 1919.

ANOTHER GRAND TALE OF



A splendid new series of football stories, which is just commencing in

THE BOYS' REALM.

Every Friday.

Price 1½d.

Make sure of reading these enthralling yarns by getting a copy now.



HOW KENNEDY RECOVERED HIS MEMORY.
One of the enthralling scenes this story is full of.



Victory for the Rebels.

A Story of School Life and Detective Adventure at St. Frank's, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "The St. Frank's Rebellion," "Barring Out the Bully," "The Siege of the West Wing," etc.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER I.

LATE FOR CALLING OVER!

BOB CHRISTINE glanced at his watch.

"Heaps of time yet," he said comfortably. "Time to see this giddy picture through, anyhow. Dry up, Yorkey—I've missed that sub-title now!"

"Yes, but we don't want to be late——"

"There's half-an-hour yet, you ass!" snapped Christine.

Yorke subsided into silence, and the two Remove juniors settled themselves down to enjoy the picture. They were in the Bannington Cinema, as it was a half-holiday at St. Frank's that day.

Roddy Yorke was rather anxious about the time, for he was not in favour of losing the train home to Bellton—the station for the school. Times were strange at St. Frank's, and late-comers were dropped on heavily.

In fact, it was a very serious offence to be late for calling-over. With Mr. Howard Martin filling the position of Headmaster, the juniors found it necessary to be extremely careful.

The Ancient House fellows had rebelled against the brutal Head's authority, but Christine and Co., of the College House, were still under Mr. Martin's thumb. They had not joined the revolution.

"Sure your watch is right?" asked Yorke, after a short time.

"Eh?" said Christine. "Don't bother——"

"Is your watch——"

"Rats to my watch!" snapped Bob Christine. "I put it right by the station clock, anyhow."

"Yes, but it loses——"

"My hat! Look at that!" said Bob tensely. "That was a near shave. Dry up, you bothering fathead! Did you see the car go over the cliff? A fake business, I'll bet!"

They watched the picture with great interest, and Christine did not show any sign of restlessness until the film was nearly at an end. Then he glanced at his watch repeatedly.

"Oh, blow!" he said. "We sha'n't be able to see the finish. The train goes in ten minutes, Yorkey. Still, we can sprint to the station in five, can't we?"

"Better go now," advised Yorke. "We've got to call at the confectioners——"

"By jingo, yes!" said Christine briskly. "Come on, my son!"

They left the cinema, and emerged into the Bannington High Street. And right opposite stood the Town Hall, with the illuminated clock towering high above the old-fashioned shops.

"You—you ass!" roared Yorke. "Look at that!"

"Eh?" gasped Christine. "What's the matter?"

"Look at the clock!"

Christine gazed upwards, started, and then consulted his watch. Finally, he gazed at Yorke in dismay.

"Well I'm blessed!" he said blankly.

"We've missed the train!" exclaimed Yorke. "It goes in two minutes, and we can't possibly get to the station in time! This'll mean a flogging for being late for calling-over! What's the good of a rotten turnip like that?"

"But I put it right," protested Christine. "In fact, I put it three minutes fast, because it generally loses a bit. I thought we had bags of time, you know. I'm jolly sorry, old man——"

"Oh, don't make a song about it," growled Yorke. "We shall have to walk home now; we can't wait two hours for the last train. If the Head gets to hear that we're late, we shall be half skinned. He's a beast!"

"That's too complimentary for him," said Christine. "We shall have to think about joining in with the Ancient House chaps if things get any worse. And, by all appearances, there's not much chance of them being any better."

Yorke grunted.

"I'm worrying about the immediate trouble," he said. "We've got about half-an-hour to get to the school—even less. If we only had a couple of bikes we might be able to do it."

"What's the good of suggesting that?" said Christine grumpily. "You know these Bannington people won't lend bikes on hire now-a-days. Besides, we should only have to bring them back—or pay through the nose."

The two juniors walked down the High Street briskly, having finally made up their minds that their best course would be to walk. It was a fine evening, considering the time of the year, and the roads were not very muddy.

But Christine and Yorke had not proceeded far before the former came to an abrupt halt. He stood staring across the road at the opposite kerb, and Yorke gazed in that direction, too.

"What are you staring at, Bob?" he asked.

"That bicycle," said Christine.

"Eh?"

"That bike," repeated Christine, with a curious note in his voice. "It belongs to one of these Bannington kids—a trademan's bike, you know. I was wondering if we could borrow it——"

"Impossible," said Yorke. "These Bannington fellows are up against us, and they've been getting rather warm on the job, lately. It can't be did, Christy. We'd better make up our minds——"

"Wait a minute," interrupted Christine. "I'm not anxious to be flogged, even if you are. Here's a way of getting to the school in time. I'm not suggesting that we should ask for the bike, remember."

"But you said we could borrow it?"

"Without permission, I mean," explained Christine. "We can easily put matters right to-morrow. We can't think of pinching the bike, of course, but there's no harm in——"

"It's not a bad wheeze," put in Yorke. "There's one of those strong carrier things fixed on the front, I see. I could squat in that while you did the peddling, you know."

"Oh, could you?" said Christine. "Lazy beggar!"

They advanced across the road leisurely, in order not to attract attention. Their minds were already made up. They could see nothing particularly wicked in going off with that bike.

For the situation certainly was urgent, and their intentions were quite honourable. They would be quite willing to pay for the use of the jigger—afterwards. And it was certainly inviting.

"Jump on!" said Christine quickly.

Yorke lost no time in slipping into the basket carrier, which was attached to the head of the machine. Christine leapt to the pedal, and a second later the pair were speeding down the street.

"Good!" muttered Christine. "We haven't been spotted!"

He pedalled hard, and when he had turned the bend in the road he was feeling confident that the "theft" had not been observed.

"Of course, we could get into serious trouble for this," said Christine, as he pedalled. "But nobody could accuse us of trying to pinch an old iron like this. It's only worth about ten bob!"

"My conscience isn't troubled, anyhow," remarked Yorke complacently. "Whew! Go easy over these bumps, you ass! These iron bars ain't very springy, you know. I got a fearful jolt that time!"

"Don't growl," said Christine. "You've got the best job, anyhow!"

They sped on, and were feeling easy in mind again. For they were now certain that they would be able to reach St. Frank's in time for calling over. They would escape the Head's dire wrath.

Perhaps their action was rather high handed, but a detail of the sort didn't cause them any particular worry.

As it happened, however, they were not to have everything their own way.

They fondly believed that their movements had been unobserved. But this was not the case.

The owner of the bicycle happened to be a youth named Jim Blundle. This young gentleman was the senior boy of the Bannington Council School; a good natured, hulking sort of fellow, with red hair and ample features.

Jim Blundle was "up against" the St. Frank's fellows simply because they were St. Frank's fellows, and not by reason of any personal animosity. If it came to a pinch he would probably turn up trumps; but his anger was somewhat great when he found that his bike had vanished.

"Well I'm blowed!" he exclaimed blankly. "Who's pinched my jigger?"

He went out into the middle of the road, and stared up and down.

"Looking for something, mate?" inquired a passing labourer.

"I left a bicycle here five minutes ago," exclaimed Blundle warmly. "Some thieving beast has walked off with it—"

"Why I saw a couple o' them College kids take a bike from that kerb—not two minutes back," said the man, jerking an earthy thumb over his shoulder. "Two o' them kids from Bellton, they was."

"St. Frank's chaps?" asked Blundle wrathfully.

"Ay—that's what they were."

The Council School boy turned red with anger.

"The awful young blighters!" he exclaimed. "Which way did they go?"

"Down the road towards Bellton."

"Thanks!" said Jim Blundle quickly. "I'll teach the beggars to meddle with my machine! Like their blooming sauce!"

He ran down the road, and was fortunate enough to meet two of his particular pals round a corner. These youths were on bicycles—one being a

butcher's boy—and the other a grocer's assistant.

"What's up, Jim?" asked one of them, as Blundle rushed up.

"I want you chaps!" panted Blundle quickly. "What do you think, Tom Kitchen, two of them St. Frank's chaps has run off with my bike!"

"My 'at!" said Tom Kitchen. "Cheek!"

"Cheek!" echoed Blundle. "Why, it's—it's robbery! I want you chaps to come with me down the road—it won't take us long to overtake the rotters, and we can wipe 'em up proper. Are you game?"

"I'll come," said Kitchen promptly. "I've finished my round, and I'm always ready for a bit of sport—particularly against them College doods. What about you, Ringham?"

The other lad, Bill Ringham, shook his head.

"I've got to get back to the shop," he said. "I daresn't leave it, mate. My boss would give me the sack if I—"

"P'raps you can lend me your bike," suggested Jim Blundle promptly.

"I might be able to do that—"

"Good!"

Jim didn't wait for any more, but seized the bicycle from the other boy's hands, and jumped into the saddle. A moment later he and Tom Kitchen were pedalling down the road for all they were worth—bent upon swift and dire vengeance.

Meanwhile, Christine and Yorke, all unconscious of the impending trouble, were gliding along the country road towards Bellton. As long as they kept up a comfortable speed, all would be well.

"We'll change places soon, if you like," said Yorke, after a while. "I'm not so sure about this being the best job, Christy. I think I'd rather be in the saddle. These iron bars are as sharp as files."

"Right-ho," said Christine. "We'll change over now."

He jumped off, and Yorke tumbled out of the carrier. Just as the pair were about to remount their steed, two twinkling lights came into view far in the rear, and the juniors needed no telling that the lights belonged to two bicycles.

"Somebody else coming," remarked

Yorke, glancing back. "I wonder if we were spotted——"

"No need to worry about that," said Christine briskly. "Let's buck up and get going again."

A moment later they were proceeding as before, except that Yorke was now in the saddle.

But retribution was near at hand.

They were unable to go at the pace which was attained by the pursuers. Jim Blundle and Tom Kitchen were using their best efforts, and they rapidly overhauled the two St. Frank's juniors.

But they really made a mistake in expending so much energy on the ride. In this they were somewhat short-sighted, for by the time they had overhauled their quarry, they had not much breath left in them for fighting purposes. Christine and Yorke, on the other hand, were comparatively fresh.

"'Ere they are!" exclaimed Blundle breathlessly. "Hi, you burglin' College kids! Get off that bike!"

"My hat!" muttered Yorke. "We were spotted after all. What shall we do, Christy? Pedal on, or jump off?"

"Better stop, and explain," said Christine. "We can't very well pinch the jigger in front of the chap's eyes. Besides, we couldn't outride the bounders, anyhow. I believe it's that Blundle chap, of the Council School—the one they call Ginger. Pull up, old son."

Yorke slowed down and jumped off the machine. A moment later he and Christine were jostled forcibly. The two Council School boys, having placed their machine against the hedge, charged to the attack without asking questions.

"Steady on, you asses!" exclaimed Christine. "We've got to explain to you——"

"We don't want none of your bloom-in' explanations," shouted Blundle breathlessly. "We're going to wipe you up, you beastly bounders! We'll teach you to pinch a bike wot don't belong to you."

"Yes, but look here——"

Biff!

Blundle's big fist thudded into Christine's cheek, and the leader of the College House juniors staggered under the force of the blow. He was somewhat incensed by that attack, and came to the conclusion that his only course would

be to retaliate. He simply wasn't going to be punched by a Council School boy without punching back—with interest.

Yorke, at the same time, was having a little trouble with Tom Kitchen.

As a result, a very lively scrap was in progress less than a minute later. The four boys were going at it hammer and tongs, and blows rained furiously. They occupied the whole road, and goodness knows what would have happened if a swiftly-moving motor-car had sped along at that moment.

However, the fighters had the lane to themselves, and they swayed to and fro, and up and down, exchanging blows freely. But the St. Frank's boys were the more skilled in the noble art of boxing.

What they lacked in brute strength, they made up for in science. And the Council School boys were not so fresh as their opponents. They soon began to realise that they had been rather unwise in forcing a combat.

Bang! Crash! Biff!

Blundle and Kitchen reeled under the blows which were showered upon them. Finally, they both went down under terrific drives, and Christine and Yorke stood victorious on the battle ground.

"Perhaps you won't be so jolly handy with your fists next time!" exclaimed Christine breathlessly. "Goodness knows, we didn't want to scrap with you, Blundle. But you biffed me, and I had to get busy. Here's ten bob for the loan of the bike—and you can go to the dickens."

"Hear, hear!" said Yorke, panting heavily.

They strode away, leaving the Council School boys exceedingly the worse for wear, and heartily sorry that they had commenced the scrap. They discovered, for the first time, that the St. Frank's fellows were quite honourable.

"Still, we'll have our own back, one day!" exclaimed Blundle darkly. "We've got ten bob—and that ain't so bad. But I mean to pay them kids back for closin' up my eye like this! I sha'n't be able to see for a week!"

Meanwhile, Christine and Yorke were hurrying through Bellton on foot. They had given up hope of reaching the school in time for calling-over. That scrap in the lane had settled the question, once and for all.

"We might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," remarked Christine, as he walked along. "There's no need to hurry, Yorkey. Five minutes or so won't make any difference now."

The two juniors proceeded on their way to St. Frank's, feeling resigned.

"There's one consolation, anyhow," remarked Yorke. "We shall get a licking, but we gave those cheeky Council School chaps a pretty good dusting! Blundle won't be able to see straight for a fortnight!"

"That won't do us much good while we're being flogged by the beastly Head!" growled Christine. "Look here, the best thing we can do is to sneak in quietly, and perhaps we sha'n't be noticed."

But ill-luck was against them.

Almost as soon as they entered the College House they were dropped on by Jesson, of the Sixth. They knew, as soon as they saw the spiteful prefect, that they were in for trouble.

"Oh, so you've come in, have you?" said Jesson grimly. "What do you mean by being late for calling-over?"

"Oh, don't make a fuss!" said Christine. "We lost our train, that's all. Everybody's liable to lose a train now and again."

"It'll cost you something this trip," said Jesson unpleasantly. "I suppose you know it's a serious offence to be late? I've had orders from the Head to send you to his study as soon as you show up. You'd better cut off straight away!"

Yorke and Christine glanced at one another, and walked down the passage without another word. They were, as a matter of fact, too completely disgusted to express their feelings in mere speech.



CHAPTER II.

THE COMMON-ROOM MEETING.

"COME in!"

Christine and Yorke shivered slightly as they heard the harsh invitation. They were outside the Head's study, and Christine gingerly opened the door, and the pair tip-toed in.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Howard Martin, laying his pen down, and gazing

severely at the two juniors. "You are the two boys, I presume, who were absent from calling-over?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will have you understand that my orders are to be obeyed—and not flouted!" said the Head grimly. "You are well aware of the rules, and you can have no excuse for being late——"

"But we have got an excuse, sir!" put in Christine quickly.

"What did you say, boy?"

The Head glared at the juniors. He appeared to think that it was a crime for any person to interrupt him. He was harsh by nature, and harsh in manner. His appearance was forbidding and unfavourable.

"I said that we had an excuse, sir!" exclaimed Christine boldly. "We went to Bannington, and lost our train."

"Bah! That is no excuse whatever!" snapped the Head. "You have no right to lose trains, and if there are many boys late for calling-over in future, I shall place both the village and Bannington out of bounds. In this present instance, I intend to flog you."

"But—but——"

"Silence, you young dog!"

"But it's not fair to flog us, just for being ten minutes late!" shouted Christine recklessly. "When Dr. Stafford was here——"

"You confounded young brat!" thundered the Head, jumping to his feet. "If you dare to utter another word, I'll flog you in public! Keep silent, and prepare to receive your punishment!"

Christine seemed to swallow something with difficulty. He realised how hopeless it was to fight against this tyrant single-handed. He sighed, and resigned himself to the inevitable.

And he and Yorke received a flogging which was utterly savage and uncalled-for. When the Head had finished, he pointed to the door.

"Go!" he exclaimed roughly. "You, Christine, will understand that you are restricted to the school grounds for the period of two weeks! And if there is any more of your nonsense, I will take even sterner measures!"

The two juniors left the study, boiling with inward rage.

Out in the passage they gazed at one another with tense looks.

"The beast!" muttered Yorke. "Oh, the awful beast!"

"We're not going to stand it!" exclaimed Christine, between his teeth. "Do you think I'm going to be treated like that, and remain meek? Do you think I'm going to stick being gated for a fortnight?"

"What else can you do?" asked Yorke.

"You'll see, my son—you'll see!"

There was a grim note in Christine's voice—a note which seemed to indicate that he had come to a final, positive decision.

He led the way straight to Study Q, and marched in. Talmadge was there, busy at prep. He had a bit of a cold, and thought it wiser not to go with his chums to Bannington.

"Hallo!" he said, looking up. "You're late——"

"Come down to the common-room!" interrupted Christine bluntly.

"Eh? What the——"

"Don't ask questions!" said Bob. "It's important!"

He passed out of the study again, and Talmadge jumped up and followed him out into the passage. Christine visited several other studies in a like manner, and by the time the common-room was reached he had a big gathering.

In fact, almost every College House Removite was present. They knew that something big was in the wind, but they hardly knew what. Christine was their accepted leader, but he was seldom in a mood of this sort. Bob Christine usually took things very easily.

"What's the trouble?" asked Clapson curiously.

"Listen to me, you chaps," said Bob, in a tense voice. "Shut that door, Nation, and put your back to it! And speak as quietly as you can—everybody. We don't want any interruptions."

"Blessed if I can see what the game is!" remarked Oldfield.

Christine cleared his throat.

"It's this!" he said deliberately. "The time's come for us to throw in our lot with Nipper and his crowd on the other side of the Triangle! The time has come for us to—revolt!"

"Great Scott!"

"It can't be done, you ass!"

"Of course not!"

"You're off your rocker, Christine!"

"It can be done—and it shall be done!" exclaimed Christine tensely. "I'll tell you why I've suddenly come

to this decision, and if you've got an ounce of spirit between the lot of you, you'll back me up!"

He paused impressively, and the juniors regarded him rather wonderingly. His unusual attitude had caused a bit of sensation.

"It's no good talking wildly, old son!" said Clapson. "We can't revolt—we're not in the same position as the Ancient House chaps. We can't bar the Head out of this House, and it wouldn't be playing the game to plant ourselves on Nipper and Co."

"Nipper has invited us to join him two or three times," said Christine. "I'm willing to take him at his word—if you chaps are ready to follow me. You all know what a beast and a bully the Head is."

"Hear, hear!"

"He's a rotter of the worst type!"

"Give him a groan!" said Nation.

"Shut up, you ass!" snapped Christine. "We don't want any row here now, I suppose? If any prefects get to know what's on, they'll sail in and break up the meeting. And I've got a lot to say yet."

"Go it!"

"On the ball, Christy!"

"We're all here!"

"If you wouldn't yell so much, things would be better," said Christine grimly. "You've got to realise that this is a serious matter, and the time has come for us to make a final decision. Yorke and I were late for calling-over——"

"We all know that, you ass!"

"We were ten minutes late," went on Christine—"ten minutes only, and when we got here Jesson collared us and said that the Head was waiting for us in his study! It wasn't sufficient for Jesson to give us fifty lines. He'd received orders from Martin that we were to go to his study."

"Did he whop you?"

"He flogged us as though we were guilty of theft!" exclaimed Christine, his voice quivering with rage. "He flogged us unmercifully, and just because I said a word of protest; he's gated me for a fortnight! And this, mind you, because Yorke and I were ten minutes late for calling-over!"

"Phew!"

"The awful brute!"

"He ought to be kicked out of the school!"

"Are we going to stand it?" demanded Christine. "That's what I'm asking you—are we going to stand it?"

"No!" exclaimed Yorke hotly.

"It seems to me you had to stand it!" observed Nation. "As for the gating, you'll get another flogging if you don't —"

"I don't mean that!" snapped Christine. "Are we going to stand such tyranny as a body? Are you fellows willing to see Yorke and I suffer like this, and do nothing in retaliation?"

"We'd like to do all sorts of things," said Clapson. "But, dash it all, we can't collar the Head and flog him, can we?"

"Perhaps not," said Christine. "But we can all ignore him!"

"Go out on strike, you mean?"

"You can call it what you like," said Bob—"strike, revolt, or anything! It doesn't make any difference, so long as we defy the bullying rotter! My idea is for us to make the plunge to-night."

"To-night?"

"Yes," said Christine tensely.

"What plunge?"

"You—you ass! There's only one plunge that we can take, and that is to join hands with good old Nipper!" said Christine. "If we'd had any sense, we should have joined the barring-out when it first started. But it's never too late to mend, and we can still defy the Head."

"It's a good idea," said one of the juniors, "but I'm not sure whether the Fossils would like it. They'd probably kick up a dust if we presented ourselves at their stronghold."

"That's my idea, too," remarked Cobb.

"Besides, it wouldn't be fair to 'em," added Holroyd. "I'm game for anything you like, Christy, and you've only got to say the word; but I have my doubts about the wisdom of taking such a drastic step."

"Look here!" exclaimed Christine grimly. "Don't you realise that we shall be doing the Fossils a good turn by joining the revolt?"

"A good turn?" repeated Freeman.

"Yes."

"But I don't see——"

"None of you seem to see anything to-night!" snapped Christine impatiently. "What's going to happen if we go in with Nipper and Co.? Why,

the Head will be at his wits' end! He'll have a much stronger force to fight against, and he'll begin to realise that there's practically no hope of bringing the Remove to its knees. We've only got to make up our minds, and we shall be able to help the Ancient House fellows in a thoroughly practical manner. That's my idea, anyhow. This rebellion has gone on long enough—too long, in fact—and it ought to be ended!"

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Munroe. "That's a bit extraordinary! You say it ought to be ended, and yet you're talking about joining it! If we join the revolt, we shall make it worse!"

"Exactly!" agreed Bob, nodding. "It's got to be worse before it's better. By falling into line with Nipper and Co., we shall help materially in bringing the rebellion to an end. Just look at the local papers!"

"Eh? What about the papers?"

"Haven't you seen them?" said Christine. "The Bannington Gazette, for example, contains a long report of this rebellion business in its last issue. And did you ever read such a string of rotten misrepresentations?"

"The paper ought to be squashed!" said Yorke indignantly. "I read that report, and I was nearly dotty with rage over it!"

"Same here!" said Dallas. "The editor ought to be boiled in oil!"

"I don't suppose the editor's to blame at all," said Christine. "He was supplied with information by the Head. You can bet your last dollar on that! Martin gave him the whole yarn, and misrepresented the whole case—painting the Remove as black as night, and white-washing himself. Why, public opinion is all against us because of those reports!"

"That's right enough!" agreed Cobb. "Only this evening, in the village, several louts started hooting me, and all sorts of people have jawed about the wickedness of Nipper and his crowd."

"If we bring the rebellion to a finish—or help towards it—we shall allow the truth to come out," said Christine—"the actual truth, I mean. Then public opinion will be on our side, and the Head will get what he deserves. He'll be hounded out of the place for good!"

"That sounds too good to be true!"

"The Head's in complete control now, and he'll take a bit of shifting," said

Page, shaking his head. "We all know he's a beast, and we're all fed up with him, but I'm not sure about the wisdom of joining in with Nipper. It seems like playing rather a dirty trick on the Ancient House chaps."

"Rot!" said Christine.

"What about the food problem, then?" asked Page. "I don't suppose they've got an unlimited supply of grub, and if we all pile on to them, we shall probably make them go on short rations —"

"That only shows what an ass you are!" interrupted Christine. "Listen to me! My idea is this. After lights-out to-night, we'll creep out of bed, dress, and then sneak downstairs. It won't take us ten minutes to loot the store-cupboard in the larders—they're all quiet and deserted after ten o'clock. We'll carry away with us all the grub we shall require for a week, so we needn't beg any from the Ancient House chaps. It's only fair that we should take our own fodder, and perhaps we shall help the other rebels, too."

"My hat!"

"That's a good idea, you know!"

"Topping!"

"Good for you, Christy!"

"There's not likely to be any hitch, because the Head thinks we're meek; he's not taking any precautions with the College House," went on Christine. "And I want to know, here and now, how many of you are willing to follow my lead? I'll take the vote straight away."

"Good egg!" said Yorke.

"Hands up all of you—who will join in this stunt!" said Christine. "Now then, up with your flappers!"

Every hand in the common-room went up.

"And now for the others!" said Bob.

Not a hand was raised.

"Good!" exclaimed Christine heartily. "That's what I was hoping for. My sons, you're true blue. We'll beat the Head yet—or, to be more exact, we'll help Nipper to beat him!"

"Hurrah!"

"Dry up, you asses——"

"Look out!" gasped Billy Nation, from the door. "I can hear two or three chaps coming—prefects, I expect!"

"Pretend to be reading, or something," said Christine rapidly.

A small table stood by, with some

chessmen set out upon a board. Christine and Yorke sat down at the table, and pretended to be playing—with a crowd of other juniors looking on.

Several others collected round the fireplace, and the remainder hastily pulled papers out of their pockets and pretended to read. The transformation was really remarkable for its swiftness.

And when Jesson and two other prefects strode in a couple of seconds later, they beheld a very peaceful scene in the common-room. Jesson swished his cane, and looked round suspiciously.

"Huh!" he exclaimed. "What was the noise I heard just now?"

"Noise?" repeated Talmadge blandly.

"Yes, I heard shouting and cheering —"

"Oh, that?" said Talmadge. "I suppose a few chaps can make a bit of noise in the common-room, Jesson? There's no harm in cheering a fellow when he makes a good move, is there?"

"A good move?" repeated the prefect.

"Chess!" explained Talmadge, waving his hand.

"A fat lot you kids know about chess!" said Jesson sourly. "You'd better be quiet, kids—that's all. If I hear any more noise from this room, I'll come and clear the whole crowd of you out. Remember that!"

And Jesson departed, with the other Sixth Formers—totally unsuspecting of the fact that a most important decision had been arrived at by the College House members of the Remove.

The revolution was destined to spread. And the hour for the great moment was drawing rapidly nearer!

The tyrant of St. Frank's was destined to receive a shock before long!

— — —

CHAPTER III.

SUPPORTERS IN PLENTY.

"WHAT o' the night, O lusty guard?"

"All's well!" grinned Reginald Pitt.

We didn't usually address one another in that manner, but I was feeling somewhat light-hearted that evening, and I had addressed Pitt half humorously as I approached the barricade of which he had charge.

"All's well?" I repeated. "Good, my sons. If I was a betting chap, I'd lay sixteen to one that we shall have Mr. Bully Martin on his knees before another forty-eight hours have passed."

Pitt looked thoughtful.

"That's rather an optimistic view, but you may be right," he said. "Anyhow, it doesn't seem that the Head is getting up to any mischief to-night. We still hold the fort, and we're ready to stand a siege of another ten days, if necessary. We shall win in the end—for certain."

Practically every other rebel was of the same opinion. Most of them had lost count of the days; they hardly knew how long they had been in revolt. As a matter of fact, the barring-out had been going on for well over a week, and still we held our own.

In spite of all the Head's efforts to dislodge us, we had stuck to our guns through thick and thin. And Mr. Martin had not merely adopted honest, straightforward methods.

He had descended to low-down trickery. In addition to lying, in order to get us to surrender, he had hired a gang of drunken roughs to force us out of our stronghold.

We had met the attacks with spirit; the fellows had come up to the scratch with a will, and although we had one or two narrow squeaks, we had managed to pull through in complete triumph.

Our fortifications were of the best.

To begin with, the west wing of the Ancient House, of which we had taken possession, was peculiarly suited to our purpose. Jutting out from the rest of the building, it formed an ideal fortress. Above, we had the dormitory, with sleeping accommodation for all.

And below, presided over by Fatty Little, were the kitchens and storerooms. Everything was there ready—food, coal, and all that was necessary for the preparation of meals. And Jimmy Little was in his element.

It had only been necessary for us to barricade the upper and lower passages, and to board up all the windows, and we were safe. Our stronghold was practically impregnable.

And so, after being besieged for nine or ten days, we were still masters of the situation. We had taken up our stand for liberty and justice, and nothing would

move us. We would only surrender upon our own terms—terms that were just and reasonable.

The Head, naturally, was doing his utmost to bring the barring-out to disaster. So far, all his efforts had failed, and it really seemed that he had expended all his ingenuity and cunning.

The whole affair was becoming notorious. Reports of it were in the papers; the countryside in general was discussing the extraordinary situation. Even one of the big London dailies had published a small paragraph on the subject.

And, naturally, the School Governors had learned, to their horror, of the appalling state of affairs which existed at St. Frank's. To the best of my knowledge, General Ord-Clayton himself was to come down to St. Frank's on the morrow.

General Ord-Clayton was the chairman of the Board of Governors, and it was he whom we had to thank for the appointment of Mr. Howard Martin. The general was practically as bad as the bullying Head.

His one idea seemed to be that we should be ground down—that schoolboys ought to be kept under an iron discipline. And he appointed Mr. Howard Martin to the position of Headmaster because Mr. Martin was a harsh bully.

Well, the general's experiment had failed, for the net result of Mr. Martin's appointment was the present rebellion. Having sown the wind, General Ord-Clayton was now reaping the whirlwind.

He would probably get a big shock when he arrived on the morrow. His presence would make no difference to us. We would only surrender upon condition that the school was run on humane lines—and not like a reformatory.

Of course, there was just a chance that we should yet be defeated, but every fellow in the Remove was grimly determined to fight valiantly for his freedom. Under my leadership, the juniors were ready to fight to the last gasp.

But there was another aspect of the affair which put quite a different complexion on the case. I was the only fellow who knew it, so far, with the exception of my own two chums—Tommy

Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West. I had no secrets from them.

Soon after the Head's evil "reign" had commenced, Nelson Lee had left the school; he had given up his post as Housemaster of the Ancient House.

Mr. Martin considered that he had dismissed Nelson Lee; but, actually, my esteemed guv'nor had been on the point of tendering his resignation.

And, in Nelson Lee's stead, a stranger had come to St. Frank's—a gentleman named Mr. Simpson Wrott. He was harsh in his manner, brutal in his speech, but astonishingly gentle in his actions.

He pretended to be a bully—but wasn't.

For some days we had been much troubled, but in the end we had come to the conclusion that Mr. Wrott was on our side. On several occasions he had acted in a manner which clearly indicated that his intentions were friendly.

And then, by sheer accident, I had discovered the truth.

Mr. Simpson Wrott was none other than Nelson Lee himself, in disguise! And he had returned to St. Frank's for the sole and only purpose of keeping his eye closely upon Mr. Howard Martin.

For there was some secret concerning the Head which would not bear the light of day. I didn't know many of the facts. In fact, I knew nothing for certain, and I certainly did not trouble. I was content to leave that part of the affair entirely in the guv'nor's hands.

My own hands were full up with other matters.

But I knew that Mr. Martin had visited the old ruins of Bellton Abbey on more than one occasion, and he was in touch with a mysterious individual who continuously lurked in the background.

Nelson Lee had discovered much more than I had, and there was every indication that his discoveries were of a somewhat startling nature. For Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard, was in the neighbourhood. He was waiting for Nelson Lee to give him the word before acting.

So, even if things went badly with us in the immediate future, I should not be disheartened. For I was convinced that the guv'nor would step in and put a very different complexion on matters.

At the same time, I had started this barring-out with the intention of carrying it on to victory, and I was grimly determined to do my utmost to obtain the success I so much desired.

That, therefore, was the position.

Everything was all serene on this particular night. My visit to the various barricades resulted in the same answer from all the guards. There was nothing to report, and all was quiet.

It was nearly midnight, and St. Frank's was asleep. At least, it should have been asleep. Half the rebels were very wide awake, however. I was not foolish enough to leave the barricades with only a handful of fellows in charge.

Whether there was any possibility of attack or not, I was very strict on the question of keeping an alert watch. It was by far the safer method, and I had already proved that it was necessary.

"There's not much fear of any trouble to-night, Montie," I remarked as I strolled down the lower passage with him. "It's my belief that the Head is at his wits' end. Ord-Clayton is coming to-morrow, and Martin won't know what the dickens to say to him."

"There'll probably be a frightful bust-up, dear old boy," observed Tregellis-West sagely. "You know what a shockin' bad-tempered old buffer the general is. When he finds out the state of affairs, he'll go off like a volcano—he will, really. An' then things'll happen."

"To us?" I asked.

"Possibly; but it's far more probable, old fellow, that things will happen to Mr. Martin," said Montie. "In any case, I have a kind of feelin' that the end is drawin' near. Begad!"

"What's the matter?"

"Listen, old boy. Didn't you hear somethin'?"

"No, I don't think— Yes, by Jove!" I exclaimed. "I certainly heard a kind of tapping sound just now."

"That's what I meant," whispered Montie. "It's at one of the windows."

"An attack, perhaps," I breathed. "By jingo! If the Head is trying on another of his stunts we shall have to be wide awake. We'd better investigate this affair at once."

"It would certainly be wiser to do so,

dear boy," said Tregellis-West softly.

We made our way quietly down the passage to the end window, from whence the strange-tapping sound proceeded.

One or two of the other fellows on watch had heard the sound, too, and they were coming along from their usual station.

"You heard it, too, then?" whispered Conroy minor. "Do you think it means trouble?"

"There's no telling," I replied. "But we'll soon see."

That part of the passage was in darkness, and I groped my way to the window, and peered through a slit between two of the boards. At first I could see nothing, but then I made out several dim outlines on the other side of the window.

My first thought was that they were men—attempts to force the window quietly. Then I saw that the figures were small, and they wore close-fitting caps. They were, in fact, boys.

"Queer," I muttered. "Hold on a minute!"

We had fastened the barricades in such a way that it was possible to open the lower sash slightly if desirable. With some difficulty I pushed it up, and then bent down so that my mouth was on a level with the opening.

"Hallo, out there," I whispered. "Who is it?"

"That you, Nipper?" breathed a familiar voice.

"Christine, by Jove!" I exclaimed, in surprise.

"Christine!" echoed Clifton.

"Begad!"

"What's the ass doing out there?"

"Don't jaw. I'll have a word with him," I said. "I say, Christy, what's the idea of this? You might be spotted, you know."

"Are you all deaf in there, you fat-headed asses?" came Christine's voice. "Do you know that we've been out here for about two hours—tapping at the windows to attract your attention?"

"I suppose you mean two minutes—that's nearer the mark," I said. "Sorry we've kept you waiting, my lord. What's the trouble?"

"We want to come in, you duffer."

"To—to come in?"

"Of course," said Christine.

"How many of you, for goodness sake?" I asked.

"The whole crowd—every Remove fellow from our side," whispered Christine. "We've decided to throw in our lot with you, Nipper. There's no reason why the Remove shouldn't be solid."

"Good man!" I exclaimed heartily.

"You approve?"

"Rather!" I replied. "I've been hoping for this for days, Christine. We'll have these boards off in two minutes, and then you can slip in as quietly as mice. What a shock for the Head tomorrow!"

I turned to the other juniors.

"Bustle about!" I said briskly. "We're going to have visitors—in numbers. Help me to take these boards down."

"Look here," said Conroy doubtfully. "I don't want to say anything——"

"Good!" I interrupted. "Then dry up!"

"You ass! I mean, I don't want to growl," went on Conroy. "But do you think it'll be as well to admit those giddy Monks? Don't forget our food supply is running short, and with a lot more mouths to feed——"

"That's enough!" I interrupted. "We can't consider details of that sort now. These fellows have come here to join us, and we've got to admit them. If there's any food trouble within a day or two, we can deal with it then. But it's my belief that we shall win the game tomorrow. Don't you understand, you ass, that our position will be tremendously strengthened?"

"Yes, I suppose it will," admitted Conroy. "Oh, well, you're in command, Nipper, and we'll leave it to you."

"Thanks awfully!" I said. "Your generosity is touching!"

Conroy grinned, and helped with a will to remove the barricading boards. The last two were just being removed when there were sounds of consternation from outside. Somebody whispered "cave," and there was an immediate stir.

"Look out!" I heard Clapson mutter. "The Head's coming."

"Oh, my hat!"

"We'd better bunk——"

"Rats!" I exclaimed sharply. "The Head can't do anything to you. Ignore him! If he orders you back to your House, take no notice of him. Come on, my sons—you can pile in as soon as you like!"

And then the Head's voice boomed out.

"What—what is the meaning of this?" he shouted furiously. "Good gracious, boys! What are you doing out of your beds——"

"It's all right, sir. We're only joining the rebels!" shouted Christine boldly.

"What—what?" roared the Head. "Upon my soul! Every boy here will immediately return to his dormitory——"

"Yah! Go home!"

"Rats!"

"We're not taking orders from you!"

"We're fed up with your bullying!"

One shout led to another, and, once the juniors had fairly started upon the rebellion, a perfect chorus of defiant yells sounded in the still air. The Head rushed up, boiling with rage.

"You young hounds!" he screamed. "I will show you whether I am to be defied or not! I have had enough of this insubordination. How—how dare you, you wretched boy! Leave my arm alone. Good gracious! What—what——"

The Head ended up in a gasp, for, to his horror, he found that the juniors no longer feared him. He had rushed up, intending to strike terror in the hearts of the rebels, but, instead of doing this, Christine and Co. had turned upon him, and he found himself grasped by many hands.

"Chuck him in the mud!" roared somebody.

"Roll him in the puddles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it!"

"Boys—boys!" panted the Head frantically. "Are you mad? Remember that you are dealing with your Headmaster——"

"We're not likely to forget it!" shouted Nation. "We've been waiting for this chance for weeks! We're fed up with you, and we're fed up with your bullying! This is where we get a bit of our own back!"

"Hurrah!"

"Help—help!" screamed the Head. "You must be insane, you young fools! Oh! Ow-yow! Yaroooh!"

The Head, having been raised high in the air, was swung out sideways, and then allowed to drop at the end of the swing. He sprawled on all fours in the somewhat thick mud of the Triangle—

for there had been a good deal of rain earlier in the day.

"Splash!"

Mr. Martin descended into a puddle with a considerable amount of noise.

"Ouch" he gasped. "Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now give him a roll!"

"Good!"

The Head was not allowed to scramble up. He was rolled over and over in the mud. And it was only when the task became too dirty that the juniors gave it up. Then, yelling with laughter, they tumbled into the open window. Mr. Martin, looking more like a scarecrow than a Headmaster, fled from the scene.

The juniors had shown him, at all events, that any respect they may have originally felt for him had entirely disappeared.

"I don't altogether agree with that rag, you know," I said, as the fellows came hustling in. "This rebellion is being carried out in an orderly manner, remember, and we've avoided rags."

"Well, the Head asked for it—and we're obliging fellows," said Christine. "When anybody asks us for something, we don't like to disappoint them. Here you are, Nipper—hang on to this."

Christine handed over a huge sack.

"What's this?" I inquired curiously.

"Grub," said Christine.

"Grub?"

"You bet," replied the College House leader. "There's tons more of it outside, all piled against the wall. We raided the College House store-room, you know. We thought we'd better provide our own fodder."

I slapped Christine's shoulder.

"Good man!" I exclaimed heartily.

"Now then, Conroy, what have you got to say now?"

"Nothing," exclaimed Conroy minor, "except that these Monks are bricks. Good luck to 'em! Long live the revolution!"

"Hear, hear!"

The commotion had caused most of the other juniors to come hurrying down. Many had risen from bed in order to find out what the trouble was. And there was general satisfaction when the truth was known.

Christine and Co. had joined the revolt, and the Remove was now solid.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GENERAL TAKES COMMAND.

HOOT-HOOT!

A big grey motor-car rolled silently through the big gateway of St. Frank's, and glided over to the Headmaster's private doorway. It pulled up, and one of the doors opened.

A rather smallish man alighted—an elderly gentleman with a fierce type of countenance, red, and with a bristling moustache adorning the upper-lip. In spite of his small stature, he carried himself with pompous dignity. It was a somewhat false dignity, for he really looked ridiculous.

This gentleman was General Ord-Clayton.

The Chairman of the Governors had arrived to investigate—and to put a prompt end to the revolution. This, at all events, is what he fondly believed. There was not the slightest doubt in his mind that he would quell the rebels with one glare of his fiery eyes.

It was rather early, and everybody was at breakfast. Consequently, the Triangle and the school grounds in general were deserted.

If the general expected to find St. Frank's looking a wreck, he was disappointed. Outwardly, there was no change. Everything looked normal and peaceful; an air of quietness and order reigned everywhere.

"Huh!" grunted the general. "It seems to me that Martin has exaggerated things—or the rebels have been quelled. I sincerely trust that such is the case."

"Speaking to me, sir?" inquired the chauffeur.

"No, Binns, I was not speaking to you!" snapped the general. "You'll be good enough to mind your own business, sir! Speak when you are spoken to, sir, and not before! Confound your impudence!"

The chauffeur, who was well used to his master, said nothing. He looked as grave as an image, but inwardly he was smiling to himself. On the average, Binns was dismissed from his post three times a week, but, as he never left, it made no difference to him.

The general mounted the steps to the Head's doorway, and gave the bell a violent pull.

But he need not have troubled, for Mr. Howard Martin himself opened the door at that moment.

"Ah, I'm very pleased to see you, sir," he said, taking the general's hand. "Now that you have come, the position may be improved, possibly."

"Possibly—possibly!" snapped the general. "Don't be absurd, Martin. I have come here to put an end to this outrageous situation—since you appear to be quite incapable of dealing with the matter yourself."

"Really, sir, I——"

"Tush!" interrupted the general. "No doubt you have plenty of glib excuses, Martin. I am amazed that you should allow the boys to defy you in such a manner as you have described to me. It is not only outrageous, but positively appalling. Such a condition of affairs has never existed before in any public school."

The Head bit his lip.

"I would suggest, sir, that we discuss these matters in the privacy of my study," he said, with dignity. "You are apparently unaware of the fact that many boys are listening to your words."

General Ord-Clayton swung round, and found a knot of Third Formers hugely enjoying the scene.

"Go away!" roared the general fiercely. "How dare you hang about here, you young reprobates? Go away at once!"

The lags retired, grinning. And when they arrived at a safe distance they plucked up courage enough to give one prolonged howl of derision.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the general. "Is it possible that those young urchins dared to jeer at me, Martin? It seems to me that you have been amazingly lax in your discipline——"

"On the contrary, sir, I have been extremely strict," snapped the Head. "But the boys of this school are the most unruly youngsters I have ever had under my control!"

"Pray do not be so ludicrous, Martin," snorted the general. "Huh! Under your control, indeed! It seems to me that they are out of your control, sir—completely out of it, by gad!"

The Head, not wishing to allow the argument to continue on the doorstep any longer, led the way down to his study. The pair entered, and it was

quite clear that General Ord-Clayton was in a bad humour.

"Now, Martin, I want you to tell me the exact state of affairs," he said grimly. "All the facts, remember. I have come here to put an end to this infernal business—and I am not to be balked!"

He planted his rear aspect to the fire, and stuck a big cigar between his teeth.

"Now, sir!" he snapped, as though he were addressing a small boy.

"The position is somewhat intricate," said the Head, swallowing his growing wrath with difficulty. "If you will listen calmly, I shall be able to describe matters much more easily."

"A preliminary to excuses, I suppose?" sneered the general.

"I am making no excuses," replied Mr. Martin coldly. "The facts are quite clear—if you will only permit me to speak. The trouble actually started after I had punished three boys for most unruly behaviour. I merely locked them in an attic for the night, deeming that such treatment would quell their rebellious spirit."

"Well? What then?"

"In the morning I was amazed to find that the rest of the boys in the Remove—the Ancient House section, that is—had openly revolted," said the Head. "For the moment I was quite non-plussed."

"You had no right to be," said the general. "Did you do nothing to put an end to the disgraceful affair?"

"I did everything," replied Mr. Martin. "The boys had barricaded themselves into the west wing, and they openly defied me—quite openly, sir. What could I do?"

"What could you do?" stormed the general. "For one thing, you could have ordered the senior boys to dislodge the young wretches—"

"That plan did not escape my notice, sir," interrupted the Head. "I called the school together, explained the facts, and gave my orders to the Sixth Form. The seniors, to my fury, walked out of the Hall, and refused to obey my commands."

"The young dogs!" snapped the general. "Well?"

"After that I tried various expedients to dislodge the boys—all in vain," said the Head. "I have done everything in my power, general. On one occasion I succeeded in capturing some of the rebels

—but the Fifth Form revolted, and actually seized me. As a result, the Remove boys succeeded in getting back to their rebel quarters. And this morning I find, to my added fury, that the College House section has joined hands with the Ancient House boys. The Remove is now completely in revolt—and they hold the west wing securely.

The general puffed at his cigar fiercely for a moment or two.

"Disgraceful — unprecedented!" he growled. "Upon my soul, Martin, I hardly know what to say. The situation is certainly difficult. When a big party of boys defy authority in this way they are hard to deal with."

"I will not deny that statement," said the Head grimly.

"However, the young scamps will not dare to ignore me," went on General Ord-Clayton pompously. "They will remember that I am the Chairman of the Governors—and they will listen to me."

"I hope so, sir," said Mr. Martin.

He had his own private views, but he did not think it advisable to mention them.

"To begin with, I will visit these boys, and give them my orders," went on the general. "It will be better, I think, for you to remain here, Martin. I wish to speak quietly and seriously with the youngsters."

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Martin. "Just as you wish."

"And I will guarantee that the boys will be upon their knees in a very short space of time," added the Chairman grimly. "You will see, Martin—you will see, I do not intend to be humbugged by a mere parcel of impudent schoolboys."

The general stalked out of the study, and a few minutes later he had mounted to the upper corridor, and approached the main barricade in the west wing.

I was there, waiting—for I had guessed that the general would make his appearance sooner or later. There was a good few other juniors on the spot, and there was a hush of anticipation.

"Now, don't forget—let me do the talking," I whispered. "And don't do any yelling or cat-calling. This rebellion is being conducted with dignity. I want the general to see that we have a good case."

"He's too obstinate to see anything," muttered Pitt.

The general came to a halt on the other side of the barricade.

"Boys!" he exclaimed. "Are you listening to me?"

"I'm here, sir," I said. "I can hear everything you say. If you address me, you address the whole Remove. I'm the leader."

"Huh! It is just as well that you have admitted that, you rebellious young rascal!" exclaimed the general sourly.

"You are Nipper, I presume?"

"That's right, sir."

"Very well, Nipper, you fully realise, I suppose, that you will receive the bigger punishment?" said the general. "You cannot hope to remain in this school after what has happened—after the shocking spirit of revolt you have fostered among your Form-fellows. You will be expelled——"

"That's hardly a nice way to begin negotiations, sir," I broke in. "The Remove is quite determined that nobody is to be expelled—and if you have come here merely in order to threaten us, there's no necessity for this interview to continue."

The general snorted with rage.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed. "Upon my soul! How—how dare you be so impertinent? It seems to me that you have defied authority for so long that you have no respect for anybody. Do you realise, you young scoundrel, that you are addressing the Chairman of the School Governors?"

"I realise that all right, sir," I replied. "But that's no reason why I should be afraid to speak the truth."

"I shall remember this, Nipper—I shall certainly remember it!" snapped the general. "You will please understand that I require you to put an end to this disgraceful rebellion at once. The matter will brook of no delay. You are to take down these barricades, and you must return to your normal duties within the hour. Do you thoroughly understand that?"

"Your words are quite plain, sir," I replied. "If I agree, what terms are you willing to——"

"Terms — terms!" shouted Ord-Clayton. "Upon my soul! Do you dare to speak to me of terms? You will obey my orders unquestionably, and you, as the ring-leader, will be flogged and expelled——"

"Hold on, sir," I interrupted.

"Eh? What—what did you say?"

"I asked you to hold on, sir," I replied. "You seem to have got a wrong idea into your head. It's not my intention to be impudent, but I should just like to point out to you that we have no intention of surrendering unless our conditions of surrender are fully granted."

"Your—your conditions?"

"That's what I said, sir?" I went on grimly. "It won't take me half a minute to explain. If you want us to return to our normal duties, you must agree to these terms. Nobody is to be punished in the slightest degree—since we rebelled against a tyranny which could not be endured. Our actions were justified in every way—and therefore it would be rotten to punish us."

"Good gracious!"

"Furthermore we demand that the school shall be conducted on those lines which were adopted by Dr. Stafford," I proceeded. "Under Dr. Stafford's guidance, everything went smoothly at St. Frank's, and although we should prefer to see Dr. Stafford back, we do not insist upon that. But we do demand that Mr. Martin shall conduct the school as Dr. Stafford conducted it; we demand that all our privileges shall be restored, and that we shall all be allowed to go unpunished."

"Hear, hear!" echoed many of the juniors.

"The—the astounding audacity of the boys!" grated the general furiously.

"You young rascal, do you realise that you are making a perfectly insane proposition? Do you expect for a moment that I will agree to such proposals—never, sir! Never! You will be punished as you deserve."

"In that case, sir, we'll dispense with the argument forthwith," I said calmly. "When you come to me in a different frame of mind, I will listen to you. But at present we are only wasting time. Good morning!"

I walked away, and the other juniors followed me. General Ord-Clayton was left stranded, as it were, and my final words had somehow stung in a manner which left the general gasping for breath. He certainly could find no words to express himself—not at the moment, anyhow.

When he did recover his breath, there was nobody to listen to him.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, red

with wrath. "This is appalling! Martin is right—these boys are utterly abandoned. They do not know the difference between right and wrong. Some drastic measures must be taken!"

He strode away, clenching his fists fiercely. And when he arrived in Mr. Martin's study, he found that Mr. Wrott was with the Head—although, of course, the general had no idea that Mr. Wrott was actually Nelson Lee. It was Lee's policy to pretend to be in sympathy with Mr. Martin's methods.

But the schoolmaster-detective was only waiting his time. He was only holding his hand until the moment was ripe for action.

"Well, sir?" asked Mr. Martin, in a slightly sarcastic tone. "Have you compelled the boys to surrender?"

The general's eyes glittered.

"I require no taunts from you, Martin!" he snapped. "You know well enough that I have done nothing of the sort. The young wretches are absolutely hardened. They care nothing for authority—and I must be allowed to remark that the whole situation leads me to believe that you have been lamentably weak in your administration."

"It is hardly fair to say that, sir," exclaimed the Head, sharply. "I've done my best, and Mr. Wrott is fully aware of that fact."

"I cannot help agreeing that Mr. Martin's words are quite true," said Nelson Lee, in his disguised voice. "Every expedient has been tried—every trick has been tested. But those boys are wide awake, and I am afraid it will be impossible to dislodge them from their stronghold. Force, in my opinion, will never solve the difficulty."

The general stamped his foot.

"Your opinion, sir, has not been asked for—and will not be asked for!" he exclaimed. "I should like you to realise that I require you to speak only when you are spoken to. Tush—piffle! Force is the only argument which the boys will understand. And force, let me tell you, will soon be applied!"

"In what way sir?" asked Mr. Martin.

"I do not know for the moment—but I am a soldier, and I am never

at a loss for long," exclaimed General Ord-Clayton. "This problem does not present many difficulties, in my view. We need, mainly, a large force to assist us in breaking down the barriers which at present protect the rebels."

"Really, sir, I cannot see——"

"Do not interrupt me," snapped the general sourly. "A large force, I repeat. If necessary, I will scour the whole neighbourhood for a sufficient number of men to storm those barricades——"

The general paused, listening.

"By gad!" he exclaimed. "What is that infernal din?"

He strode to the window, and glanced out into the Triangle. There certainly was some cause for his irritable inquiry. The beating of a drum could be heard, accompanied by the rather discordant notes of many bugles.

"It sounds like a cadet corps," suggested Nelson Lee drily.

"A cadet corps!" echoed the general. "By gad, sir, I realise, now, what it means. For a moment I suspected that those wretched boys were up to some tricks. But this noise is merely being caused by a party of boy scouts—a considerable party, I may add. I passed them on the road, this side of Bannington."

"The Bannington patrol, probably, on one of their rare route marches," suggested Nelson Lee mildly.

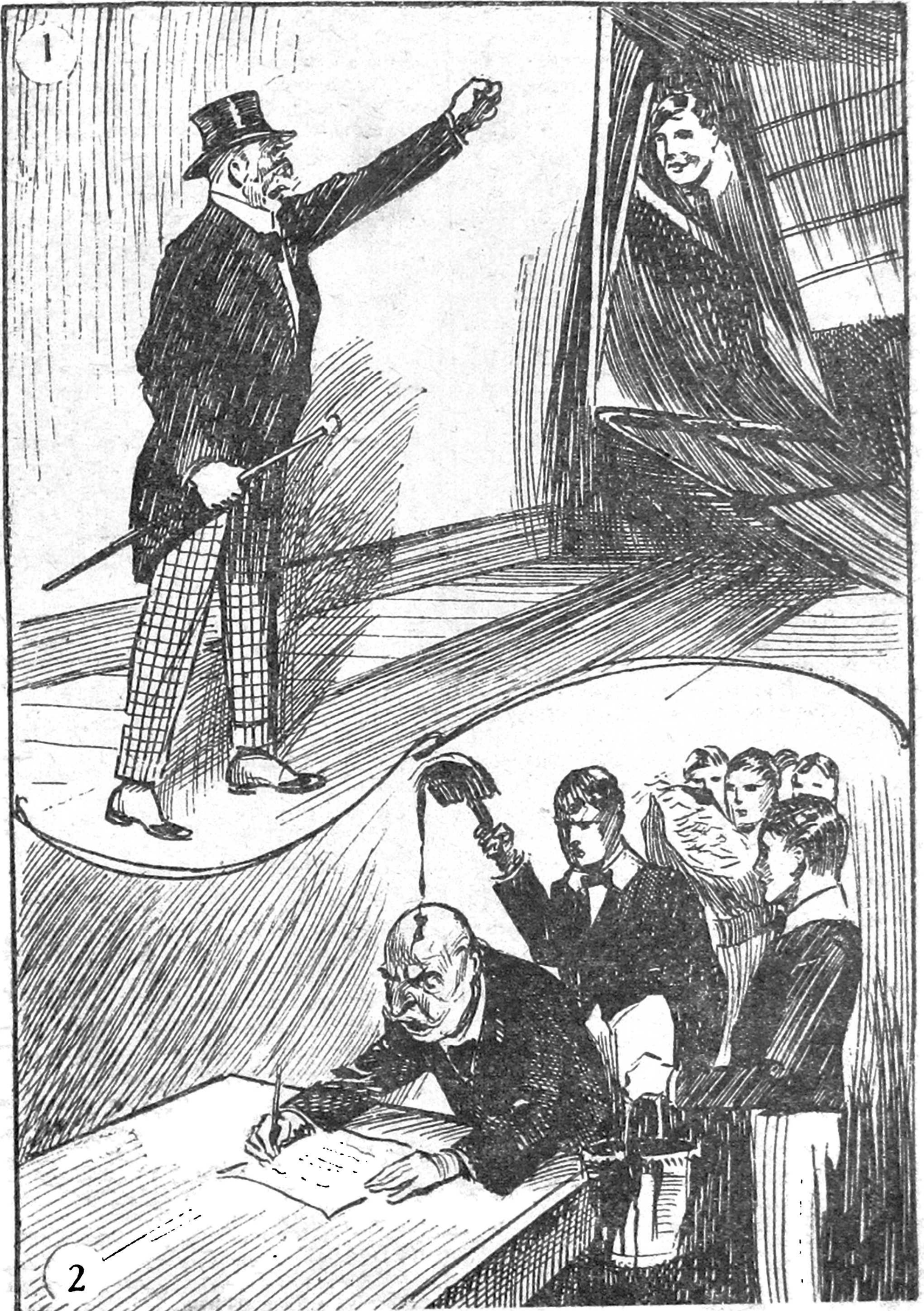
"Well, we will not allow them to interrupt our discussion," went on General Ord-Clayton. "As I was saying—good gracious! Upon my soul!"

"I do not remember you saying that, sir," remarked the Head.

"Do not be absurd, Martin," exclaimed the general, a gleam in his eye. "An idea has just occurred to me—a really brilliant idea. By gad! I am certain that I shall be able to defeat these rebellious schoolboys within an hour. Yes! within an hour, sir."

"But how——"

"You will learn in a moment or two," said the general, pacing up and down, his eyes still glittering. "The scheme cannot fail to be effectual. It will, in fact, solve the problem which confronts us!"



1. "Terms—terms!" shouted Ord-Clayton. "You dare to speak to me of terms!"

2. "I—I— confound you, I will sign!" grated Ord-Clayton.

CHAPTER V.

THE STORMING OF THE FORT.

MR. MARTIN was puzzled. "I cannot quite follow your line of reasoning, general," he said. "Why should the sound of that bugle suggest a solution to you?" "Why?" exclaimed the general. "Because I am a soldier, sir—that is why. You are very dull this morning—your wits are woolgathering, sir! Can you not realise that here we have the very means of routing the Remove into abject surrender? These boy scouts—they will help——"

"You mean that they will storm the west wing?" asked Lee quickly.

"Exactly, sir—exactly," snapped the other.

"But their numbers will not be sufficient, I'm afraid," said the Head.

"Then you need be afraid no longer," retorted Ord-Clayton. "There are several hundreds of these scouts—I was quite impressed by their number as I passed them. Indeed, there must be several patrols—possibly an annual gathering of the young rascals, from all the towns and villages in the district. At all events, these scouts are boys of action—and with their trained skill, they will be able to affect an entry into the west wing with comparatively no difficulty. It is a splendid suggestion."

"But will the boys agree—that is the question?"

"I shall compel them to agree," snapped the general. "You do not seem to realise, sir that I have been in the habit of commanding all my life. I have but to give orders, and they are obeyed. They will be obeyed, let me tell you, in this present instance.

"I hope so, sir," said the Head doubtfully.

He followed the general out into the Triangle, and then out into the open lane. They were just in time to see the leaders of the scouts coming round the bend, with considerable noise and bustle.

They were all boys, and the leader appeared to be a youth with ginger hair, and rough features. He was, in fact, no less a person than Master Jim Blundle, of Bannington.

The Council School leader was also

the leading spirit in the Bannington Scout movement.

And at present, in full glory, he was leading his followers on their weary tramp across country. Tom Kitchen and Bill Ringham were also present—the trio were generally together. They regarded General Ord-Clayton somewhat curiously as they drew opposite.

"One moment, boys—I should like a word with you," exclaimed the general abruptly.

Blundle called a halt.

The whole line of scouts came to a standstill, the bugles were silenced, and the drums ceased to rattle.

"Want to speak to me, sir?" said Jim Blundle.

"Yes, boy, I do," said the general. "Further, I require your assistance in a little matter. I have always understood that scouts are supposed to be useful members of society—that they are always ready to maintain law and order."

"That's so, sir," said Blundle. "If we can do anything in that line for you, you won't find us raising no objections. What's the game, sir?"

"Now, my boy, I wish to talk to you privately for a moment or two," said Ord-Clayton. "This gentleman by my side is Mr. Howard Martin, the Headmaster of St. Frank's school."

"Pleased to meet you, sir," said Blundle genially.

"You may be aware of the fact that there are a number of boys in this school at present defying discipline and order," continued the general. "The Remove Form, to be exact, has revolted against authority, and is at present disregarding all orders and commands."

"Cheeky young beggars, sir," said Blundle warmly. "We did ear something about it—quite a good bit, in fact. It's time them young rascals was put in their proper place. I never heard tell o' such impudence."

"I am glad you take that view, my boy—a most sensible view," said the general, approvingly. "Here is a ten-shilling note to put into your pocket."

"Thank you kindly, sir," said Blundle. "And now what have I got to do for it? You didn't give me that Bradbury for fun, I suppose?"

"No, my lad, not exactly," said the

general. "The position is this. These Remove boys have barricaded themselves into the west wing of the Ancient House so securely that, for the moment, we are powerless to dislodge them. They have had the unprecedented audacity to defy me to my face—to say nothing of defying their Headmaster. I am anxious to effect a settlement at the earliest possible moment—and the only way to do so is to take the west wing by force——"

"I see, sir," said Blundle, nodding. "That's where we come in—eh?"

"Exactly," replied the general. "That is where you come in, my boy. These juniors have flouted every rule of the school—for no reason, mark you. They have simply taken it into their heads to be rebellious. Something must be done—and that swiftly. The ungrateful young puppies are not content with the very easy-going discipline of this school. If you will agree to assist in this matter, I can promise you that you will be liberally rewarded."

Jim Blundle shook his head.

"I don't know as how that would be right, sir," he said. "We scouts don't expect money for doin' somebody a good turn. I don't feel exactly comfortable about that ten bob you gave me——"

"Pooh—pooh!" interrupted the general. "That is nothing, boy. What I want you to do is to form your men into several parties, and to attack the west wing at several different points simultaneously. Do you think you will be able to engage in this little affair for me?"

Blundle considered.

"I shall have to ask the chaps, sir," he said. "I can't very well give you an answer right off."

"Remember that what I am asking you to do is in the interests of justice and authority," said the general. "Something must be done, and I thought perhaps that you would be honoured to lend me your valuable assistance. You are a fine looking set of boys, and I am sure that you will use your efforts in the cause of discipline."

Compliment was not lost upon Jim Blundle, and he nodded.

"Just a minute, sir," he said. "I'll have a chat with the fellers!"

"He walked away, and was soon

talking to an eager crowd of scouts. They listened to him attentively.

"You see, mates, it's this way," explained Blundle. "These 'ere gents want us to give them a 'and with them cheeky Remove kids. They're still in revolt, and they've pinched a whole bit of the Ancient House all to themselves."

"Yes, but where do we come in?" asked Tom Kitchen.

"Why, you'll help, of course," replied his leader. "You know as well as I do that discipline is everything. If a crowd of cheeky kids sets their back agin authority, there's trouble—and we've heard all about these Remove beggars. They're a set of blooming young rotters—that's what they are."

"You're right there, Jim,"

"Rather, mate!"

"An' what 'ave we got to do?"

"Raid the Ancient House," said Blundle grimly. "Don't you think it's the best thing for us to do? You remember what happened the other night? See my eye? That was give to me by one o' them bloomin' kids—blow him! We ain't got no cause to love these St. Frank's doods—an' 'ere's a chance right in our 'ands, to get a bit of our own back."

"Not arf it ain't!"

"We've always been up against these kids—but, somehow, we've never had a real go at 'em," went on Blundle. "There's been times when we've been beaten to the wide—just because they've been in stronger numbers. But this time the position ain't the same. We're in a position to knock spots off the kids—an' we shall be able to get our own back. The Council School is up against these 'ere snobs!"

"We'll 'elp, Jim."

"O' course we will!"

"Only too glad to, mate!"

"It'll be a fine bit o' sport!"

The scouts were unanimous in their approval. There had always been a kind of rivalry between the Bannington Council School and St. Frank's. And here, as Blundle had said, was an opportunity to indulge in a terrific spree. And to do so, moreover, right under the eyes of authority.

It was a chance not to be missed.

On many occasions the Council School boys had longed for the chance of

routing his rivals. But they had never been granted a real sound chance. They had been afraid to approach too near to St. Frank's, in case the Head complained to their own schoolmaster.

But this affair was different.

Mr. Martin himself—to say nothing of General Ord-Clayton—was anxious to see them engage in combat with their deadly rivals. The scouts needed no pressing. They were only too eager to fall in with the general's suggestion.

Jim Blundle returned to the two waiting men.

"It's all right, sir," said Jim. "We'll do it—and glad to."

"Ah," said the general. "Splendid—splendid! You reveal the right spirit, my boy, and I will see that you do not suffer for your efforts. Defeat these rebels, and you will be very handsomely rewarded—yes, I insist upon that. You can use the money for new uniforms, and such like."

"You're a gent, sir," said Blundle enthusiastically. "Well, what do we do first? I'll take orders from you."

"Of course—of course," said Ord-Clayton genially. "Now, let me see. You know the geography of the school better than I do, Mr. Martin. What would you suggest in the way of an attack?"

The Head, greatly pleased with the situation, looked thoughtful.

"Well, it would be advisable, I think, to storm the west wing from several different points simultaneously," he said. "For example, a number of scouts can attack the lower windows, another batch can deal with the barricades indoors—while still more scouts can mount ladders to the windows."

"We ain't everlasting, sir," said Blundle, with a grin.

"No, my boy, I know that," said the Head. "But you are sufficiently strong in numbers to carry out the plan I suggested, I have ladders ready; for, to tell the truth, I was contemplating an attack of this style myself. These ladders will reach the dormitory windows, and it is quite likely that all the boys who mount them will enter unresistingly. The rebels will be fully engaged downstairs, and at the barricades."

"We don't mind a few knocks, sir," said Blundle. "We'll give a few back, don't you worry. It'll be rare sport!"

Exactly ten minutes later the attack commenced.

The west wing was stormed.

There had been previous stormings, but never on such a scale as this. The Head had employed thirty or so men for the job, but they had been half-drunken fellows with no enthusiasm, and not an atom of pluck.

The present proposition was different.

Jim Blundle and Co. were in force—appalling force—and nobody could accuse them of being cowards. Over two hundred scouts there were—many of them boys we had never seen or heard of. They were neutral in the whole affair, but they were naturally willing to back up their companions.

And two hundred determined boy scouts was a different affair to thirty useless roughs.

We had no idea that anything was brewing until the attack had actually commenced. I had had no opportunity of finding out the truth. Moreover, I never dreamed that the general would attempt a daylight raid.

The sound of the bugles and the drums had smote our ears earlier, but as they had ceased, we assumed that the scouts—as we rightly judged them to be—had passed on. And it was impossible to see through the high brick wall into the lane.

Thus, only at the last moment, did we discover the truth.

And then we knew all about it!

I was just finishing a rather late breakfast when Reginald Pitt came rushing into the kitchen. There was a flush in his cheeks, and his eyes were gleaming with excitement.

"Hallo!" I exclaimed. "What's wrong?"

"We're—we're being attacked!" gasped Pitt. "We shall be down if we ain't careful. There's hundreds of 'em, Nipper!"

"Eh? Hundreds of what?"

"Scouts!" panted Pitt. "Bannington Council School chaps!"

"What!" I ejaculated, jumping up.

"The Head must have paid the rotters to do the job," said Pitt hurriedly. "You remember we heard the bugles? It's Jim Blundle and his crowd. They're rushing at the building! Great Scott! Hear that?"

A hammering sound, followed by a crashing of glass.

"Sound the alarm!" I yelled. "Hurry yourselves, you chaps!"

Orders were shouted by the dozen; fellows rushed to their action stations. And it was soon seen that we were dealing with a dangerous problem. My position was in the upper corridor, in charge of the main barricade.

Just as I reached it there came the noise of running feet, and then the scouts came to the attack. They used their staves to break down the obstacles which had protected us for so long.

There was no time to obtain ammunition—pea-shooters, or squirters. We simply had to rely upon our strength. And we were outnumbered at every point of onslaught.

"Go it, chaps!" I heard Blundle roar. "We'll soon have the beggars out!"

The barricade was being pulled down rapidly, and nothing we could do seemed to stay the advance of the attackers. Bit by bit they succeeded in weakening our defence.

"This won't do," I gasped. "Rush downstairs, Tommy, and see how they're going there! If De Valerie can spare any men—bring 'em along. Hurry!"

"Right!" panted Tommy Watson.

He darted away, with the sound of strife ringing in his ears. It came from every quarter. Downstairs he found that the position was far worse than upstairs.

Every window was being attacked in tremendous force. And the boy scouts were not pretending to gain an entry; they were actually doing so! The windows were being forced, in spite of the defenders' efforts.

De Valerie spotted Watson at once.

"Thank goodness you've come," he exclaimed huskily. "Rush upstairs for help, Watson! We must have some——"

"You ass!" roared Watson. "I've come down here for help!"

"Oh, my hat!" said De Valerie. "We shall be whacked—whacked by those rotten Council School bounders! Isn't Nipper holding his own at the upper barricade? Can't you manage?"

"They're breaking through," gasped Watson. "We can't stop 'em, you know——Hi, look out! Some of those scouts have got through——Oh, goodness! This is the finish of us!"

It had all come so suddenly that the majority of the rebels were still partially dazed with shock. They fought desperately—not that this repelled the storming parties.

Watson, finding things going so badly downstairs, rushed up again. He was just in time to see the barricade being torn to shreds—just in time to see the scouts pouring through the gap.

A tremendous struggle was in progress, and I was personally fighting with Jim Blundle. And in the middle of it Somerton came pelting along the corridor from the dormitory.

"Look out, Nipper!" he yelled. "The enemy's in! They're piling through the dormitory windows in dozens! We can't hold 'em back!"

"Do your best!" I panted. "Use every effort!"

"That won't make no sort of difference to you," said Blundle. "We've got you cooked, my sons. It's about time you knew somethin' about lor an' order. Nice goings on—rebellin' against authority——Yaroo!"

Blundle sat down as my fist hammered into his face. Next moment he was on his feet again, and we were soon scrapping vigorously. Other fellows were rolling and falling about on all sides.

And in the dormitory there was the same story to tell.

Scrambling up the ladders the scouts had nearly everything their own way. At the windows a few juniors had stationed themselves, to resist the invaders. But they were unable to stem the tide.

The scouts poured in in a continuous stream—once the breach had been made.

And the rebels, fighting at the barricades and windows, found themselves at a disadvantage. For the scouts, coming from the dormitory in ever-increasing numbers, were able to conduct a flanking attack. We were surprised in the rear, and the result was inevitable.

The battle lasted three minutes more—not a second longer.

And at the end of that time we were beaten!

Fighting fore and aft, as it were, it was impossible for us to hold out. The scouts simply overwhelmed us. The defeat was all the more bitter because we had not suspected it.

My feelings were too deep to be expressed in mere words.

After all my troubles—after holding out so successfully all through, we were beaten by our rivals of the Bannington Council School! It was galling in the extreme.

The fight was one which left us honourably defeated. We had fought hopelessly against heavy odds, and we had gone down. It was not our fault.

Blundle and Co. had got the upper hand—but at a cost.

With the barricades gone, with the windows open, our fortress was a fortress no longer.

General Ord-Clayton, having waited until all danger was over, stalked into the arena, as though he had accomplished the whole affair. He reminded me of the celebrated Duke of Plaza Toro, of "Gondoliers" fame, who "led his regiment from behind; he found it less exciting."

Certainly, the general had not displayed much enthusiasm during the thick of the battle.

He was as pleased as Punch, and we were unable to defy him any longer. Surrounded by the victorious scouts, we were helpless. We were at the general's mercy.

Disaster had overtaken the rebellion!

CHAPTER VI.

THE TABLES TURNED.

GENERAL ORD-CLAYTON rubbed his hands together with pleasure. "Splendid, my boys—splendid!" he exclaimed. "I hardly hoped for such an early victory as this. You have defeated these wretched rebels, and they are now powerless."

"I thought we'd do the trick, sir," grinned Blundle.

"I was determined to put a finish to this rebellion—and I have done so," gloated the general. "You see, Mr. Martin? When I am in earnest there is something happening. I do not play with the thing as you did."

The Head, who was there, frowned.

"You will pardon me, sir," he

snapped. "I have not played in the slightest degree. Fortune favoured you this morning——"

"We will not discuss the matter, sir," interjected the general. "It is sufficient that we have gained the upper hand."

"Yes—by a piece of mean trickery," I said hotly. "These Bannington chaps don't know the truth, or they wouldn't have lifted a finger to help you! I know Blundle too well for that!"

Jim Blundle looked surprised.

"Oh, do you?" he said. "I don't 'old with defying good rules——"

"Silence, boy!" roared the general.

"Eh?" gasped Blundle.

"I ordered you to be silent, you impertinent rascal!" shouted Ord-Clayton. "I will stand no nonsense from you, my lad. Nipper, I shall deal with you later for your insulting conduct——"

"You can do as you like!" I retorted angrily. "You have beaten us by a trick, General Ord-Clayton—a mean, contemptible trick!"

"By gad!" ejaculated the general. "Good gracious!"

He seemed to be overcome by my impudence; and I noticed that Jim Blundle was frowning a bit. The general's harsh words had surprised him somewhat. Having gained his end, Ord-Clayton was no longer polite to the scout-leader.

"Did—did you hear, Mr. Martin?" asked the general, pale with anger. "Did you hear what this outrageous rascal said. Within an hour he shall be flogged before the whole school—flogged until he screams for mercy!"

"I agree with you, sir—I agree heartily," said the Head. "It will give me much pleasure to administer the punishment. Afterwards Nipper will be expelled—together with the other ring-leaders."

"Oh, my goodness!" muttered Tommy Watson faintly.

"Begad!" said Sir Montie.

"There will be many accounts to settle," said the general, glaring at me. "This revolt is the most disgraceful affair I have ever heard of in my career, and it shall be punished accordingly. It is my intention that ten boys shall be sent away in disgrace——"

"Ten, sir?" gasped Hubbard.

"Yes, boy—ten!" roared the general.

"They shall be expelled, and flogged previously. And after that the discipline will be even more rigid than before. It is the only way to keep you in check——"

"But look 'ere, sir," put in Tom Kitchen. "We didn't know as you was goin' to kick any of the kids out of the school——"

"What you knew, and what you did not know, does not interest me," said Ord-Clayton sourly. "You have been of some slight assistance to me, and I appreciate it. I will give you orders when you may go."

"Orders!" muttered Blundle. "Oh, my 'at!"

"Some slight assistance!" echoed Kitchen. "Did you 'ear it?"

"This is what you get for working for a man like General Ord-Clayton," shouted Handforth wrathfully. "You silly lunatic——"

"Boy, be silent!" roared the general.

"Rats!" said Handforth boldly.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the general harshly. "Then you are still unruly? I will deal with you, boy, later. You shall be the second boy to be flogged and expelled. And when the punishments are over, the Remove will be ruled with an iron hand. I intend to frame new regulations altogether."

"Something like a prison, I suppose?" suggested Handforth bitterly.

"You—you infernal young hound——"

"Oh, dry up!" said Handforth. "Your voice worries me!"

"Good gracious!"

"I don't mind telling you what I think of you, in the least," said Handforth, with delightful candour. "I'm going to be flogged and expelled, so what difference does it make?"

"You will see, you confounded young wretch," roared the general. "I intend to frame new regulations, I say. The Remove will be confined to the school gates constantly—throughout the whole term! I will not allow a single Remove boy to leave the school property!"

"Oh!"

"Futhermore," proceeded the general, pleased with the impression he had made—"furthermore, your lessons will be longer each day. You will stay in your class-room an hour later than the other boys. The junior studies will be closed completely. Do you understand? And

for the rest of this term the Remove will be sent to bed supperless!"

"Phew!" muttered Blundle. "That's a bit steep!"

"Not 'arf!" said Kitchen, nodding. "If we'd know'd this, Jim, we wouldn't ha' interfered—hey? This old bloke——"

"What!" roared the general. "What did you say, boy?"

"I wasn't talkin' to you, sir," growled Tom Kitchen.

"You referred to me as a—ahem!—as a bloke!" snapped the general. "I have never been so insulted in my life. Take that, you young ruffian!"

He delivered a cuff which sent Kitchen spinning, his cheeks flaming red.

"My 'at!" gasped the boy scout.

"Stop them games, sir," said Blundle sharply.

"Eh?"

"We ain't standing that sort of thing, sir," went on Blundle. "We come here to give you a 'and, and then you knock us about. I thought you was a genial sort of bloke—bloke, do you hear? But you seem to be a nasty tempered blighter!"

"Upon my soul!" said the general. "This—this is insufferable!"

The Council School boys were rather incensed, and little wonder. They had no fear of Ord-Clayton. He could do them no harm, and they did not mind stating their minds—in their own blunt way.

"Hold on," I exclaimed grimly. "I'd like a word here."

I had been preparing myself for the moment, and I spoke with determination.

"Be silent, Nipper!" shouted the general.

"I'm sorry, sir—but I'm going to speak," I went on. "I mean to let these Bannington boys know the exact truth of the case. Look here, Blundle, will you listen to me for two minutes?"

"Certainly, old mate," said Blundle. "Go ahead."

"I refuse to allow——" began the general.

"No, you don't," interrupted Jim Blundle. "You don't refuse nothin' of the sort—you can't. I an' my mates are here in force, sir, and we want to hear what Nipper has to say. If you don't be quiet we'll shove you outside."

The general nearly exploded—but he realised, in time, that the Council School boys were quite capable of such an act.

"Go it, Nipper," said Blundle.

"Thanks," I said. "I knew you were a sportsman, Blundle. We've had a few rows, now and again, but they've always been good-natured. I'll just explain the whole position. The rebellion started because our Headmaster, Mr. Martin, is a bully and a tyrant."

"You—you——" began the Head furiously.

"Let him speak, if you don't mind!" exclaimed Blundle.

"A tyrant," I repeated. "He imposed the most harsh and unreasonable restrictions; he punished fellows for doing nothing. Our liberties were taken away, and interfered with at every turn. The incident which finally cast the die happened on Guy Fawkes night."

"Oh!" said Blundle. "'Ow was that?"

"Handforth and Church and McClure—three of our chaps—decided to have a bit of fun after lights-out with fireworks," I proceeded. "They were seen by the Head, and captured. I'll admit they oughtn't to have been out of bed, but it was only a minor offence—particularly on the Fifth of November."

"Granted," remarked Kitchen. "It wasn't anythin', in fact."

"Well, the Headmaster sent Handforth and Church and McClure into an icy-cold attic, dressed only in their pyjamas," I exclaimed tensely. "They were ordered to spend the night in that cold room, locked in, without a single blanket. It was enough to give them pneumonia!"

"I should say it was!" said Blundle. "This 'ere is news, mate!"

"I suppose it is," I agreed grimly. "These details didn't come out in the local papers, did they? We decided that the time had come to take action—so we rebelled. We took possession of this part of the house—and meant to remain here until our terms were granted. All we wanted was a promise that nobody would be punished, and that the old rules and regulations would be restored. We didn't revolt for the fun of it, or because we like being unruly. We revolted because we're not in favour of standing tyranny!"

There was a short silence, the Council School boys eyeing one another uncertainly and uncomfortably. There was a ring of truth in my statements, and they could not fail to be impressed.

"It's a bit awkward, mate," said Blundle, at last. "We didn't know——"

"Do you believe this young liar's tongue?" shouted the Head furiously. "Upon my word, general, I cannot understand why you allow this——"

"He can't do nothing else," snapped Blundle.

"That's the position," I went on quietly. "If you like to disbelieve me, you can. But it's all the perfect truth. We were within an ace of victory when you came along with your men, Blundle."

"We sort of mucked it all up—eh?" asked Blundle.

"Yes," I replied. "And now—well, we're properly in the cart now. I shall be flogged and expelled, and a good few other chaps will share my fate. I wouldn't mind so much if we deserved it—but we don't. You've played us an awful trick, Blundle, but I don't blame you. You didn't know."

I extended my hand, and Jim Blundle took it warmly.

"Good for you, Nipper—you're a sport!" he said heartily.

"So he is!" shouted many of the other scouts. "We've made a bloomer!"

Blundle nodded, and took something from his pocket.

"You can take this 'ere thing back, sir," he said, tossing a folded ten-shilling note to General Ord-Clayton. "I don't want your bloomin' money. You got us to fight these fellers by a lot of lies——"

"Lies!" roared the general. "How—how dare you suggest——"

"And we're not having any of it," went on Blundle calmly. "We've done the harm, but it won't take long to repair it!"

"You—you mean——" I began.

"Exactly, mate," nodded Jim. "All we've got to do is to clear out—an' you'll be just the same as you was before we butted in. See? We'll make it all right, old son. Don't you worry."

"Hurrah!" yelled Handforth. "Good old Ginger!"

The Head and Ord-Clayton exchanged startled glances.

'You must be mad, boy!' snarled the Head. "You would not dare to——"

"Wouldn't dare, wouldn't we?" shouted Blundle. "We can be on Nipper's side, I suppose? We ain't obliged to keep in with you, are we? An' what's more, we'll give you a taste of somethin', you bloomin' bully!"

"Good heavens!" panted the Head nervously.

He turned abruptly, and hastened out of the dormitory—where the discussion had been taking place. Several scouts tried to stop him, but he succeeded in getting out.

"Now then, lend a hand with this one," yelled Blundle. "Come on, mates! We'll run him along the passage——"

The general backed away.

"Don't—don't you dare to touch me!" he gasped frantically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A yell of derisive laughter went up. The Removites were feeling light-hearted again. They knew that Blundle and his men could easily repair the error if they liked—and they did like. They had been convinced by my straightforward story of the facts.

Several scouts rushed at the general—but I stopped them.

"Half a minute!" I shouted. "I want to ask a favour."

"Go it!" said Blundle.

"I want you to leave the general in our hands—barricaded in with us," I said, with gleaming eyes. "If you do that, you'll not only repair the error, but do us a tremendous service, too."

Jim Blundle laughed.

"You can 'ave the old buffer, an' welcome," he said. "We don't want him!"

The general nearly wept with fury.

"You—you young lunatics!" he exclaimed thickly. "You—you would not dare to touch me! Let me go! Do you hear me? Let me go!"

But he was surrounded by Handforth and Co., Pitt, and a good few others, who made sure that he didn't escape.

The juniors were delighted at the sudden turning of the tables.

Blundle led his men out through the open windows below. They poured out in crowds, laughing uproariously. They had full control of the situation—and they knew it. Out in the Triangle they met Mr. Howard Martin. The Head was looking alarmed and anxious. He knew what dire consequences would follow if the general was left in our hands.

"Boys," he shouted earnestly, "I want you to listen to me——"

"Shut up! You're a bully!" roared Kitchen.

"Listen to me!" repeated the Head. "Nipper was speaking only a part of the truth; he exaggerated matters badly, and you must not be led away by everything you hear——"

"We're not going to be led away by what we hear now, anyhow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are doing a terrible thing," shouted the Head. "You are leaving those wretched boys in full control again—you are making them the master of the situation. And, with the general in their hands, they will be able to force me——"

"Good!" said Blundle. "That's just what we want!"

"Go indoors, Bully!"

"Slide!"

"If you don't, you'll be pelted!"

"Yah! Bully! Yah!"

The Head made one more attempt.

"Boys, I will give you ten shillings each if—ug-gug-gug-gug!"

Mr. Martin made that extraordinary sound as a handful of mud smote him fully in the mouth. He staggered back, half-blinded, and nearly choked. And he sat down in a deep puddle of water with a tremendous splash.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do it again," yelled Ringham. "I didn't see it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Martin, realising that his was a hopeless task, scrambled to his feet, and hurriedly went indoors—being bespattered liberally with mud. Blundle and Co. had changed over with a vengeance!

"All right, Nipper—get ahead with

puttin' up the boards," shouted Blundle cheerfully. "We'll keep guard till you're all nicely fixed again!"

"Good man!" I replied. "We'll do as much for you one day!"

The work of restoring the barricades proceeded apace, while the boy scouts remained outside, guarding the position. The Triangle was deserted except for these Bannington fellows. The St. Frank's boys were in their class-rooms, busy at morning lessons.

And at last everything was as before.

The boards were on the windows once more, and the barricades in the passages were firm and secure. Then, and not until then, did Jim Blundle show any sign of shifting.

"O.K. now?" he asked. "Right! We'll continue our march, then. Good luck to you, an' may you be the winners!"

Many of the scouts were marked, but they did not bear any malice. Black eyes and thick ears were plentiful on both sides, as a matter of fact. But the main point was that we were secure in our stronghold once more.

And now we held the trump card.

We had General Ord-Clayton with us—a prisoner in our hands!

Some of the Removites were rather nervous, but I wasn't. I knew well enough that victory was certain for us, if only I played the game in the right way. Mr. Martin feared the worst, too.

He was pacing his study, with Nelson Lee standing at the window. Lee was secretly delighted with the turn of events, but he did not look delighted. His expression was one of sour disapproval.

"This business is disastrous, Wrott—absolutely disastrous," exclaimed the Head savagely. "It all comes of the general interfering. I knew what would come of his infernal blundering. He has got himself imprisoned with those boys now——"

"But surely it is for him to worry?" suggested Lee.

"What about me?" snapped the Head. "If those boys make the general promise anything—hang them! I don't know what to think!"

He continued pacing up and down, agitated beyond measure. He had reason to be agitated, for he saw, as surely as the stars shine at night, that defeat was looming largely upon the horizon.

The Remove held the upper hand!
And the Remove knew it!

CHAPTER VII.

VICTORY FOR THE REBELS.

"AND now for business!" I said grimly.

The excitement was over, and everything was as usual in the west wing. But there was a big matter to be attended to—a matter which, in my opinion, was to bring complete victory to our cause.

General Ord-Clayton, in his endeavour to bring disaster upon us, had only brought disaster upon himself. He had gained an entry into our fortress, only to be left there—a prisoner in our hands.

Some of the fellows were awed.

It was a terrible thing to detain the Chairman of the Board of Governors in this way! Perhaps it was. But the general was as much a bully as Martin, and he needed a lesson.

I decided that our only chance was to be absolutely firm—stern and unbending. The general's bluster would go then, and he would give way to our demands. He could scarcely do anything else.

"To business, eh?" repeated Pitt. "I say, Nipper, do you really mean to rag old Ord-Clayton?"

"I'm not going to rag him," I replied. "I'm simply going to make him give in to us. I don't think it'll be necessary to touch a single hair of his head. If possible, I want to avoid ragging him, as you say."

"But what's the idea?" asked Reginald.

"You'll see," I said briskly. "Come on, my son."

We hurried upstairs, and in the dormitory we found the general sitting

sullenly on the edge of a bed. Handforth and Co. and a dozen other juniors were keeping guard over him.

He looked up as I entered.

"You foolish boy!" he exclaimed, with unusual reserve. "You will presently regret this outrageous conduct on your part. If you will allow me to go free now—at once—I may be inclined to overlook——"

"I'm sorry, sir," I interrupted, "but I've come here to talk things over seriously. There's much to be settled, and I think we might as well get it over quickly. Please don't imagine for a moment that we mean to harm you. But it is in your power to right our wrongs, and we want you to do it."

"I will do nothing—nothing whatever!" snapped the general angrily.

"You have only got to say the word, and the Head will have to obey you," I went on. "Well, sir, this is the position. If you will agree to our terms of surrender, we will go back to lessons within an hour—right now, in fact."

"I will not even listen to your terms—let alone agree to them," shouted the general fiercely. "You impertinent puppy——"

"Pardon me, sir, but I haven't been impertinent yet," I broke in. "The Remove rebellion was justifiable. Under ordinary circumstances, a barring-out is a rotten affair, and the culprits ought to be horse-whipped. But, in this case, we were justified in taking action. It was our only course."

"Tosh!" snapped Ord-Clayton. "I refuse to listen to another word!"

"I'm sorry to hear that, sir—because I'm afraid you'll have to listen," I said quietly. "We were justified in rebelling, as I said before, and it would be unfair to punish us. In any case, the terms of the Remove are these."

"I won't hear them!" bellowed the general.

"The terms are these, sir," I went on smoothly. "No boy is to be punished in any way whatever; we are all to be allowed to continue the ordinary routine from the moment we surrender. All our lost privileges are to be restored. Tea is to be permitted in junior studies, and the whole school, in fact, is to be conducted exactly as Dr. Stafford conducted it."

The general's cheeks puffed out with fury.

"Are you mad, boy?" he barked.

"No, sir—I'm simply stating our terms," I answered.

"Then you may as well save your breath, young man," rapped out the general. "I shall not give way an inch—not a particle of an inch. Understand that, once and for all!"

I nodded.

"Only about a week ago, sir," I said reflectively, "we managed to get hold of Jesson, of the Sixth. He's a prefect, and he's a particularly low-down sort of a cad. He tried to trick us, and we paid him back. In brief, sir, we smothered him with tar, and rolled him in feathers."

"You young heathens!" exclaimed the general. "It was a disgraceful affair! Good heavens——"

He broke off, and stared at me blankly.

"Are—are you insinuating——" he began.

"That we shall tar and feather you, sir?" I asked. "Well, it's not absolutely impossible, is it? But you can avoid all unpleasantness by agreeing to sign a little document I have prepared—a document, stating the terms just as I have named them. Will you sign, sir?"

"Tar's awfully sticky, sir," remarked Handforth. "I got some on my hand once. It must be awful to be smothered with it from head to foot! Why, it takes weeks and weeks to get it off——"

"And feathers aren't very nice, worn over tar," put in De Valerie. "Just think how queer you'd look, sir, being led through the Bellton High Street, dressed in nothing else but tar and feathers!"

The meaning of all this talk was quite obvious.

"Boys, you would not dare!" gasped the general huskily.

"It's only a small document, sir," I exclaimed. "It won't take you a minute to sign it—and then we shall have your word in writing, and the Head will be unable to bully us any more——"

The general jumped to his feet in a frenzy of fury.

"I will do nothing—nothing!" he roared. "I will not sign any document, and if you dare to touch me——"

"Oh, well, I suppose it must be done," I said, with a sigh. "Bring him downstairs, you chaps. This way, sir, please. It'll make it a lot easier if you come quietly."

He didn't come quietly, by any means—but we got him down to the rear store-room at last. Here several preparations had been made. The electric light was on, and the floor of the room was smothered with a big pile of feathers.

In a corner stood a pail of tar, with a big brush in it.

The general eyed everything, horrified. Somehow, the whole scene was very impressive, and it seemed to indicate that we meant grim business.

Of course, we really had no intention of submitting General Ord-Clayton to a tar-and-feather ordeal. But there was no reason why we should not make him believe that we were quite prepared to go to such lengths.

The very thought of it would probably be enough.

"Boys! You are mad—perfectly insane!" shouted the general. "You do not know what you are doing!"

"Yes we do, sir," I said grimly. "We intend to have our own way in this matter. It's about time this rebellion came to an end—and an opportunity has arisen for us to finish it. It's not fair that any of us should suffer—since our cause has been a just one. As I said before, if you like to sign that little document, all will be well. If not——"

"I won't sign—I won't sign—I won't sign!" shouted the general, his voice rising higher and higher in a sudden frenzy of fury.

I reached out my hand.

"Pass over the tar brush, Handy," I said casually.

"Certainly!" said Handforth with great promptitude.

He handed it over so well that, incidentally, he splashed Church and McClure in a frightful manner—not only their faces, but their clothing.

"You careless ass!" howled McClure. "Look what you've done!"

"And look at me!" hooted Church.

"Don't make a noise here, you asses," said Handforth sternly. "Tar's healthy—it'll do you good. Don't forget that this is a solemn occasion. We are about to take a very grave step."

"Well, hand me the brush, and don't jaw," I said briskly.

Handforth gave me the brush, dripping with tar, and I walked over slowly and deliberately towards the now thoroughly frightened general. I had thought that he would give in earlier, and I was just beginning to be somewhat troubled.

Would the ruse succeed?

"Now, sir, please hold yourself steady," I said. "I wouldn't like to get any of this stuff in your eyes——"

"Take that brush away!" yelled the general. "I—I will sign—no, by gad! I'll be tarred and feathered before I submit!"

"Pile it on!" advised Handforth. "Soak him with it, Nipper!"

"Don't waste time—get busy!" advised Pitt.

"Hear, hear!"

Again I put the brush forward, and now I was more hopeful, for I had seen the determined glint fading in the general's eyes. He was wavering—and I decided to finish the affair quickly.

"Now, sir," I said sharply. "Hold ready for the first dab!"

I shot the brush forward within an inch of his face.

"Stop—stop!" gasped the general hoarsely.

"Well, sir," I said, holding my hand.

"I—I—confound you, I will sign!" grated Ord-Clayton. "But, remember, I am doing so under protest. I hope I am a gentleman, and I shall not go back on my word. But you are a set of unprincipled hooligans—simply that and nothing better. You have forced me into this infernal affair!"

"We knew that force was the only thing to apply, sir," I said, producing a sheet of paper and a fountain-pen with great promptitude. "Sign here, please, sir."

The general took the paper, and hesitated for a second.

"If you destroy that, sir, I have two duplicates—exactly the same," I said calmly. "So it would only be a waste of time."

"Hang you!" barked the general.

He signed the document reluctantly. But he did sign it, and that was the main thing. I took the paper from him, glanced at it, and folded it up. Some of the fellows were getting ready to yell, but I gave them a warning look.

"Now, sir, I should just like to earnestly tell you that we've meant no disrespect to you," I said smoothly. "Our sole aim has been to stamp out the tyranny which has been Mr. Martin's trade-mark since he arrived here. You don't know the facts as we do, sir—or you wouldn't blame us so much. It's for the best that we've done this, and if we have displeased you in any way, we humbly apologise."

The general regarded us sourly.

"It is easy for you to apologise now—after you have gained your end!" he exclaimed harshly. "I will have nothing more to say to you—nothing whatever. You have won your victory, and I must submit. One day, however, you will regret having treated me in this way."

"I don't think so, sir," I said quietly. "It's far more likely that you'll regret having appointed Mr. Martin to the Headmastership. I don't think it'll be long before you get a big shock. Handforth, kindly escort General Ord-Clayton to the barricade, and clear a way for him."

I rather fancy that the general was impressed by our politeness, for his rage had certainly diminished by the time Handforth and a few others had escorted him to the exit.

Meanwhile, the juniors were crowding round me, eagerly scanning the document.

It contained the general's signature, and he pledged himself to restore all our liberties, to see that no member of the Remove was punished in consequence of the rebellion, and it was guaranteed that the school in future would be run on precisely the same lines as those adopted by Dr. Stafford.

"It's victory for us!" shouted Pitt enthusiastically.

"Hurrah!"

"Victory for the rebels!"

"We've won—we've won!"

"Three cheers for Nipper."

Three cheers were given with a will, and for a short time there was quite a considerable commotion. This was not very surprising, for we had gained the triumph for which we had been striving so hard.

And, ten minutes later, the first Remove fellows to enter the Triangle for many days—Ancient House juniors that is—walked out boldly. Others followed, and presently we were all out as usual.

Morning lessons were over just then, and soon there were great crowds surrounding us, eager for information.

"Oh, so you've been beaten at last, have you?" sneered Jesson, coming up.

"No, thanks!" I replied. "We've won, Jessy—and you'll find a great many of your powers taken away this afternoon—in fact, they're taken away already. So you can go and eat coke!"

"You cheeky young sweep!" snapped Jesson angrily.

But we took no notice of him, for at that moment Chambers and Bryant of the Fifth came bustling along.

Chambers was enthusiastic.

"Good men!" he exclaimed briskly. "Well, I didn't think you'd manage it. There must be some brains in the Remove, after all! This stand of yours means better conditions for everybody in the school. Good luck to you, kids!"

"We all helped a bit," I said. "Don't forget the way you gave the Head a whopping, Chambers—I don't suppose he's forgotten it."

"He's still sore, I expect," grinned Chambers.

The excitement continued practically until dinner-time. And then the school was called together in the Big Hall. The general, it seemed, had decided to make a speech, and not a single fellow was absent when Ord-Clayton appeared upon the platform with the Head by his side. Mr. Martin was looking as black as thunder, although he pretended not to be upset.

"Going to make the best of a bad job, I suppose," whispered Handforth. "He ought to say nothing—he'll only go and put his giddy foot in it, I expect."

"Silence, please!" said Mr. Crowell sharply.

General Ord-Clayton stepped to the edge of the platform.

"Boys, the information I am now about to give you is probably well known to you already," he exclaimed: "The Remove Form is now facing me, in its proper place in the school. I can only say that I am glad the unfortunate rebellion is at an end. At the same time, I wish to remark that I am seriously annoyed by the manner in which the ringleaders of that rebellion obtained their own way."

"Nobody blames the kids, sir!" shouted Chambers.

"Rather not!"

"Good luck to the Remove!"

"Ahem! We will say as little on the subject as possible," exclaimed the general hastily. "I now wish to publicly state that Mr. Martin and I have held a conference, and we have come to one or two important decisions.

"No boy in the Remove is to be punished for his part in the regrettable affair which is now ended. And from henceforth Mr. Martin will conduct the school in a different manner—and he hopes that you will do your utmost to make up for the many delinquencies of the past."

"It's easy enough to jaw like that!" murmured Handforth. "Important de-

cisions! What rot! It was we who came to the decisions!"

"Of course it was—but the general must say something, you ass," whispered Church.

The general had a good deal more to say, but there was nothing much of interest in it. He was simply doing his utmost to gloss over the whole unfortunate business. The Remove was quite content—for everybody knew that the general, harsh as he was, would not go back upon his written word.

The Remove had won its victory, but, somehow, I had an idea that Mr. Howard Martin would not remain long at St. Frank's. Nelson Lee gave me a hint that very evening, as it happened.

He was now "Mr. Wrott," of course, and I had very few opportunities of chatting with him. But he managed to catch me alone in the passage.

"Look out for something like a sensation to-morrow, Nipper," he murmured confidently. "I think you can guess what I mean."

"Yes, rather, sir," I replied. "Good business!"

Those few words of the gov'nor's told me that he was ready to show his hand, and the downfall of the St. Frank's tyrant was now only a matter of hours. Somehow, I felt sure that the next day would produce some dramatic incidents!

THE END.

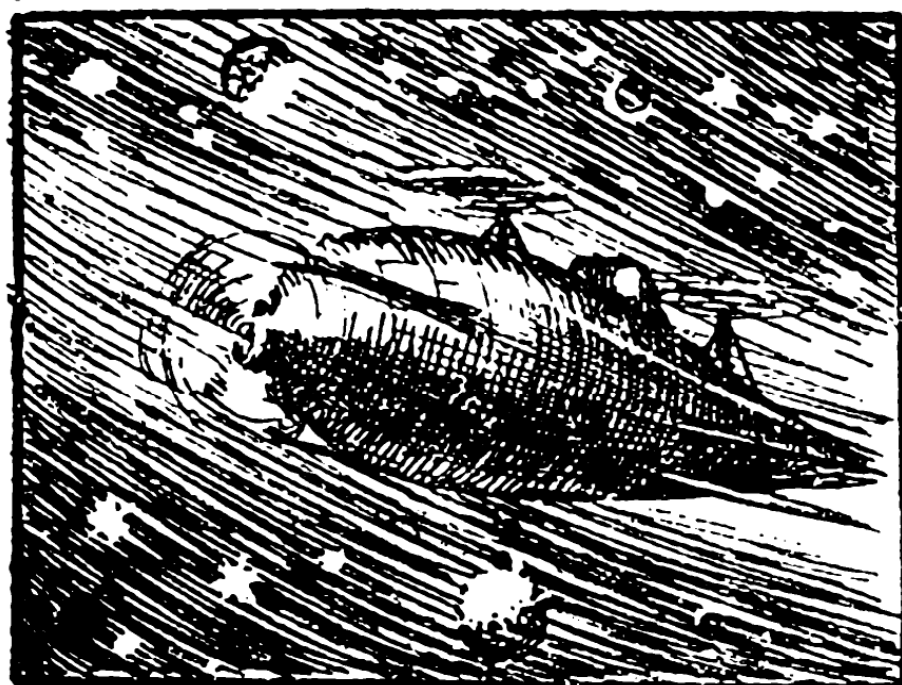
TO MY READERS.

In our issue of Nov. 15 I made an appeal to my readers for back numbers, so that I could oblige a number of other readers who needed them. The response has exceeded expectations, with the result that I have had many more offers than I need. Nevertheless, I thoroughly appreciate the generosity that prompted these readers, while sincerely regretting that I cannot accept a very large number of these offers.

Though the rebels have been victorious, we have yet to disclose how the Head was compelled to vacate the position he was unfit to hold, not only because of his cruel nature, but on account of certain allegations of a dishonourable nature concerning his private life, to which an allusion has already been made. This will form the subject of next week's story called "THE EXIT OF THE TYRANT."

THE EDITOR.

MAGNIFICENT STORY OF ADVENTURE AMONG THE PLANETS



IN TRACKLESS SPACE.

A Thrilling Account of a Wonderful Voyage to the Moon, Venus, and Mars, and of a Flying Machine known as the "Solar Monarch," the Most Marvellous Invention of the Age.

By ROBT. W. COMRADE.

Author of "The Stowaway's Quest," "Scorned by the School," etc.

INTRODUCTION.

ROBERT GRESHAM, inventor of the *Solar Monarch*, an airship designed to travel through space, decides to put his theories to the test by making a journey to the moon and other planets. He is accompanied by

FRANK HILLSWORTH and **MACDONALD GUTHRIE**, both wealthy young adventurers; **PROFESSOR PALGRAVE**, a renowned scientist; and **ABBIE**, a burly negro, who acts as cook and engineer. The airship is secretly constructed in England. At last everything is in readiness to start. The adventurers are aboard, and as Gresham pulls a lever the *Solar Monarch* shoots up into space. The moon is reached in a week, the projectile attaining a speed of 2,000 miles an hour. The surface of the moon appears destitute of life, but the explorers learn, after many exciting adventures, that the dark fissures and caves are inhabited by strange monsters. They return to the *Solar Monarch*, and set off for Venus. In this world of whiteness the adventurers encounter many extraordinary beings and fresh scenes, such as have never before been seen by the inhabitants of our Mother Earth. An accident to a propeller causes the aeronef to descend among the Venusites, Gresham and Palgrave being captured. Mac and Frank set off to the rescue.

(Now read on.)

Delivered From the Venusites.

THEY raced along, and the Venusites came thundering after them, travelling twelve yards to their one. The foremost of them endeavoured to grasp Frank; the next

moment it fell back with a thud and lay still. The pursuers were evidently at a loss to account for this, and stopped. Meanwhile, the two fugitives dashed round the first corner they came to, and received another shock—this time a pleasant one. Crouching flat against the wall, as if to escape observation, stood Professor Palgrave and Robert Gresham, both looking much dishevelled and both panting heavily.

They stepped forward eagerly.

"Well, I'm dashed," exclaimed Frank as he saw them. "Whoever would have thought of finding you here? I've been imagining you bound up and guarded by a dozen mighty Venusites. What a stroke of luck! Stand back, though; you'll get half-killed if you touch us."

Frank rapidly explained, and then asked the inventor how it was that they were standing there. After numerous questions and other excited remarks, Gresham replied to the question.

"We were snatched from the deck like flies," he said, as they ran alongside the building, meaning to travel round it, and strike the fence again, their pursuers having dropped off for some unknown reason, "and hoisted over the palings. Without being hurt we found ourselves in one of these houses. The most aggravating part was that, being dark, we were unable to see what the interior was like. We were taken in at the doorway and through apartment after apartment, up long winding slopes, until finally the creatures left us, unbound, and free to do as we pleased. Whether they expected us to stop there, considering our

selves prisoners, I cannot imagine. Anyhow, you can guess we did not do this. We endeavoured to find the outer doorway——"

"And from that time up till five minutes ago, we were still trying to locate it," put in the professor, who was panting alongside. "In utter darkness—by a strange chance neither of us had matches, or else they had dropped out of our pockets—it was a stupendous task, and we came upon it at last by pure accident. When you found us we had just run from the building, which lies in the centre of the city. Ah, the fence!" Palgrave ended, as their objective came into sight.

"Look out," cried Mac suddenly.

The others turned. Coming towards them, slowly and silently, were fully one hundred Venusites!

"The fence!" shouted Gresham. Then the words hovered on his lips. The fence had dozens of the inhabitants guarding it. Seemingly, therefore, these beings had a certain amount of system. Allowing the adventurers to think themselves secure they had collected all their forces at the place where the fugitives would probably seek escape.

With a groan the four realised that they were trapped—hopelessly trapped. The circle the enemy had drawn was rapidly becoming smaller; and when they closed up altogether, what would be the use of a couple of puny electric batteries? None whatever. Unless a miracle happened they were doomed. So they shook hands silently and waited the end.

"The thing I can't make out," Frank said, trying to speak calmly, "is why these invaders and citizens have amalgamated together——"

"Maybe they have not, Frank," put in the professor. "For all we know, these are the survivors of the battle—the remainder of the city's inhabitants. The invaders are probably on the other side of the fence."

"Then why did they carry us over and deposit us right in the centre of the city?" asked Gresham. "There's something uncanny about it, almost. It may be a rule in this world at nightfall to suspend all warfare until the morning; or else the two forces have come to terms and are combining their strength to destroy us. We don't know, we are in

total ignorance of their ways and methods; we can only guess at things. We don't know yet whether they will kill us, although there is scarcely any doubt on that point. Good heavens, what's that?"

A low, furr-r-ing hum had made itself apparent, and although the explorers had grown quite used to the sound, they could not convince themselves of the truth until——

"By Jimmy!" yelled Mac excitedly, "d'ye ken what's reet ower oor heads? Luke! She's there! Mon, we've a chance yet!"

The Scot was dancing about and pointing up into the sky, where, clearly visible now, could be seen the dark bulk of the Solar Monarch.

A second later Mac was shielding his eyes from the blinding radiance of light which poured down upon them.

"It's Abbie again," gasped Palgrave. "By George, that man's a marvel! How in the world has he managed to get the aeronef repaired in this little time?"

"The most important item at the present moment," interjected Gresham quickly, "is that he has got it repaired! He'll have to be quick, though, or he'll be too late. The enemy are closing in rapidly——"

"It's all right, Massa Gresham, sah," roared the nigger from the deck. "Don' yo' be gettin' 'cited! Dere's tons ob time. Jest grab a-hold 'n dis yere rope, an' stick to it! I guess you'll be aboard inside ob free minits."

Gresham waved his hand in answer, and motioned to the professor.

"You first, Palgrave."

"No, no; you——"

"You're wasting time," calmly.

"If you insist, then." And the professor put his foot in the loop and was rapidly drawn upwards. Those below could see Abbie pulling as if for dear life, could see the professor step on board and grasp the nigger's hand.

All this time the oncoming Venusites had taken to conversing in loud, shrill, weird tones, but the fugitives took no heed. Nevertheless, Frank and Mac

(Continued on page III of cover.)

knew it would be touch and go with the last one to ascend.

"You next, Mr. Gresham," said Frank resolutely. "I can scramble up part of the way myself. Besides, it won't matter so much if I am left——"

"But——"

Mac and Frank grasped the inventor and forced him on to the rope.

"Haul away," called Mac, and Gresham went soaring upwards. He had only just reached the top when, with a final noisy utterance, the Venus-beings did that which had been long expected—closed round the chums.

They gave themselves up for lost, and could only just catch glimpses of the aeronaut, for their captors towered above them in a terrifying way.

"We're finished, Frank——"

"Not yet," said the other tensely. "I'm hanged if I'll give up thus tamely. What peculiar creatures they are. Why the deuce don't they catch hold of us and squash us, instead of standing round yelling at each other?" He raised his voice. "Professor!" he called.

"Hallo! Are you still alive?"

"And kicking," cried Frank. "Drop a few bombs on the outskirts of the crowd, and then raise the ship. Mac and I are both hanging on to the rope. Once we're clear of this we can easily be yanked up. It's now or never. These fools haven't touched us yet. They appear to be rather more than half dotty."

Abbie must have had his bombs in readiness, for within fifteen seconds a resounding crash shook the ground. The Venusites widened the circle a trifle, paused in their argument, and stared blankly at the dozen or so stricken fellow-countrymen.

Even as they did so the second explosion struck. Their attention completely distracted from Mac and Frank the grotesque beings commenced scrambling over one another in their efforts to escape.

They had at least enough sense to know that they were in danger of their lives.

A moment after their cries rose to shrieks for, swift and sure, their last two prisoners were carried away before their very eyes. Up, up they went, the

searchlight clearly defining them. Then out snapped the glare, leaving the city in seeming impenetrable darkness.

The shrieks of the screws drowned their voices, and presently nothing remained to tell of the white men's extreme peril save for the fact that Frank and Mac were still clinging for dear life to the rope.

Before leaving the ground Gresham had switched off the current on their backs, so there was no danger of them getting a shock.

Once clear of the city the rest was a simple matter. In five minutes the two chums were standing on the deck, and the Solar Monarch was speeding along at an altitude of two thousand feet.

"Our lives seem charmed," smiled Gresham as he shook his young friend by the hand. "I certainly did not dare hope for a general deliverance. Yet here we all are, safe and sound, and as cheerful as ever."

"It ought to be a lesson," said the professor, with a merry twinkle. "If nothing else, it shows what comes of giving our aid unasked. If we hadn't hovered over the city throwing bombs that lightning wouldn't have struck us——"

"And if these two heroes hadn't had the pluck and ingenuity to come and rescue us," went on Gresham, "we shouldn't be here now——"

"And, to conclude," grinned Frank, "if a certain coloured gentleman, who goes by the name of Abbie, hadn't worked like a slave, got the propeller fixed, and come to our assistance from the sky we should have been, by this time, what is commonly known as cold meat."

"True enough, Frank. Which reminds me, he hasn't explained yet how he did it. Come along, boys, we'll go below. You'll have to get out of these weird-looking costumes at once!"

And the inventor led the way into the interior of the ship. They found Abbie seated calmly in an easychair contentedly watching the three powerful engines. He grinned as they entered.

"Dat was a mighty close 'un, Massa Frank, sah," he exclaimed. "Fo' suah, I tought yo' an' Massa Mac were goners."

(Continued overleaf.)

"But how did ye manage tae get the spare screw on sae quickly?" Mac asked.

"Oh, dat weren't such an almighty hard job, sah. I jest shinned up de column, took de broken blade off'n it, an' den put anoder on. It didn' take mor'n a hour, an' when I got it all finished, I says to meself, 'I guess dis niggah wouldn' be wastin' no time if he had a look fo' de massas.' I was feelin' mighty funky, sah, and kep' saying to meself as you'd all got killed, fo' suah. But as soon as eber I got ober dat fence I saw de lot ob you, surrounded by thousands ob Venus fellers. By golly, I didn' know what to do. Ef I dropped too low de beggahs would collar de ship, an' ef I stopped too high you'd a' got killed. Den I say to meself, 'Hull de rope down,' and de nex' minute down it went. Dat's all, sah."

"And a jolly good all, too," cried

Frank. "You've done rippingly, Abbie, and we're all proud of you!"

Which speech the others heartily seconded. A few minutes later they were seated in the saloon enjoying a hearty meal, and discussing the question of departing from the planet.

"We'll land soon in a bare piece of ground," said Gresham finally, "and be up at daybreak. It won't take us long to remove the propeller, suspensory screws, etc. After that we'll see that everything is stored away safe and snug, that the hatches are battened down, as it were, and leave Venus to look after its own affairs."

"And the next port of call——" queried Frank.

"Will be Mars," replied Gresham calmly.

(To be continued.)

DECEMBER.

NEW LONG COMPLETE STORY BOOKS. Out on Friday, December 5th.

DETECTIVE TALES.

SEXTON-BLAKE LIBRARY.

No. 104.—LOOT.

Enthralling Story of Count Ivor Carlac and Professor Kew.

No. 105.—FIVE YEARS AFTER.

Grand Christmas Novel.

No. 106.—THE CHINK IN THE ARMOUR.

A Thrilling Adventure of Leon Kestrel.

No. 107.—THE BRANDED SPY.

Exciting Tale of Bolshevik Treachery.

Sexton Blake figures prominently in all the above stories.

TALES of SPORT, SCHOOL LIFE and ADVENTURE BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY.

No. 486.—THE OUTCAST OF THE SCHOOL.

Magnificent Yarn of Schoolboy Fun and Adventure. By Henry St. John.

No. 487.—THE LUCK AGAINST THEM.

Superb Story of the Football Field. By A. S. Hardy.

No. 488.—THE BOXING BARRISTER.

Splendid Tale of the Boxing Ring. By Henry T. Johnson.

No. 487.—FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS!

Grand Football Yarn. By Frank Richards.

Price
4d. Each.

COMPLETE STORY IN EACH NUMBER.

Ask your Newsagent for them.

Price
4d. Each.