

No. 245.—An Account of How Singleton Starts a Rival School!

THE
NELSON LEE
LIBRARY

1^{1D}/₂



THE SPENDTHRIFT BUYS A SCHOOL

Up Against the Head

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 Waster's Progress," "Singleton in London," "Deeper in the Mire," etc. February 14, 1920.

The Stunt Club

By **WALTER EDWARDS.**

A series of Splendid Stories, each telling of an exciting stunt performed by one of a group of Famous Sportsmen, banded together with the object of preventing £10,000 from falling into the coffers of the Anti-Sports League, instead of being devoted to the advancement of healthy athletics. Sexton Blake figures in these fine yarns, the first of which appears in

THE BOYS' REALM

Out To-day.

Price Three-halfpence.



THE CORINTHIAN ACCOMPLISHES THE FIRST STUNT.

Up Against The Head.

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 "On the Downward Grade," "The Waster's Progress," "Singleton in London," "Deeper in the Mire," etc.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT
BY NIPPER.)



CHAPTER I.

HANDFORTH ON THE WAR-PATH.

"A QUESTION of honour!"
"Eh?"
"It simply must be attended to," declared Handforth firmly. "Yorke's nose has got to be punched; and I'm not the kind of chap to waste time. I mean to find the cad, tell him what I think of him, and punch his nose."

"Yes, but look here——"

"Be reasonable, Handy——"

"I'm not going to listen to any of your rot," interrupted Edward Oswald Handforth. "You heard Yorke as well as I did—and I'm surprised that you should try to dissuade me from my purpose."

The three Remove juniors were standing in the doorway of the Ancient House at St. Frank's. Afternoon lessons were over, and the short February day was drawing to a close. The weather was rather mild and the sky clear.

The chums of Study D, in the Remove passage, were having a little argument—as usual. For Handforth and Co. to exist without arguing would be uncanny.

It was generally Handforth's fault. He had a mania for performing headstrong actions, and his chums were continually holding him in check—or trying to.

"Look here, Handy——" began Church again.

"I don't want to listen to any of your rot," interjected Handforth firmly. "You might as well save your breath, my son. I'm going to punch Yorke's nose—and there's an end of it."

"Yes, I can believe it, too!" said McClure.

"What?"

"I can believe that it'll be the end of Yorke's nose——"

"You funny ass!" snapped Handforth. "If you can't make better jokes than that I should advise you to dry up. You don't seem to realise the position. Not an hour ago, in the Form-room, Yorke insulted me."

"He only drew your likeness, and passed it round the room——"

"My what?" roared Handforth.

"Likeness, of course!"

"Likeness!" bellowed Handforth.

"Do you call that horrible-looking drawing a likeness? It was an insult, and Yorke made it worse by saying that his

effort was so life-like that it could almost speak!"

Church grinned at the recollection.

"Well, it was only a joke," he said. "You mustn't take these things to heart, Handy——"

"I haven't taken anything to heart, you fathead!" interrupted Handforth. "But I'm not going to stand insults at any price. Understand? Those College House asses giggled and squirmed when Yorke passed his drawing round—they laughed at me. Me, you understand!"

"Awful!" said Church.

"Horrible!" added McClure.

"That drawing was horrible, anyhow," declared Handforth. "And Yorke had the nerve to say it looked like me!"

"Well, there was a bit of a resemblance——"

"You—you insulting rotter!" roared Handforth. "Are you calling me horrible?"

"Of course not," said Church.

"You'd better not get my rag out, Walter Church!" snapped Handforth. "I'll soon wipe you up if you start any of your beastly bunkum. I'm going over to the College House, and I'm going to punch Yorke's nose."

"But do be reasonable, Handy," said McClure. "You'll get chucked out on your neck if you go into the College House——"

"It'll take more than those silly Monks to chuck me out," interrupted Handforth disdainfully. "Yorke slipped out of my way when lessons were over, but I'm going to get hold of him soon! By George! I'll pulverize him!"

Handforth was quite determined, and his chums knew that it was a hopeless task to even attempt to dissuade him from his object. Yorke's nose had to be punched—and that's all there was about it.

Handforth did not consider the possibility of getting into trouble himself. He never counted the odds, and was quite willing to enter a hornets' nest, if occasion demanded.

He would regret it afterwards, of course, but had never realised the danger until it was too late. Consequently, Handforth was a record breaker in the way of finding trouble.

Church and McClure had fears for their chief, and they naturally wanted to give him a word of warning. They

might just as well have attempted to warn a doorpost. Handforth had made up his mind, and wild horses wouldn't alter it.

"Well, it'll serve the ass right—that's one thing," remarked Church, after Handforth had passed out of the Ancient House. "He'll come back looking a bit of a wreck, I expect. It ought to teach him not to be so jolly pig-headed."

"Teach him?" repeated McClure, with a sniff. "Is it possible to teach Handy anything? He's like a mule—only worse! If he doesn't get half-skinned in the Monks' camp, I shall be surprised."

Church grinned.

"Don't forget it's a matter of honour," he chuckled. "Handforth has gone into the lions' den in order to wipe out the stain."

Meanwhile, Handforth strode across the Triangle with a light of determination in his eyes. He arrived at the College House, and entered the lobby boldly. The lobby was rather smaller than that of the Ancient House, and certainly far less impressive. Handforth looked round him with disdain.

"Miserable hole!" he murmured. "Thank goodness I don't board in this barn of a place. The best thing I can do is to go straight along to Study Q and bang in. Christine and Co. will be at tea, probably, and I shall be able to collar Yorke just nicely."

Handforth did not consider the possibility of being stopped before he arrived at Study Q. He strode along the passage, and only came to a halt when he heard the sound of approaching voices.

There were quite a number of voices, and Handforth gathered that some of the juniors were coming along. He paused for a moment, thinking—and he realised, for the first time, that his position was not one of absolute security.

He was in the rival House, far from friends, and he would certainly receive no assistance if he fell into the hands of the Monks. Christine and Co. would take a special pleasure in ragging a prize victim like Handforth.

As usual, Handforth did not grasp these minute details until it was almost too late. He thought about retreating, but he heard voices from his rear, too. Either he had to hide, or he would have to fight his way out.

And that wasn't on Handforth's pro-

gramme at all. He had come here to punch Yorke's nose—not to fight the whole Remove.

"What the dickens shall I do?" muttered Handforth, looking round him anxiously.

A solution suggested itself at once. He was just at an angle of the passage, and in the corner there stood a cupboard. It was generally used for old lumber, and the doors were always unlocked.

Handforth had no time to pick and choose.

He slipped into the cupboard, and drew the doors to. A second later several College House fellows come round the bend of the passage. They were Bob Christine, Talmadge, Yorke, Clapson, and Nation. From the other direction Page, Barron and Oldfield appeared.

The intruder was between two fires! Escape was cut off completely, and if he was discovered he would be "put through it" thoroughly.

So he remained in the cupboard, as still as a mouse.

"Hallo, you chaps," came Christine's voice, through the doors. "Just the fellows we were looking for. I've got a wheeze."

"Leave it until after tea," said Clapson.

"Rats!"

"It's a topping idea," chuckled Talmadge. "You wait until you hear it, my sons. We're going to jape those Ancient House bounders."

"Oh!" said Clapson. "That's different. We haven't had a shot at the Fossils for weeks. About time something was done."

The two parties of juniors had come to a halt—as was only natural—at the bend of the passage, where they had met. Nothing could have been more unfortunate for Handforth—if, by chance, the door was opened.

But the situation had other possibilities.

The Monks had stopped in the passage, and were talking there. It seemed that Handforth would possibly overhear something of extreme interest. He did not believe in eavesdropping—but he couldn't help it here. For he certainly had no intention of betraying himself.

"Well, what's the wheeze?" asked Nation. "It'll have to be something

pretty cute, you know. Nipper and his crowd are fairly wide awake——"

"Don't you worry," said Christine. "This wheeze will beat the lot of 'em—hollow. It'll be the joke of the term."

"Well, get it out, you ass!"

"Let's hear it!"

"Is it a new idea?"

"Or an old, hashed-up thing?"

"If you all speak at once, I can't answer," said Christine warmly. "Don't be such a set of asses! This wheeze is new in certain respects, although it's not exactly novel. Still, it's pretty certain that we shall be able to dish the Fossils all right."

"Oh, will you?" muttered Handforth grimly. "It seems to me that it's a jolly good thing I came. If I hear the details of this jape it'll be great! These bounders will be done in the eye beautifully."

Handforth took care to remain very still. It was something of an ordeal for him, but he managed it. And the Monks did not seem at all anxious to clear away from that particular section of the corridor. They had met there, and were discussing the scheme on the spot.

"The idea is mainly up against that chap with all the money—Singleton!" explained Christine.

"The Hon. Douglas?"

"Yes."

"I'm blessed if I can see much fun in japing that rotter," said Page bluntly.

"You will when I've explained," replied Christine. "Besides, it'll be a joke against the whole crowd, really. I shall do all the work, and you chaps will simply laugh at the finish."

"If everything goes all right, that is," added Yorke.

"Well, naturally," said Christine. "But I've got plenty of confidence in myself, and I'm very certain I can work the dodge."

"But what is it, you ass?"

"Explain, you duffer!"

"Get it off your chest, you long-winded bounder."

Bob Christine grinned.

"Well, one of the Ancient House chaps told me during lessons that somebody is coming to see Singleton this evening—some chap from London. He'll arrive at about seven o'clock."

"Well?"

"My idea is to dress up as a man," explained Christine. "I can wear a frock coat and top hat, and glasses, and do the thing nicely. My wheeze is to go to Singleton's study, and spoof him up to the eyes——"

"But how the dickens can you?" demanded Clapson. "He'll know in a tick you ain't the right chap. You can't disguise yourself as somebody you've never seen!"

"That's all you know," said Christine. "As it happens, Singleton has never seen the chap, so he can't possibly tell. I shall go at half-past six, of course, and say I got here early. During that half-hour I can spoof everybody, and have no end of a game."

"Well, it's not so bad," admitted Clapson. "It all depends upon your ability to deceive Singleton and the rest. But if you're spotted over there—well, you'll be half slaughtered."

"I'll risk that."

"And how do you know this for certain?" asked Page. "That Ancient House chap might have been pulling your leg——"

"I didn't overlook that point," interrupted Christine. "So when I passed Mr. Lee a quarter of an hour ago I asked him if Singleton was expecting a visitor to-day. And Mr. Lee said yes, a man was coming at seven. That's good enough, isn't it? Are you all satisfied?"

"Quite," grinned Clapson. "But, somehow, it doesn't seem complete enough to me. It ought to be elaborated. Why shouldn't you make the jape more thorough?"

"How?"

"Well, you could get some of the bounders to go to the village with you on some pretext," said Clapson. "Singleton and those chaps of Study C. Nipper and Watson and Tregellis-West. A crowd of us could be waiting in the lane, and when you've lured them out we shall simply fall on them and give them rocks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Two heads are better than one," said Christine. "That's a ripping idea, Clappy. It'll sort of put the finishing touch to the jape. We can't leave it till after tea, because there won't be enough time. I want you to come with me to the boxroom where we keep the props of the dramatic club. I'm going to dis-

guise myself, and I want you fellows to assist."

"Good!" said Page. "We're game."

"Tea can wait until later on," declared Talmadge. "Come on!"

Handforth breathed a sigh of relief—and then gave a gulp.

"What about this cupboard?" asked Yorke, grasping the door handle. "I believe there's an old topper—and some clobber, too!"

"Good idea," said Page. "Let's have a look."

Handforth clenched his fists and got ready. At the same moment he bitterly realised that the jape was off. For, after the Monks had discovered him, they would be unable to carry out their scheme. But Handforth need not have worried.

"Rats!" said Christine briskly. "I don't want to wear the old rubbish that's in there. I want good stuff. Let's buzz upstairs and examine the wardrobe. Buck up."

The juniors hurried away down the corridor, Handforth, breathing a huge sigh of relief. He had positively thought that he was doomed, but he had escaped detection by a hair's breadth.

"Phew!" he whistled. "I thought it was all up!"

He waited until all sounds of the juniors had vanished. Then, when everything was quiet, he cautiously opened the cupboard doors, and peeped through the middle crack. As the cupboard was situated in the angle, at the corner, he could see up both passages quite distinctly.

The coast was clear.

And Handforth lost no time in taking advantage of the opportunity. He slipped out of the cupboard, and hastened away towards the lobby as silently as he could manage—which was not at all silent, in any case.

But, more by luck than skill, he reached the open air in safety, and breathed a sigh of relief and triumph as he emerged.

"Great!" he muttered exultantly. "Everything's all serene—and I shall be able to spoil the wheeze beautifully!"

Handforth had been into the lions' den, and had emerged in safety. And he brought out with him information of a most valuable type.

It did not seem that the Monks were to gain very much of a victory!

CHAPTER II.

HANDFORTH AND CO. DO THE TRICK.

"WELL, I'm blessed!" exclaimed McClure, in surprise.

"Amazing!" said Church.

"He's not even scratched!"

"Not a bruise to be seen!"

Church and McClure gazed at Handforth in wonder. They were in Study D, and tea was just about ready. Handforth had strode in, and he was looking exceedingly pleased with himself, and there was a gleam in his eye which was unmistakable.

"What's that?" he said as he closed the door. "I don't want any of your beastly sarcasm, my sons——"

"I don't expect he's been into the College House at all," exclaimed Church.

"Have you, Handy?"

"Yes, I have," said Handforth.

"Right inside?"

"Yes, right inside!"

"Did you see Yorke?" demanded Church.

"Well, no——"

"Oh, that explains it," said McClure. "I suppose you went in quietly, and then slipped out again. I thought you were going to punch Yorke's nose?"

"I've left that until later—there's no immediate hurry," explained Handforth. "I went into the College House, and I was just passing down the passage when a crowd of chaps happened to come along——"

"So you bunked?"

"No, I didn't bunk," roared Handforth. "I held my ground—well, I stopped where I was, anyhow," he added. "There was a cupboard just handy, so I slipped into it——"

"Is that what you call holding your ground?" asked Church, with a sniff.

"So you went into the College House, and sneaked into a giddy cupboard! Well, there's nothing particularly glorious in that, Handy!"

"Anybody could do it!" added McClure.

Handforth glared.

"If you chaps are going to be idiotic, I'll dry up," he exclaimed threateningly.

"I dodged into the cupboard, as I said, and stood there for four or five minutes. And that crowd of Monks remained outside—within two yards of me. I thought I was finished for the time being."

"You always seem to have luck like that," said Church.

Handforth nodded.

"Well, I was lucky this time," he admitted. "I overheard the bounders planning a jape, and when they'd finished, I slipped out—and here I am."

"So they didn't see you, after all?"

"No."

"And they didn't touch you?"

"How the dickens could they touch me if they didn't see me, you babbling fathead?" demanded Handforth politely. "On the whole, I'm jolly pleased with myself, and the Ancient House ought to be grateful to me."

"Well, I can't see anything particularly wonderful in sticking in a cupboard—eavesdropping," sniffed Church, as he buttered the bread.

"Eavesdropping!" roared Handforth.

"You—you insulting rotter!"

"Rats! Didn't you listen to what the Monks said?"

"Yes, but——"

"Isn't that eavesdropping?"

"No, it isn't," retorted Handforth warmly. "I couldn't help overhearing. I bunked into the cupboard for safety, and those chaps stopped outside, jawing. You don't suppose I was going to give myself away, do you? Besides, what I overheard is of the utmost value—to us."

"What did you overhear?" asked McClure.

"Well, a gentleman is coming at seven o'clock to see Singleton," said Handforth.

"There's nothing much in that—I could have told you the same thing," exclaimed Church. "Singleton was mentioning it only five minutes ago, when we passed him in the passage."

"I overheard more than that, you duffer," said Handforth. "Christine is coming in at half-past six, dressed up—and he's going to try to spoof everybody. I expect he'd have done the trick, too, if I hadn't heard all that. But now we can spoil the little game, and turn the tables."

Church and McClure were interested at last.

"My hat! Rather!" said Church.

"We'd better buzz along and give Singleton the tip. Perhaps it will be as well to warn Nipper, too. Then he can prepare a surprise for Christine."

Handforth regarded his chums pityingly.

"You brainy bounders!" he exclaimed with scorn. "You clever asses! Do you think I'm going to spoil everything like that? This is our affair—not Nipper's. We're going to deal with it, don't forget."

"Oh!" said McClure. "That's not a bad idea. But do you think we shall be able to manage it?"

"No," said Handforth deliberately. "I don't think we shall!"

"Then what's the idea of—"

"I don't think—I know we shall manage!" roared Handforth. "This is going to be our night out—and Christine will wish he'd never been born by the time I've done. He's coming at half-past six—alone. And I'm going to make things hot for him."

"Well, of course, you can do as you like," remarked Church; "but if I were you I should tell Nipper. It's not good enough to just whack Christine on the nose. You want something more—more elaborate."

Handforth sat down, and stirred his tea.

"We shall have something more elaborate," he remarked calmly. "I've been thinking it all out. For example, we shall pretend to be spoofed for a few minutes, and when this chap asks to be taken to Singleton, we'll cart him along to the cellar, and lock him in!"

"Marvellous!" said McClure. "How do you think of these things, Handy?"

"What a brain you've got!" said Church admiringly.

Handforth stared at his chums with suspicion.

"If you're rotting—" he began.

"I want to ask you one question," said McClure. "Do you think that Christine will walk into a simple trap like that? He'll be disguised as somebody else, but he'll still be Christine. And if you lead him off to the cellar, he'll smell a rat at once, and probably bunk while he's safe."

Handforth nodded slowly.

"Well, there's that about it," he admitted. "I hadn't thought it out quite fully, you know. The best thing we can do is to bring the chap along here, get him inside, and then paint his face."

"That's better," said Church, nodding; "in fact, it's jolly good. It'll be easy enough to wangle Christine into

this study—and then we can get busy. What time is he coming, did you say?"

"Half-past six."

"Then we shall have to get tea over pretty smartly, and then rout out some paint," said McClure briskly. "We must be prepared, you know."

"Yes, of course," said Handforth. "I think we shall find two or three pots of paint in the tool shed—"

"Not house paint, you ass!" grinned McClure. "We don't want to poison the poor chap. I mean grease paint!"

Handforth nodded calmly.

"Perhaps it would be better," he admitted. "There's plenty of grease paint in the common-room cupboard. We want red and green and blue; in fact, all colours. We'll make the chap look a regular freak, and then exhibit him to the Remove."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Church and McClure were inclined to believe that Handforth had some sense after all. It would certainly be "putting one over" on the Monks, if everything turned out all right; for Christine to come over with the intention of japing the Ancient House, and to be japed himself, was decidedly interesting.

The chums of Study D hurried over their tea, for they had no time to spare. It would be necessary to wait on the Ancient House steps before six-thirty arrived, in case Christine was a little early.

Tea being finished, Church hurried down to the common-room, and returned within a few minutes with several sticks of grease paint. They were highly coloured, and the prospect of the would-be japer did not look rosy.

"Good!" said Handforth. "Just the very articles, Churchy. We've got a pile of rope here, and it'll only take a couple of minutes to tie the bounder up as tight as ninepence. Then we'll lead him round on a string!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three juniors switched off the electric light, and passed out of the study. They stationed themselves just outside the Ancient House, and pretended to be discussing football with much animation.

Actually, they were watching the gateway.

By the time six-thirty struck, the argument had assumed realistic proportions. Handforth was talking most of the time, and he was laying down the law with

regard to the off-side rule. Church and McClure listened, and were so interested that they nearly forgot their real object.

"Oh, that's rot!" said Church warmly. "I don't agree with you there, Handy. If a fellow is running down the field with the ball, and——"

"I'm doing the jawing," interrupted Handforth. "I say that the off-side rule ought to be altered. If it was arranged my way, it would be possible for a chap to score fairly——"

"Shush!" muttered McClure suddenly. "He's here!"

"Eh?" said Handforth.

"That chap—Christine, I mean——"

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Handforth. "I nearly forgot!"

They had become so engrossed in the football "jaw" that they had momentarily overlooked the real issue at stake. But now they gazed across the Triangle, in the direction of the gateway, and observed a stranger approaching. At all events, he seemed to be a stranger.

The individual was rather short, inclined to be stout, and he was wearing a frock-coat and top-hat. He carried a small leather bag, and walked with short, brisk strides. As he came nearer, Handforth and Co. observed his features.

The man seemed to be elderly, for he wore slightly grey side-whiskers, and his face was rather ruddy in hue. Pince-nez adorned his nose, and he held his head in a quaint kind of peering attitude.

"Jolly good make-up!" muttered Church.

"Rats!" said Handforth. "Anybody can tell he's Christine—look at his height; look at his shape! In my opinion, he's overdone it. Those whiskers don't look real, either, and his chivvy is too red!"

The disguised Christine halted half-way up the steps, and gazed at Handforth and Co. quizzically.

"Ah, my boys, can you tell me if this is the Ancient House?" he inquired in a deep voice.

"Yes, sir, this is the Ancient House," replied Handforth promptly, giving Church a nudge. "Is there anybody you particularly want to see?"

"Well, yes, as a matter of fact, there is," replied the other. "My name is Mr. Partington, and I am anxious to have a few words with a junior school-boy whose name is the Hon. Douglas Singleton. I think he boards in this house?"

Handforth gave Church another nudge, and nearly knocked Church down the steps.

"I see, sir," said Handy. "I fancy I heard that Singleton was expecting a visitor. If you'll come this way, we'll trot you along. Perhaps you're feeling tired after your long journey across the Triangle—I mean, from London?"

Mr. Partington nodded.

"I'm certainly feeling somewhat tired," he admitted. "Travelling is always somewhat exhausting."

"Particularly walking, sir," said Handforth.

"Shut up, you ass!" muttered McClure. "If you give hints like that, you'll give the game away."

Mr. Partington entered the lobby, and looked about him with interest.

"H'm! Quite interesting!" he remarked. "I must confess that I expected to see something rather more impressive. However, this is only a small portion of St. Frank's, of course. If you'll be kind enough to lead me to Master Singleton, I shall be greatly indebted to you."

"This way, sir," said Church briskly.

They passed out of the lobby, along the Remove passage, and halted at the door of Study D. Handforth and Co. were rather anxious for a moment. Christine, of course, knew that it was their study, and he might be suspicious.

"This way, sir—step in, please!" said Handforth invitingly.

Mr. Partington blinked at the doorway.

"Is—er—Master Singleton here?" he inquired.

"It's all right, sir; you'll see in a tick," said Handforth. "Now then, you chaps, lend a hand!"

He gave the frock-coated gentleman a violent shove in the back, and Mr. Partington, with a loud gasp, went hurtling through the doorway into Study D. He brought up with a bang against the table, and when he turned round, Handforth and Co. were in the room, too—and the door was closed.

"Good—good gracious!" gasped Mr. Partington. "How—how dare you? Boys, I protest strongly! How dare you treat me in this outrageous manner——"

"Chuck it!" grinned Handforth.

"What—what did you say?"

"You can't diddle us, you fathead!" chuckled Church.

The visitor fairly gulped

"I—I cannot diddle you!" he repeated dazedly. "Good gracious me! This—this is simply outrageous! How dare you treat me in this manner, you impertinent young rascals? I shall report this behaviour to your Headmaster——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bless my soul!"

"You're doing it pretty well, you know," grinned Handforth. "All the same, you can't spoof us, you rotter!"

Mr. Partington nearly dropped his pince-nez.

"Did—did I understand you to call me a rotter?" he asked blankly. "I've never been so insulted in all my experience—never! Good gracious! When I see your Headmaster, I shall complain in the strongest possible language, and I shall not be satisfied until you are all severely punished!"

Handforth and Co. roared.

"Can't you ring off, you silly josses?" asked Handforth. "If you think you're diddling us, you're mistaken. I'd know your voice in a tick—and you needn't think that that disguise is any good."

"Dis-disguise!" stuttered Mr. Partington.

"Well, what you call a disguise," amended Handforth. "Why, a kid in the Second could do it better than that! No real chap has got cheeks of that rotten colour——"

"This—this is beyond all endurance," shouted the visitor furiously. "I can only assume that you have brought me here with the deliberate intention of subjecting me to this—this concerted insult!"

"And look at your giddy whiskers!" went on Handforth. "Anybody can see they're false——"

"False!" roared Mr. Partington. "False!"

"Yes, as false as your blessed wig!" grinned Handforth. "And your voice is all put on, too! The best thing you can do, my son, is to own up. If you go down on your knees, and say you're sorry, we'll let you off lightly."

The visitor turned to McClure.

"This—this boy is mad!" he panted huskily. "It seems that you are all mad! Can it be possible that you are making some mistake——"

"Does it well, doesn't he?" chuckled McClure. "But the best thing we can do is to rope him at once, and apply the

giddy grease paints. You're in for it nicely this time, Christine. It'll teach you not to try any of your funny business in the Ancient House!"

"Christine!" said the visitor, panting hard. "My name's Partington! I am a solicitor, and I order you to open that door, and to let me go free! Furthermore, I shall report—— Great heavens! How dare you lay hands on me? Release me at once, you wretched youths!"

Handforth glared.

"Wretched youths, are we?" he belated. "All right, my son! That'll mean an extra bump when we get you tied up!"

Mr. Partington was quite helpless in the grasp of the three strong juniors. They had the rope round him in next to no time—and they were at close quarters. Church looked at his chums with a peculiar light in his eyes. His face had been within a few inches of Mr. Partington's, and Church was rather scared.

"I—I say, you chaps!" he whispered, "I believe we've made a bloomer! This—this hair is real, you know—they're real whiskers! Oh, my goodness! We've collared the real chap!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "Look at this!"

He grabbed at Mr. Partington's hair, and it came away in his hand—revealing a head which was as bald as a billiard ball. Mr. Partington let out a whoop, and Handforth and Co. went pale.

Under no circumstances was it possible for that head to belong to Bob Christine, of the Remove. Handforth was shivering now, and he grabbed frantically at Mr. Partington's whiskers—in order to make doubly sure.

"Ow! Yaroo!" roared the unfortunate gentleman. "Boy, you shall be expelled for this—this dastardly outrage——"

"They're real!" said Handforth faintly. "Oh, my only topper! We've made a bloomer. This is the real Mr. Partington—not Christine at all!"

The chums of Study D were staggered. They knew that they had committed a terrible offence, and they had visions of public flogging and expulsion. Nothing less than the sack could possibly be the result of this outrage.

Mr. Partington had been dropped like a hot brick—which was rather unfortunate. With his feet bound already he

found it difficult to stand, and he collapsed upon the floor with a thud.

The sudden shock brought Handforth and Co. to their senses.

"Just a minute, sir," gasped Church. "We'll take the rope off."

"Here's your wig, sir," said Handforth, placing it on backwards. "My hat! It doesn't seem to fit right! It's all a mistake, sir."

"A mistake!" bellowed Mr. Partington. "You—you dare to say that—after you have grossly assaulted me! After you have treated me in a manner which can only be described as ruffianly! I shall take full care that you are expelled from this school, and——"

"Don't be harsh, sir," panted McClure huskily. "We—we didn't know it was you! We thought it was one of our chaps, sir."

"Don't dare talk such nonsense to me—don't dare, I say!" shouted the angry gentleman, tearing himself free from the rope. "You must be insane, if you expect me to believe such nonsense as that. How could you, under any circumstances, mistake me for a boy?"

Handforth gulped

"You—you see, sir, one of our fellows planned to play a joke on us," he explained. "This chap knew you were coming, and meant to spoof us——"

"His idea was to disguise himself, and pretend that he was you," put in Church anxiously.

"And we thought that you were our chap in disguise, sir," said McClure. "It's all a mix-up, sir, and we're frightfully sorry. Until we pulled your wig off, we didn't know!"

Mr. Partington, having adjusted his wig to his satisfaction, and feeling rather more comfortable, eyed the juniors sternly.

"Have you been telling me the truth?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir, honour bright!"

"Absolutely the truth, sir!"

"We wouldn't dream of insulting a visitor, sir," panted Church. "But we were so sure that you were Christine in disguise—that's the chap's name—that we went for you baldheaded—— I mean——"

Mr. Partington frowned, having been unfortunately reminded of the worst aspect of the affair.

"You deserve to be soundly flogged!"

he said stiffly. "But I think I can understand your mistake now that you have explained. I am beginning to realise that you did not maliciously attack me, but did so under a mistaken impression."

"That's right, sir, exactly."

"However, you have revealed yourselves as being singularly foolish," added Mr. Partington. "How on earth you could mistake me for a boy in disguise surpasses my comprehension. Frankly, I am amazed."

"Are—are you going to report us, sir?" asked Church anxiously.

"I'm not quite certain," said the visitor. "It all depends, my lad—it all depends. I shall think the matter over, and do as I think fit. That you deserve punishment of some kind is highly obvious."

"But—but can't you tell us at once, sir?" asked Handforth humbly. "We shall be in terrible suspense if you leave it undecided. We can't tell you how upset we are, sir. I pride myself on being polite to strangers, and it's terrible to know that we've treated you like this! What a mercy we found out in time—we were going to smother your face in grease paint, sir!"

"Dear me! Then it seems that I have escaped an even worse ordeal," said Mr. Partington. "Well, my boys, seeing that you are so contrite, I will overlook the matter—providing that you do not discuss it among your schoolfellows. If you will give me your word that you will keep the incident quiet, I will say nothing."

"We won't breathe a word, sir."

"On our word of honour, sir!"

"Honest Injun, sir!"

Mr. Partington smiled.

"Very well," he said. "We will let it go at that."

And, picking up his hat, he withdrew from Study D. Handforth and Co. stared at one another, and looked somewhat fagged.

"My hat!" said Church. "What a narrow squeak!"

"Well, he's a decent old bird—by George, he is!" said Handforth. "I didn't think we were going to get out of it. Just fancy us making a bloomer of that sort. I could have sworn——"

"You did most of the jawing, you silly ass!" said McClure crossly. "I had a bit of a suspicion all along——"

"Rot!" said Handforth. "You were as much spoofed as I was. We'd better go along and see where the real Christine is!"

But when the heroes of Study D went out in search of the japer they could see no sign of him. It was fairly obvious, in fact, that Mr. Partington's early arrival had upset the Monks' game, and it had apparently been abandoned.

Handforth and Co. had blundered badly, but good luck had been with them—in the guise of Mr. Partington's good nature. If the visitor had been of a crusty disposition, it would have been very bad indeed for Study D!

CHAPTER III.

A VERY SERIOUS MATTER.

MR. PARTINGTON walked down the Remove passage rather aimlessly. He was feeling decidedly more comfortable now, and once or twice he chuckled—as he recollected the blank dismay of the juniors who had made the mistake.

As it happened, I came along the passage with Sir Montie Tregellis-West at that moment, and we both regarded the stranger with some surprise.

"Begad! I wonder who this imposin' lookin' gentleman is," murmured Sir Montie. "A visitor for somebody, I suppose?"

"Well, that's pretty obvious," I said. "Anything we can do, sir?" I asked politely.

"Yes, my boy," said Mr. Partington. "I should like you to direct me to the study which is occupied by Master Singleton—the Hon. Douglas Singleton, to be exact."

"Study N, sir, just along the passage, on your right," I replied. "You can't mistake it if you keep straight on, sir."

"Thank you, my boy—thank you very much," said the stranger.

He passed on, and Montie and I entered Study C, still wondering who the visitor could be. But it was none of our business, in any case. Mr. Partington looked eminently respectable.

He came to a halt outside Study N, tapped upon the door, and entered.

"Dear me!" he murmured.

The study was in darkness, which proved that Singleton was not there.

And just then Pitt and Grey came along and paused at the doorway.

"Looking for Singleton, sir?" asked Pitt.

"Yes, my lad, I am."

"I'm afraid I don't know where he is at the moment, sir," said Pitt. "Do you know, Jack?"

"Haven't the faintest idea," replied Grey.

"Never mind, my boys—never mind," said Mr. Partington. "I can see the lad later. At the moment I will go to the Headmaster's study, if you will be good enough to direct me there."

"With pleasure, sir."

Pitt volunteered to escort the visitor to the Head's door, and very shortly they arrived. Mr. Partington was not exactly sorry; for, upon second thoughts, he thought it just as well to see Dr. Stafford first.

"Ah, my dear sir, I was expecting you," said the Head, as Mr. Partington entered. "Come in, Mr. Partington. Please take a seat, and make yourself quite at home. You may go, Pitt."

"Yes, sir," said Pitt, closing the door.

Mr. Partington made himself comfortable.

"I received your letter this morning, my dear sir," said the Head. "Please help yourself to a cigar and you will find refreshment at your elbow, if you require it."

"Thank you—thank you."

The visitor helped himself to a whisky-and-soda, and, having got his cigar going well, he settled himself in his chair again, and faced the Headmaster. Dr. Stafford was looking politely interested.

"As you will have gathered from my letter, Dr. Stafford, I am the senior partner in the firm of Partington and Dodd, solicitors," said the new arrival. "And I have come to you with reference to one of your scholars—the Hon. Douglas Singleton, to be exact."

"Ah, yes," said the Head. "I know the lad slightly. I think he is in the Fourth Form, which we call the Remove."

"That is so," agreed Mr. Partington. "Have you any idea of Singleton's mode of living?"

The Head raised his eyebrows.

"Surely he lives as the other boys do?" he asked. "I am not intimately acquainted with the movements of junior boys. I must admit, but I seem to have an impression that Singleton is rather extravagant. One or two of my masters have mentioned that he is somewhat lavish in regard to his study furniture."

"But you have no idea of Singleton's real expenditure?"

"I cannot say that I have," replied the Head.

"Then, my dear sir, I'm afraid I am about to give you something of a shock," said Mr. Partington gravely. "Singleton's affairs are nominally in my hands, but, unfortunately, the lad has complete control over his own money. It is not necessary for me to go into any details at the moment, but all I need say is, owing to some legal point, the boy is in a position to draw upon his fortune exactly as he pleases. I am powerless to stop his expenditure. His legal guardian, I may add, is at present in Africa, and we cannot possibly get in touch with him."

"That is rather awkward," said the Head. "But I must confess, sir, that I do not quite follow your argument. It is not within my power to interfere with the lad—any more than it is within yours. So long as he conforms to the school rules, I can do nothing. He is at liberty to spend his money as he pleases."

"I will grant you that," agreed Mr. Partington. "But I cannot help being convinced that the boy has too many opportunities of giving way to his positively mad desire for spending money. The lad is a most appalling spendthrift, and I must tell you that I have spent many sleepless nights recently—worrying myself about him. His case is one which can only fill any right-minded man with blank dismay."

"Has he spent so much, then?"

"Good gracious!" said Mr. Partington. "You will be appalled when I tell you—which I shall do presently. For I have come to St. Frank's with two objects in view. Firstly, I want to speak to Singleton, and I want you to arrange things so that he will have fewer opportunities of getting about. Secondly, I am determined to reason with the lad myself."

"The latter will be by far the more profitable, I dare say," said the Head.

"I really cannot see how I can interfere

in the matter, Mr. Partington. I cannot very well take away the lad's liberties. That would not be fair to him."

"But you do not realise how much money he has spent in less than a single term—in less than two months, I might say," said Mr. Partington. "I almost fail to credit the truth myself——"

"You must remember that a boy needs a certain amount of money in a school of this type, my dear sir," said Dr. Stafford gently. "There are some pupils here who spend as much as five and ten pounds weekly—although such expenditure does not meet with my approval. Singleton is a junior, I will admit, and two or three pounds a week ought to be ample for his needs——"

"Good gracious!" interrupted the visitor. "Two or three pounds!"

"Singleton has been spending more than that?"

"More!" shouted Mr. Partington. "More!"

He jumped up excitedly, and paced the room, much to the Head's astonishment.

"It is obvious to me, my dear sir, that you have no understanding of the true position," he exclaimed quickly. "You have not the faintest idea of the truth. Singleton has been at St. Frank's less than one term, as I said before, and during that period he has spent, not one thousand pounds, but very many thousands!"

The Head started.

"Nonsense, sir," he said sharply.

"You will pardon me, Dr. Stafford, but I am not talking nonsense," exclaimed Mr. Partington. "I will tell you the truth bluntly. And the truth is this. Singleton has squandered a sum which roughly amounts up to one hundred thousand pounds. Now, perhaps, you will understand my anxiety."

The Head rose to his feet, his face grim.

"You are jesting with me, surely?" he said, with ominous quietness.

"I am speaking the truth."

"You tell me, in all seriousness, that a junior boy in this school has squandered a hundred thousand pounds in less than two months?" said the Head. "You actually wish me to believe that, sir?"

"I have stated a simple fact," said the other. "It is the truth, Dr. Stafford, and I am not at all surprised that you are staggered."

"Good heavens!"

The Head sat down again, looking rather pale.

"One hundred thousand pounds," he repeated, almost dazedly. "It is unbelievable—it is incredible! Frankly, Mr. Partington, I think there must be some terrible mistake about this. No boy—no man—could spend that amount of money in such a short time. I am absolutely at a loss for words."

Mr. Partington nodded.

"And yet it is the truth," he said. "Do you blame me for coming here, Dr. Stafford? Do you wonder that I have requested you to speak to the boy, and to curtail his liberties?"

"I don't wonder at all! I am rather astounded that you did not come to me before—weeks ago," said the Head grimly.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I have been away from London on business for several weeks," said Mr. Partington. "I only returned ten days ago—to find that Singleton had spent twenty thousand pounds. That worried me sufficiently, I will confess. But within this last week he has squandered a further eighty thousand."

"But how?" asked the Head. "In heaven's name, how?"

"I cannot possibly tell you, for I do not know myself," said the solicitor. "But I do know that the money has been withdrawn from the boy's banking account."

"But can you do nothing to stop it?"

"Nothing whatever—until we hear from the lad's guardian."

"It is simply appalling," said the Headmaster. "The boy must be mad. Judging from what you have told me, I imagine that he is something of a millionaire—"

"That is just the pity of it—he is not," interrupted Mr. Partington. "Singleton has already run through half his fortune. Think of it, sir—half his fortune in less than two months!"

"It hardly bears thinking about," said the Head huskily. "Why, before the term is ended he will be a pauper!"

"Unless something is done," said the other.

"Something shall be done—you may be sure of that," declared the Head grimly. "If I had known of this before,

I would have taken immediate steps. But what could I do when I knew nothing? Have you no idea at all as to where the money went?"

"Well, I only know that two cheques at least were drawn in favour of a man named Philip Smith Gore," said Mr. Partington. "Those cheques represent three-fifths of the amount, which Singleton has squandered, so it seems that this man has some power over the lad."

"Do you know who he is?"

"I have not the faintest idea."

"Have you not attempted to find out?"

"Naturally," said the solicitor; "but so far I have been unsuccessful, and, as a last resource, I have come to you. I sincerely hope that you will be able to make an impression on the boy. I shall attempt to reason with him, too."

"Reason with him!" echoed the Head. "Reason, indeed! I shall demand to know the truth—I shall lecture the lad in the most severe terms. And, further, I shall positively forbid him to spend more than five pounds weekly! Furthermore, I shall make him tell me who this Mr. Gore is!"

"You will do wonderfully well if you succeed," said the solicitor. "If we can lay our hands upon Mr. Gore, there may be some hope of regaining possession of the lost money. I had intended speaking to Singleton first, but I am rather glad now that I failed to find him."

The Head did not reply. He had seated himself again, and was drumming his fingers upon the blotting-pad, and frowning thoughtfully at the ink-pot.

"A junior boy—one hundred thousand pounds!" he murmured. "I cannot understand how he had the opportunity— Good gracious! It is stupendous, Mr. Partington. Years ago we had a senior boy here who spent ten thousand in the course of one term—and that was deemed to be positively staggering. But this—this is unheard of; it is unprecedented."

"That is what I thought," said the visitor. "Well, sir, do you intend to have Singleton here at once?"

"Most certainly," said the Head. "I will ring."

He pressed the bell on his desk.

"I think it is better that we should both be here," said Mr. Partington. "Possibly we may be able to make an

impression—although, I must warn you, Singleton is decidedly self-willed. Moreover, you must not overlook the fact that he is complete master of his own money."

"I will remember those facts," said the Head quietly. "I will do my best—Ah, Tubbs, I want you."

The page-boy had just entered the Head's study.

"Yes, sir," he said respectfully.

"You must find Singleton, of the Remove, and bring him to me as soon as possible," said the Head. "Bring him back with you, Tubbs, and do not mention that I have a visitor."

"Right, sir," said the page-boy. "I'll be as quick as I can."

He hurried off, and the two gentlemen waited grimly for the appearance of the Hon. Douglas Singleton.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE CARPET!

"**S**EEN Master Singleton, sir?" Tubbs asked the question in the Remove passage. De Valerie and Hart were just passing along, and they paused.

"He's in the study, I think," said Hart.

"He ain't, sir," exclaimed the page-boy. "I just looked in, an' the study's all dark. I can't find him nowhere—"

"Singleton's in his study," repeated Hart. "I saw him go in ten minutes ago. I expect he's sitting in the dark—it's a little habit of his lately. He seems to be a bit moody this week."

"In the dark, Master Hart?" grinned Tubbs. "Well, I wasn't to think of anythink-like that, was I? Queer 'abits some young gents has, ain't they?"

The page-boy turned, and bumped into a junior who was just coming along. The junior was Timothy Tucker, of the Remove.

"Sorry, sir," grinned Tubbs.

"Don't mention it, my dear sir," said T. T. "Don't mention it. It is quite all right. Admitted. H'm! Tubbs, eh? Quite so!"

The page-boy grinned—he couldn't

help it. Tucker was a very peculiar junior, and he was already referred to by many fellows as the comedian of the Remove. Certainly he always kept the juniors amused. He was a comedian unconsciously; he couldn't help it.

"How goes it, T. T.?" asked De Valerie cheerfully.

"The position is this," said Tucker. "I am looking for Pitt. I arranged to meet him, and he has failed to turn up. He has failed, I regret to say. H'm! Most careless of him."

"Awful!" chuckled Hart.

"Well, it cannot be helped," said T. T. "What do you know, my dear sir? Have you heard any news?"

"Plenty—heaps!"

"Is that so?" exclaimed Tucker. "You surprise me, my dear sir. I must admit that you surprise me. H'm! Admitted. Well, I must be going. M'sieur De Luxe—I must be going!"

"M'sieur which?" grinned Hart.

"H'm! Quite so," mumbled Tucker. "Quite so, my dear sir. H'm! H'm!" He wandered down the passage.

"I think he must be touched a bit, you know," said De Valerie, laughing. "He brings out the most unexpected things—and they're generally totally inexplicable. But the chap's got a wonderful temper; you can't offend him."

"Not if you call him a lunatic and a fool and anything else," said Hart. "Hallo! Here's the giddy millionaire. Whither bound, Singleton?"

The Hon. Douglas had appeared with Tubbs, and he paused.

"It's a frightful bore," he explained languidly. "The Head wants me for something—goodness knows what. I shouldn't be surprised if that ass of a Partington is with him—my solicitor, you know."

"Trouble?" asked Hart.

"Bound to be," said Singleton calmly. "But troubles don't worry me. I'll soon settle the old beggar."

"The Head or the solicitor?" grinned Hart.

"Both!" said the Hon. Douglas.

He went with Tubbs to the Headmaster's study, and lounged in with all his usual elegance. He was a dandy of dandies, and was attired in the most exquisite clothing; from tip to toe, he was immaculate.

"Ah, Singleton, I wish to have a serious talk with you," said Dr. Stafford. "Come over here, my lad, and stand in front of me. Tubbs, you may go."

"Yes, sir," said Tubbs.

He went, and closed the door.

"Anything important, sir?" asked the Hon. Douglas. "Hallo, Partington? How goes it? You're looking pretty bright."

"I am not feeling bright, my lad," said the solicitor severely.

"No?" said Singleton. "That's bad."

"Singleton, you must address Mr. Partington respectfully in my presence," exclaimed the Head grimly. "He has brought me news of the most astounding character—news concerning yourself. My boy, I find it impossible to credit what Mr. Partington has told me—or, I should say, I am amazed to hear such startling news concerning your recent expenditure of money."

The Hon. Douglas sighed.

"Egad! Somehow I had an idea that the subject would be concerning money," he said. "What's the trouble, sir?"

"First of all, Singleton, I must tell you that I have been totally unaware of these facts until this evening," said the Head. "Had I known of them earlier, I should have taken immediate steps to alter your—your disgraceful conduct."

"Disgraceful, sir?"

"That is the only word I can use which fitly describes the position," declared the Head. "Your conduct has been disgraceful, inasmuch as you have been squandering your money——"

"Hang it all, sir, I can do as I like——"

"You will be silent, my boy!"

"But——"

"Let me speak, Singleton," snapped the Head. "Ever since you have been at St. Frank's, you have, it seems, done your level best to spend money in the most reckless fashion, at every and any opportunity. I have heard one or two remarks concerning your extravagance, but I did not dream that you had been so positively criminal as to spend your money, not in tens, but in thousands of pounds."

Singleton sighed again.

"Any more, sir?" he asked patiently.

"There is a lot more, my boy," said the Head. "You have been brought

here because I want you to tell me how you have spent this money, and why. Mr. Partington informs me that since you came to this school you have squandered no less than one hundred thousand pounds—in fact, half your fortune."

Singleton nodded.

"Something like that, sir," he said calmly.

"You admit it?"

"There's nothing else to do, sir," yawned the Hon. Douglas.

The Head's eyes flashed.

"Boy! How dare you yawn in front of me in that ill-mannered fashion?" he asked sharply. "I am convinced that it is merely a pose—you are pretending to be unconcerned. But it does not deceive me."

"That's rather bad, sir," said Singleton. "I didn't mean to be rude, and I sincerely apologise if I offended you, sir."

"Very well—we will let it pass," said Dr. Stafford. "Do you admit that you have squandered the sum I mentioned?"

"No, sir."

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Partington. "Why, you cannot possibly deny——"

"I didn't squander it, sir," said Singleton. "I invested it."

"Invested it?" echoed the Head. "That, of course, is different. I did not understand you to say, Mr. Partington, that Singleton had invested the money? This puts a different complexion on the matter."

"Singleton is merely attempting to get out of his responsibility," said Mr. Partington sharply. "He has invested nothing. I have made every inquiry possible, and there is no trace whatever of the investment. Moreover, he is not old enough to deal with anything of that nature."

"Singleton, how did you invest the money?" asked the Head.

"I can't tell you, sir."

"Eh? You cannot tell me?"

"I'm afraid not, sir."

"But I order you to tell me!" shouted the Head.

"I'm sorry, sir, but it can't be done."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Dr. Stafford. "This is truly appalling! You dare to defy me, Singleton?"

"I'm not defying you, sir," said the Hon. Douglas. "But this thing happens to be my business—that's all."

"In other words, you think I am im-

pertinent to question you in this way?" demanded the Head grimly. "Is that it, Singleton?"

"Well, you said it yourself, sir," said Singleton.

"Upon my soul! This is simply past all bearing!" exclaimed the Head. "You dare to tell me that I am prying into your business? Singleton, I order you to tell me how you invested that money."

"And I'm sorry I can't obey you, sir," said the Hon. Douglas warmly. "Dash it all, I can do what I like with my own, I suppose? If you want to know the absolute truth, I spent the money—I spent every penny of it."

"Good heavens! You spent it?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"What on?"

"That's my business, sir," said the Hon. Douglas.

"I cannot permit you to continue in this strain, Singleton," said the Head grimly. "I want you to thoroughly understand, here, at once, that you must answer my questions. Do not forget that I am your Headmaster, and that you are under my control. While you are at St. Frank's, I'm your guardian, and it is your duty to obey me."

"Yes," said Singleton. "I quite understand that. I'm ready to obey you in everything connected with the school. But this is different. My own private money is my own concern. I have a perfect right to spend it as I choose, and there's not a soul on earth who can stop me."

The Head bit his lip.

"My boy, you must be reasonable," he said. "Good gracious me! Do you realise what you have done? Do you grasp the fact that you have squandered a fortune in less than eight weeks?"

"I had bad luck, sir," said Singleton. "I spent the money, but I shall get it all back again. You needn't worry. I can look after myself, thanks. There's no need to get alarmed."

"I am alarmed—and greatly concerned for your own good," said Dr. Stafford. "You are young—you do not realise what you have been doing, in all probability. I might tell you that this case is without parallel in my knowledge. For a boy of your age to spend such sums of money is appalling—truly appalling!"

Singleton frowned

"But it's my money," he protested. "I can do what I like with it, and I don't intend to answer any more questions. I have never been hauled over the coals for misbehaviour here—I've always done my best to do as the other fellows do. And in this matter I am my own master, so you will greatly oblige me by changing the subject."

"I have no intention of doing so," exclaimed the Head angrily. "You are trying my patience sorely, boy, and I may tell you that I am deeply distressed by your attitude. Mr. Partington informs me that you have drawn big cheques in favour of a man named Mr. —Mr. Hore—"

"No, Mr. Gore, sir," said the solicitor. "Mr. Philip Smith Gore."

"Yes, that is the name," said the Head. "What have you to say, Singleton?"

The Hon. Douglas shrugged his shoulders.

"It doesn't seem necessary to say anything," he remarked.

"Do you admit that you have drawn these cheques?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Then, perhaps, you will tell me who this Mr. Gore is?"

"Certainly, sir," replied Singleton. "Mr. Gore is a friend of mine."

"What is he?"

"A gentleman."

"A gentleman—that is no description," exclaimed the Head. "What does Mr. Gore do? Who is he? Where does he reside?"

"They are all questions I can't answer, sir," replied the junior. "Mr. Gore is a friend of mine, and that's all I can say—and it's all I intend to say. And if I like to spend the rest of my money in the same way, I can spend it."

"Good gracious!" muttered Mr. Partington. "Open defiance!"

"You are right, my dear sir—quite right," exclaimed the Head. "It is, indeed, open defiance. Singleton, I have a mind to punish you very severely—"

"Punish me, sir?" said the Hon. Douglas mildly. "What for?"

"Because you deserve very severe punishment."

"But I haven't broken any school rules," exclaimed Singleton. "Hang it all, you can't very well punish me for spending my own money! And you

can't punish me for being impertinent—because I've taken care to be polite!"

The Headmaster breathed hard.

"You are a very difficult boy to deal with, Singleton," he said. "It is quite clear that you intend to defy me. Do you realise that it is within my power to expel you from the school?"

"Of course I realise it, sir," said the Hon. Douglas. "But you wouldn't do that—it wouldn't be playing the game."

"I shall certainly expel you if you continue in the same manner as you have been going on," declared Dr. Stafford grimly. "Now, Singleton, you must listen to me carefully, and I hope my words will sink in."

The Hon. Douglas sighed once more.

"Another lecture?" he asked patiently.

"Surely you've got to the end of it, sir? I'm getting rather bored, you know."

"Bored?" thundered the Head. "How dare you, Singleton! Good gracious! I've half a mind to flog you on the spot—to flog you for studied impertinence. Do not dare to go too far with me, boy!"

The Head's tone subdued the junior somewhat.

"I'm sorry, sir," he muttered. "I didn't mean to be impertinent."

"It is the height of impertinence to tell me that my remarks bore you," snapped the Head. "And now, for the last time, will you tell me why you have spent these large sums of money, and who this Mr. Gore is?"

"I've said all I can say, sir."

"In other words, you refuse to speak the truth?"

"If you like to put it that way, sir—yes," said Singleton. "I took up a certain position, and I'm maintaining it. That's the long and the short of the matter. The money is mine—mine, to do as I like with. So long as I spend it in my own way, I don't see that it concerns anybody else. If I like to make myself a pauper—well, it's my funeral!"

"Dear me," said the Head sadly. "I don't know what to make of this boy, Mr. Partington. He is certainly beyond my comprehension. It is clear that he intends to maintain this—this position he has taken up. Very well, Singleton, I will not question you further."

"Thank goodness! I—I mean thank you, sir," said the Hon. Douglas.

"But I wish to tell you that you must not continue your extravagance, under

any circumstances," declared the Head. "I will not permit you to spend your money as though it were of utterly no value."

"That, again, sir, is my concern——"

"Enough!" snapped the Head. "You apparently think that you can do just as you like. You cannot, Singleton. In the future I shall see that your movements are restricted."

The Hon. Douglas started.

"Restricted, sir?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"But I don't understand——"

"You will understand in a moment, Singleton," said Dr. Stafford grimly. "It is fairly clear that you are not to be trusted out of bounds of this school. You could not have spent all that money within the four walls of St. Frank's. Temptations came in your way, and you succumbed—and perhaps that is only natural with a weak-willed boy such as you have proved yourself to be."

"Thank you, sir," said Singleton smoothly.

"Therefore, in future, as I have just said, your movements will be restricted," said the Headmaster. "From henceforth, Singleton, you will be confined to the school property—that is to say, you are forbidden to move out of the gates—under any circumstances whatsoever."

Singleton turned red with growing wrath.

"And how long is this to last, sir?" he demanded.

"Throughout the term."

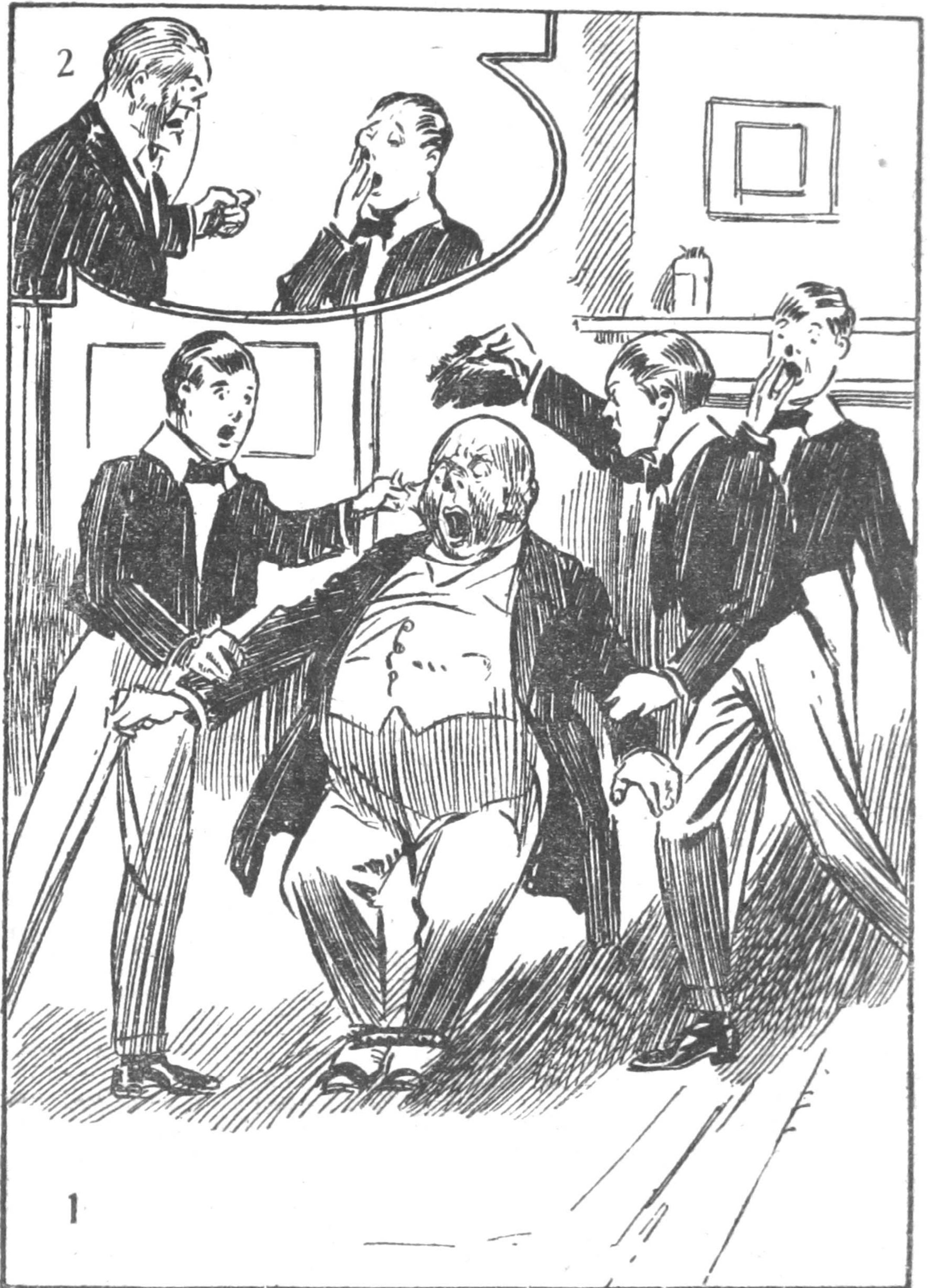
"But it's a deuced imposition!" roared the Hon. Douglas. "I've done nothing to deserve this treatment! I've got as much right to go out as the other fellows——"

"Silence!"

"But look here——"

"You have surrendered your right to act as the other boys act," said the Head. "And I can see that the only method of keeping you in check is to curtail your liberties. I regret to do so, Singleton, but it is for your own good. From now onwards, you will not go out of school grounds unless you have a special permit from myself or your House-master, Mr. Lee. If you break this rule, you'll be flogged!"

"All right, sir; I expect I shall be flogged a good few times!" said Singleton savagely.



1. Mr. Partington let out a whoop and Handforth & Co. went pale.

2. "Boy! how dare you yawn in front of me in that ill-mannerly fashion!" shouted the Head.

"You mean that you will deliberately disobey me?" roared Dr. Stafford. "Good gracious! You are unendurable, Singleton! I shall take heed of what you have said—and you can understand that you'll be carefully watched."

"This isn't a prison, sir," shouted Singleton. "You might as well put me in a room somewhere and lock the door, and bar the window, while you're about it. You might as well do the thing thoroughly."

"There is no reason why you should attempt sarcasm with me, my boy," snapped the Head. "There is one further restriction I shall make. To-night, and every night in future, you will sleep in a small bedroom, instead of in the dormitory. And Morrow, of the Sixth Form, will sleep with you."

Singleton fairly shook with anger. "Why, sir?" he shouted thickly. "Why should I be treated like this?"

"Because I have no intention of letting you break bounds after lights-out," said the Head sharply. "It has come to my ears, Singleton, that you have been guilty in that respect upon one occasion. I overlooked the matter because the evidence at the time was not absolutely conclusive. I shall not allow you to have any further rope. Perhaps you will cease to squander your money if you are not permitted to go out."

"It's shameful, sir," exclaimed Singleton. "It's not playing the game! I've a good mind to leave the school altogether——"

"Don't talk wildly, boy!" said the Head. "Mind you, if you show visible signs of improvement during the next two weeks, I may be disposed to make a concession. But, for the present, you will do as I order."

"And what if I refuse, sir?"

"In that event, you will be expelled—in absolute disgrace," said Dr. Stafford.

For a moment it seemed that Singleton was about to make a violent outburst. But, by a huge effort, he held himself in check. He clenched his fists, looked round him helplessly, and then glared at the Head.

"May I go, sir," he asked between his teeth.

Dr. Stafford nodded; and the Hon. Douglas, still clenching his fists, walked to the door and passed out.

Dr. Stafford and Mr. Partington were rather pleased. They had an idea that they had conquered the obstinate junior. But in that idea they were quite wrong—as the Head was very soon to learn!

The Hon. Douglas Singleton was a hard nut to crack!

CHAPTER V.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY.

"HALLO! What's wrong?" asked Fullwood, in astonishment.

He had just entered Study N with Gulliver and Bell. The light was full on, and the Hon. Douglas was pacing up and down the study, a cigarette between his lips, and with his eyes glittering as they had never glittered before. And there was something about the twist of his mouth which Fullwood did not quite care for.

"What's wrong?" he repeated.

"Eh?" snapped the Hon. Douglas. "Come in and shut the door. I was hoping you chaps would come along. I want to speak to you."

The door was closed, and the Nuts regarded the dandy of the Remove with open astonishment.

"Trouble?" asked Bell curiously.

"Trouble's not the word!" shouted Singleton. "I can tell you I'm furious—I'm absolutely raving! If any of you chaps upset me I sha'n't be responsible for what I do!"

"By gad! There certainly is something wrong," said Fullwood, with a whistle. "Lost some money, Singleton?"

"No."

"Feelin' ill?"

"No, you idiot!"

"Been flogged by the Head?"

"No, confound you!"

"Then what's the bally trouble?"

"I'll tell you what the trouble is," snapped the Hon. Douglas. "I'm gated."

"Phow!"

"For how long, Duggy?"

"All the term!" said Singleton.

"But what on earth for?" asked Gulliver.

"Because I've been spending money

too freely—my own money, mark you!" said Singleton bitterly. "So, if you please, I've got to be kept indoors—like an infernal baby!"

"That's a bit steep you know," said Bell seriously. "We sha'n't be able to go out with you, Singleton—or, rather, you won't be able to come out with us."

"He can sneak out after lights-out—"

"Can I?" said Singleton fiercely. "Oh, can I? That's all you know! The Head has put the ban on that, too! To-night, and every night in future, I've got to sleep in a separate bedroom—with a prefect to guard me!"

"Great Scott!"

"Well, I'm hanged!"

"That a bit rotten!"

"It's not only rotten, but it's unbearable," said the Hon. Douglas. "What am I going to do about Mr. Gore? I can't get out to meet him—I can't have any more flutters—I can't do anything!"

"Perhaps that's why you're bein' gated—"

"Of course it's why," said Singleton fiercely. "That's just the object of it. That old fool of a Partington has come here, and the Head says that I'm not going to be allowed to spend any more money. So I'm being wrapped up in cottonwool. I don't know what I'm going to do—but I'm jolly certain I won't stick it!"

"Of course you won't," said Fullwood. "You can't! It ain't possible to live like that. Dash it all, you must have a bit of freedom!"

"I've got an idea in the back of my head—but it's not quite complete yet," said the Hon. Duggy slowly. "You fellows are with me, aren't you?"

"Of course."

"You'll back me up in anything I start?"

"Yes."

"Good! It's just as well to know that I've got support," said the Hon. Douglas. "I can tell you at once, that I'm not going to put up with this imposition. I can't very well break bounds, because it'll mean a flogging every time—and perhaps the sack. So I shall have to think of something else. But, before I start on the new line, I want to know how many supporters I can rely on."

"Quite a crowd, I should say," said Fullwood. "But let's get this thing

clear. "Supporters in what? What do you want support for?"

"Revolution!" said Singleton grimly.

"Eh?"

"Which?"

"What?"

"Revolution!" repeated the Hon. Douglas. "I don't mean to say that we shall break out at once, but I want to know how many fellows will back me up. I mean to revolt against this treatment—but I can't very well do it alone. If I have a crowd of supporters behind me I shall probably be successful. Do you see the idea? How many chaps do you think will fall into line?"

"A couple of dozen probably."

"Splendid!" said Singleton. "Look here, you fellows might do me a favour. Go round to the studies, and put the thing to the chaps you think likely, and ask what they'll do. We might as well have a preliminary list."

"What about funds?" asked Fullwood.

"Funds?"

"Are you willing to pay the expenses of your supporters?" asked Fullwood. "Or, in more blunt language, will you give each chap a tip? A kind of entrance fee, you know. It'll work wonders, I may add."

"Rather!" said Gulliver and Bell.

Singleton's eyes gleamed.

"It's a ripping idea," he declared.

"I sha'n't be able to spend money on anything else for a bit, so I'll spend it on this. I'll pay you chaps twenty quid each if you back me all through—"

"Done!" said Gulliver.

"You bet!" added Bell. "I'm game."

"And so am I," said Fullwood. "But you don't mean to say that you'll give twenty quid to everybody who joins the party?"

"Well, no," replied Singleton. "My idea is to offer ten pounds each—ten pounds if they'll join us. That's to pay their exes; but, of course, it'll really be a kind of tip."

"You can rely on a good few supporters," grinned Fullwood. "Anyhow, we'll go round and see."

"Good!"

Singleton was feeling much better after Fullwood and Co. had gone. He felt that he would be able to get the better of the Headmaster, after all.

Exactly how he would run his revolu-

tion, he did not know. But he fully intended to get his own way in the finish.

He would certainly not remain a prisoner.

He couldn't think very well, for his thoughts were in a kind of riot. And while he waited for Fullwood to return, he picked up a newspaper and attempted to read it. He really did nothing of the sort, but simply scanned the pages in an aimless kind of fashion.

But, as sometimes happens on occasion such as this, his eyes caught a paragraph which claimed his attention—a paragraph which drove every other thought from his mind—a paragraph which thrilled him.

"Egad!" he muttered. "It can't be true!"

He read the item through again and again. It was in the advertisement column, and it had attracted his attention because the word "Bannington" was most obvious, in conjunction with the other words "school for sale."

The exact paragraph ran in this way:

BANNINGTON.—SCHOOL FOR SALE.

The splendid residential school, known as Beechwood College, situated on the outskirts of Bannington, Sussex, for sale, freehold. Price includes all furniture, contents of class-room—in fact, everything, complete. The school has a good reputation throughout the county, and is in a most excellent financial position. Full particulars upon application to the Headmaster, Mr. Rodney Briggs. Price, including goodwill, five thousand pounds:

The Hon. Douglas Singleton read through this paragraph again and again.

"There must be a catch in it," he muttered. "Five thousand quid. Why, it's nothing to me—nothing at all! Why, if only I can——"

But Singleton did not allow his thoughts to run much further. But he fully intended to visit Mr. Rodney Briggs on the morrow—gating or no gating. That advertisement had suggested an idea to him—a wild, insane kind of idea, it is true. But just then Singleton was feeling wild.

Fullwood and Co. turned up shortly afterwards, and they were all looking extremely pleased.

"Well, we've got a few supporters—at ten quid a time!" grinned Fullwood. "Study G is solid——"

"Who the deuce lives in Study G?" demanded the Hon. Douglas.

"Merrell, Marriott, and Moys."

"Decent chaps?"

"Sports," replied Fullwood.

"Good! Who else?"

"Hubbard is with us, and so is Long," said Fullwood. "I think Clifton and Simmons will join in, too, and we can pretty well rely on Skelton and Ellmore and Lincoln. Doyle and Armstrong are a bit uncertain, but they'll probably cave in before long. And there's one or two others, too!"

"Well, that's a good start, anyhow," said the Hon. Douglas. "In fact, we hardly need any more. We've simply got to show the Head we're determined—and that's all that matters. As soon as he finds that a good many of the fellows won't stand this sort of treatment, Stafford will cave in."

"He's bound to," said Gulliver. "But I should like to know what the game is. You talk about revolution—but how? What kind of a revolution? You're not suggesting that we should all go out on strike, are you?"

Singleton shook his head.

"No," he replied. "But we're up against the Head—that's the long and short of it. I didn't expect to find any prominent fellows in that list of yours. But that doesn't matter much. If we can't have the decent chaps, we must have the second best. Leave it until to-morrow, and I'll give you further details. For the present I want to think things over."

"But you might give us a hint——"

"I can't, because I don't know exactly what to hint at," said the Hon. Douglas. "But let me wrestle with it alone, and I shall be all right. Anyhow, we're going to have some excitement."

"I reckon we are," said Gulliver. "Being up against the Head isn't much of a game. You seem to forget that we shall be on the worst side, and I'm not anxious to get the sack for one."

"You won't get the sack," said Singleton. "The Head can't sack all of us—and as long as we stick together, we shall be all right."

"Of course," said Fullwood. "Come on, you chaps."

They passed out of the study, leaving Singleton alone. The spendthrift immediately picked up the newspaper, and once more studied the advertisements.

Meanwhile, Fullwood and Co. had returned to Study A.

"I don't much care for this dotty wheeze," said Bell bluntly. "Anyhow, I'm not going to get sacked for that idiot's sake."

"Same here," said Fullwood.

"Haven't you got any sense at all?" demanded Fullwood. "There's twenty quid each attached to this job—sixty between us three. We sha'n't touch that until we've agreed to join in—in fact, until we have joined. After we've got the money, we can please ourselves. If this idea of Singleton's doesn't suit us, we'll back out—see?"

"That's not a bad idea," grinned Gulliver. "In fact, it's jolly decent. As you say, Fully, we might just as well get hold of that twenty quid. There's nothing like collaring cash when it's about."

It did not seem that the support of the Nuts was likely to be of much value. They were quite ready to take the money, but were equally ready to betray their leader if they felt so inclined.

That night Singleton did not sleep much. His mind was too full for sleep. Morrow, of the Sixth, was quite decent to him, and actually sympathised with the Hon. Douglas. The latter was somewhat morose, and said little.

He lay in his own bed, thinking of the scheme he had in mind. The Head's decision had come as a great blow to him.

Something had to be done, certainly.

For the stopper had been put on his little game—a most effective stopper, too. Confined to the school grounds, he would be unable to practise his little games: he would be unable to attend race meetings and card parties. Life, in short, would hardly be worth living.

So something drastic was necessary.

And Singleton rose in good time, and was looking quite cheerful when the Remove trooped in to breakfast. During morning lessons the Hon. Douglas was very much the same as usual—except for the fact that he was preoccupied. I could see that something was occupying his attention, and the determined light in his eyes made me rather curious.

"It's my belief that Singleton is up to something, my sons," I said, after morning lessons were over. "Didn't you notice that look in his eyes?"

"Begad! I didn't notice anythin' particular," said Sir Montie. "Did you, Tommy, old boy?"

"Well, he seemed to be pretty glum," said Watson. "But that's only natural. A chap who's been gated like that wouldn't look exactly happy. It seems to me that the Head's been a bit harsh."

"You don't know," I said. "Singleton has been up to something pretty bad—we know that for ourselves. Didn't we meet him in London last week, going on the razzle, when he was supposed to be ill? I expect the Head's got to hear of it, and has put a stopper on his games."

"That's what everybody thinks, so I suppose it's true," said Watson.

Singleton himself did not seem to care much for the Head's order that day. For as soon as morning lessons were over, he put on his overcoat and hat, and calmly walked out of the gateway—careless of whether he was seen. It was open defiance.

But Singleton had an object in view.

He just managed to catch the mid-day train for Bannington. Arriving there, he sought out Beechwood College. It turned out to be an old-fashioned place on the outskirts of the town—near the road which led to Bellton.

The school lay back from the road, and stood in its own grounds. The building itself was somewhat aged, but in a fairly good state of preservation. And the board in the big front garden announced Beechwood College, "a high-class boarding school for young gentlemen."

Singleton entered the place boldly, and requested to see Mr. Rodney Briggs. This gentleman came after a little waiting. He turned out to be a man of about fifty, tall, and rather forbidding looking.

"Well, my lad?" he inquired, as he greeted Singleton in the hall. "What can I do for you?"

"I've come about that advertisement in the paper," said the Hon. Douglas. "I understand that this school is for sale?"

"It is," said Mr. Briggs. "Well?"

"Has it been sold yet?"

"No."

"Any applications?"

"Well, not exactly," said Mr. Briggs. "But I do not take it that you are willing to buy the place?" he added sarcastically.

"That's what I've come about," said Singleton calmly.

"Indeed," said the Headmaster. "Surely you are not serious?"

"Yes, I am," said the junior. "But I should like to hear more particulars. For example, what accommodation is there here?"

"Sufficient for eighty boys."

"Yes, but how many fellows are there in the place at present?"

"Fifty-two."

"That leaves room for twenty-eight more," said the Hon. Douglas. "Good, couldn't be better. And what about servants, and master——"

"The school staff will remain, of course," said Mr. Briggs. "When the sale is effected everything will remain as it is now—except, of course, the ownership will be different."

"Are you the owner?" asked Singleton.

"No, but I'm acting as his agent in this matter," said the Headmaster of Beechwood College. "I presume you are making inquiries for somebody else?"

"Not at all," said the Hon. Douglas. "But to get down to the facts. Who is the owner of this property?"

"Major Rigby," said the other. "He lives on the other side of the town, and he is in very failing health. He did not want to sell the place, for it is in a good financial position. But it is better, perhaps, that he should do so. But these details will not interest you."

Singleton's eyes gleamed.

"Am I to understand that if anybody puts down five thousand pounds he buys the property?" he asked.

"Yes—intact."

"And the school will run on as hitherto?"

"Yes, of course," said the Head. "But the new owner will naturally introduce his own ideas—that, of course, cannot be prevented."

"What sort of a school is it now?" asked Singleton.

"Well, to tell the truth, young man, the discipline here is decidedly strict," said Mr. Briggs. "Far too strict for my own personal liking. The boys are kept hard at it continuously, and I do not fancy their lives are very happy. I shall be glad when the ownership is changed, in one way."

"It can be changed now—within two

minutes, if you like," said the Hon. Douglas.

"I don't quite understand——"

"It's very simple," said the Hon. Douglas. "I'll buy the place!"

"You'll—you'll buy it?"

"Yes—spot cash!"

"My boy, it is not polite of you to joke in this way. Good gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Briggs. "This—this is astounding!"

Singleton had produced his notebook, and he proceeded to take out a sheaf of banknotes. He handed Mr. Briggs the sum of five thousand pounds, and Mr. Briggs couldn't quite understand it.

"But I can't see what——" he began.

But Singleton proceeded to explain matters, and before half an hour had elapsed he had secured Mr. Briggs' promise that everything would be put in order for the sale to be legally effected.

There was likely to be some trouble because Singleton was a minor, but perhaps this could be got over. Singleton had special privileges, as he possessed a fortune in his own right. And money, as he said, would do anything. At all events, he regarded Beechwood College as his own.

And he was to enter into possession on the following Monday—to be exact, within five days!

There was certainly an exciting time ahead!

CHAPTER VI.

SUPPORTERS IN PLENTY.

"A MEETING?" said Merrell.

"Exactly," said Fullwood. "The meeting is to be held down in the old vault, under the monastery ruins. It's the best place, considering, because we shall be private. We don't want Nipper and his beastly crowd nosin' about."

"Rather not," said Merrell. "I'll be there."

"At seven sharp, don't forget."

"Right."

Fullwood went round to the other juniors with the same story. A meeting had been called by the revolutionary

leader—the Hon. Douglas Singleton. The majority of the fellows who were in the scheme, decided to go merely for the sport of it. They did not think for a minute that anything would come of the meeting.

It was the evening of the same day that Singleton had gone to Bannington. The Hon. Douglas had not returned to St. Frank's until late afternoon—he had missed practically the whole of the afternoon lessons, and a good many fellows had assumed that he had run away.

But this, of course, was not the case. Singleton had merely been making his astounding plans.

A flogging had awaited him—not that he cared a rap. It didn't hurt him much, and he considered that the game was worth it.

And, at seven o'clock exactly, the Hon. Douglas descended into the old vault of the monastery ruins, a place which had frequently been used by the juniors for secret meetings.

The vault was already occupied.

Fullwood and Co. were there, Merrell and his two chums were to be seen; Hubbard, Long, and a good many others had put in an appearance. The place was illuminated by means of candles, stuck on the wall.

"Here comes the speaker!"

"The second Trotsky, by Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No rot!" said Singleton. "I'm going to suggest a revolution—but this will be a peaceful one, and in a good cause, too. If anybody brings politics into the discussion, he'll get hoofed out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the style, Duggy!"

"Get busy on the speech, old son!"

Singleton rose upon a box, which had been placed there for his especial benefit. He looked round at the grinning faces, with his own countenance expressing tense excitement and grim determination.

"I want you fellows to realise that I'm serious," he said. "This affair is no laughing matter——"

"Of course not!"

"Go ahead, old son!"

"And it'll be a lot better if you don't interrupt so much," went on Singleton. "You all know the position, so it's not necessary for me to describe it again.

The Head has gated me in the most unjust manner——"

"Shame!"

"You can't go on the ran-dan, can you?" grinned Noys.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's not what I'm worrying about," snapped Singleton. "It's the injustice of the thing that gets on my nerves. I'm to be kept a prisoner—just because I spend my own money in my own way!"

"Rotten!"

"The Head's gone too far!"

"We're with you, Duggy."

"We'll sign a petition with you——"

"A petition be hanged!" shouted Singleton. "That's not what I'm after. I mean to lead a revolution—one of my own. As you fellows know, I have decided to defy the Head—I'm up against Dr. Stafford. It'll pay you to help me in this affair, because——"

"We're going to get ten quid each!" grinned Merrell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll get the money if you agree to fall into line with me," said Singleton. "And I called this meeting to put the thing to you. In plain language, to put it bluntly, the idea is this—I'm going to open a rival school."

"A—a which?"

"Great Scott!"

"A—a rival school!"

"Yes!" shouted the Hon. Douglas grimly.

"Rot!" said Fullwood. "You must be off your head, Singleton. How on earth can you start anything like that?"

"It's impossible!" put in Hubbard. "Why, it's like that giddy music hall sketch—about a policeman who started a rival police station—Parker, P.C., or something like that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How can a junior start a rival school on his own?" demanded Marriott.

"He can—and he's going to," shouted Singleton. "I want to know if you fellows are willing to back me up. I may as well tell you that I've already bought the school——"

"You've—you've bought it?"

"Exactly."

"A—a real school?"

"A real school!" said Singleton. "It's called Beechwood College, and it stands just on the outskirts of Bannington——"

"Why, I've seen it many a time," shouted Hubbard. "It's quite a decent place. I've spoken to some of the fellows, too. They say it's a bit rough there, but it's quite a high-class place. I reckon Singleton's pulling our leg. He couldn't have bought a place like that—it's worth thousands of quids."

"Exactly," said Singleton. "I paid thousands for it, too—five thousand, to be exact. I paid it this morning, in solid cash."

"Phew!"

"He's spoofing!"

"Of course he is!"

"It can't possibly be true!"

"But it is true!" shouted Singleton. "That school is mine now—lock, stock and barrel. The details will be fixed up within three days, and I shall enter into full possession on Monday."

"Great Scott!"

"A—a rival school!"

"It's past belief!"

The juniors were now thoroughly interested and excited. At first they did not believe Singleton's statement, but they were compelled to later. The Hon. Douglas had bought a school of his own!

"You see the idea?" he asked. "Every fellow who joins me must leave St. Frank's and come along to Beechwood College. The scheme is to dish the Head out of as many chaps as we can manage."

"It's impossible!" said Fullwood.

"Rather!" declared Bell. "We couldn't leave without our people's consent—and they'd never consent to a thing like that."

"My idea is to do it without asking anybody," said the Hon. Douglas grimly. "You can simply clear off on Monday morning, before breakfast. You'll all write to your people, explaining what you've done, and telling them that you'd rather be at Beechwood. It's a first-class place, so they can't object."

"Can't they?" said Hubbard. "My people would object pretty strongly."

"Besides, we should only get the sack from St. Frank's——"

"Nonsense!" said Singleton. "If the thing fails, the Head can't sack over twenty of us. If anybody got expelled, it would be me; and I don't care a hang whether I'm sacked or not. I'm out for a bit of sport."

The juniors were more excited than ever.

"Besides, where's the trouble coming in?" asked the Hon. Douglas. "Surely you can go to another school if you want to! It's not like rebelling in the ordinary way. You simply leave St. Frank's, and you go to another high-class college. What is there to be sacked for?"

"Well, nothing, I suppose!" said Bell.

"That's it—nothing!" shouted the Hon. Douglas. "If your people don't like the idea, they'll send you back here and the Head will be only too glad to receive you. But you'd better go first, without asking permission—then you'll be on the safe side."

"My hat!"

"It's a jolly big scheme!"

"A bit too big, I'm afraid," remarked Marriott. "Besides, I'm not very keen on leaving St. Frank's. Beechwood College isn't much of an exchange, I must say. I've heard pretty rotten reports about Beechwood."

"What sort of reports?" asked Singleton.

"Well, reports that make me want to stop here," replied Marriott. "For example, the fellows are restricted awfully—locking up at six o'clock in the evening, and bed at nine, without supper. There are extra lessons, too; and the grub isn't everything it ought to be. I'd rather stay at St. Frank's."

"Hear, hear!"

"It's not quite good enough, Duggy."

"We're staying where we are."

"Yes, rather!"

The Hon. Douglas Singleton looked round him grimly.

"It's not quite good enough, eh?" he asked. "Don't forget that you'll each get ten quid. And it may interest you to know that the conditions at Beechwood College will be totally altered from next Monday onwards."

"Altered?"

"Exactly," said Singleton. "I'm the owner now, and I've already given my instructions to the Headmaster——"

"Your--your instructions to the Headmaster!" gasped Bell.

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Just listen to him!"

"That's what I want you to do," said the Hon. Douglas. "I'm the owner of this school, and it's in my power to give any orders I like. I have

retained the services of all the masters, including the Head, and everything will go on as usual—except for the changes I mentioned."

"What changes are they?"

"I'll give them to you in detail," said Singleton. "Firstly, with regard to lessons, there will be nothing doing until ten o'clock in the morning. Lessons at Beechwood will start at ten, and will be over by twelve. Afternoon lessons will start at three, and will finish at four-thirty. That's the end of the day. There will be no prep. And Wednesday and Saturday will be half-holiday, as they are here."

"Great Scott! No prep!"

"An' only two hours in the morning, and less in the afternoon!"

"It's too good to be true."

"It is true, anyhow," said Singleton. "Then there's the question of freedom. Locking up won't be until nine, and supper at nine-thirty. That brings me to the question of grub."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the most important point!"

"What about the fodder?"

"That's what I'm coming to," said the Hon. Douglas. "Under the new regime everything will be rosy—or I shall know the reason why. You see, I don't want to make any profit out of the school, and so everything can go on *exa*."

"But what about the grub?"

"For breakfast there will be eggs and bacon, generally—and plenty of it," said Singleton.

"On Sundays you mean, I suppose?"

"No—every day."

"Great pip! That's living in luxury!"

"That's the idea," said Singleton.

"Dinner will consist of four courses, and will be equal to any served in a first-class West End restaurant. Tea will be partaken of in your own studies—and the school will supply the tuck."

"Plain bread and butter!" sniffed Hubbard.

"No—anything you like," replied Singleton. "A school-shop is being prepared now, and it will be well stocked. At tea-time the fellows can go over there and get exactly what they want—free of charge."

"My only hat!"

"It sounds like Utopia!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"At any rate, it'll be the best school going," said Singleton firmly. "Supper

will be another fine meal. And there will be all sorts of other privileges which I can't detail here. In short, the school will provide the chaps with every luxury, and life will be easy."

The juniors were greatly impressed now.

"And remember, if your people don't like the idea, you can come back—and you can't be punished," went on the Hon. Douglas. "Are you coming in with me or not? That's what I want to know. Hands up those who join the movement!"

Every hand went up.

"Good!" said Singleton heartily.

"That's ripping! You're all sports! We shall beat the Head yet!"

"Well, even if we don't, we shall have a bit of excitement," remarked Fullwood. "An' I dare say we can get some other fellows to join, too—some of the College House chaps."

"The more the merrier," said Singleton. "The more we have the stronger we shall be. A mere handful would be useless. The Head could sack a handful, but not half the Remove—and that's what I'm aiming at. Just think of the sensation on Monday, when we all walk out!"

"By Jove, rather!"

The meeting broke up at last, and every junior who had taken part in it was determined to see the Hon. Douglas Singleton through. They held that he had been unjustly treated, and they were all up against the Head.

Singleton had opened a rival school. On the face of it, it seemed a wild idea; but in practice, it would probably turn out all right.

For the school was an old-established one—it was a school with a good name—a school with its full complement of masters, every one of whom was a clever, accomplished scholar.

So the idea was not so wild after all. But would it work?

CHAPTER VII.

THE DESERTERS.

MONDAY morning dawned fine and clear.

For some curious reason, every junior in the Remove was up in record time. Those fellows who generally lazed in bed until the last minute were up before anybody else.

Toddy Long, for example, bounced out of bed at the first note of the rising bell. As a rule he stayed between the sheets until the last possible second—until he was hauled out on his neck.

"Great pip!" exclaimed Handforth, sitting up. "Who said the age of miracles was past?"

"Eh?" yawned McClure. "What's the matter?"

"Long's getting up—he's actually dressing!" said Handforth wonderingly. "Hubbard, too—and Merrell and Marriott—by George! I'm hanged if Fullwood isn't out as well!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's certainly something wrong this morning," observed De Valerie. "Look here, you chaps, what's on?"

"Nothing that matters to you," said Teddy Long importantly. "We have our own business, De Valerie. Before long you'll see what the game is—and then you'll be jolly jealous——"

"Shut up, you young fool!" snapped Fullwood.

Long shut up—mainly because he feared the boot which Fullwood held suggestively in his hand.

I did not fail to notice the signs.

"I'm blessed if I can quite make it out, my sons," I murmured to Sir Montie and Tommy. "Just look at them! All getting up as though a wager depended upon it."

"Dear fellow, it's most remarkable—it is, really!" declared Tregellis-West. "There's been somethin' the matter for the last two or three days. Most of the chaps have been fairly bubbling with excitement, and I've noticed that they're mainly the bounders of the Remove."

I nodded.

"I've noticed that, too," I said. "Exactly what the stunt is, I can't imagine; but I'm jolly sure that Singleton is at the head of it—he's the prime mover. And it's something pretty rotten, too."

"Well, it's not our place to interfere," said Tommy Watson. "We can't help it if the bounders play the silly fool. Leave 'em alone!"

"There was some talk about revolt," I went on. "At least, a whisper; but if these chaps start a revolt, they'll soon find themselves in the wrong box. The Head isn't the kind of man to be played about with."

"Begad! It'll be rather interestin' to see what happens, you know," observed Sir Montie. "I shall be frightfully keen on watching the developments. But I fancy it'll fizzle out!"

"Let's hope so, anyhow," said Watson. "We don't want any beastly revolutions here!"

"Well, it's nothing to do with us this time," I remarked. "We were up against that beast Martin, last year, but we had every cause. There's no cause for Singleton to start a revolt against Dr. Stafford."

"Rather not, old boy!"

Fullwood and Co. and the others were dressing with all haste, and when they were all ready, they marched downstairs in a body. Out in the Triangle eight or ten College House boys were waiting, all of them looking considerably excited—and somewhat nervous.

"I—I say!" asked somebody. "Are we really going?"

"Of course we're going!" said Gulliver. "Now, too!"

Altogether, there were twenty-two fellows quite a formidable force. The Hon. Douglas Singleton was at their head, and he was looking determined and grim. He, at all events, was intent upon seeing the thing through.

"Right!" he exclaimed briskly. "Quick march!"

The whole crowd of rebels passed out through the gateway, and marched down towards the village. Every junior carried a bag of some kind, containing enough personal articles to last a week or so. And in the village twenty-two letters were placed in the post-office letter-box.

"Well, we've done that!" said Fullwood. "By to-morrow morning, our people will know all about it, and if they don't like the change—they can lump it! I expect we shall have to go back to St. Frank's before the week is out; but it'll be a fine bit of sport, all the same."

"Rather!"

The juniors crowded on to the early train which left for Bannington, and very shortly afterwards they arrived in the old town.

They marched straight to Beechwood College.

Outside the gates a crowd of boys were watching, and several shouts went up as the St. Frank's party was seen.

"Here they are!"

"Give the bounders a cheer!"

"Hurrah!"

"Hallo!" said Bell. "How did these bounders know we were coming?"

"I happened to tell them," explained Singleton calmly.

As soon as they reached the grounds of Beechwood College, the St. Frank's fellows were surrounded by fellows of their own age. All the boys were decent, and of quite a good class.

And Mr. Rodney Briggs stood upon the steps of the school.

"So you have come over, boys?" he said genially. "It is a most extraordinary state of affairs, but I suppose you know what you are doing. In celebration of this occasion, to-day is to be a whole holiday!"

"Hurrah!"

"My hat! This is first rate!" said Hubbard. "I'm jolly glad I came to this school! What a ripping idea of Singleton's!"

"Yes, by Jingo, rather!"

Mr. Briggs further intimated that there would be extra special food that day—a regular feast. The boys would be able to get accustomed to their new quarters, and acquainted with their new school-fellows.

The latter were highly excited.

"Just fancy!" said one of them. "This place has been bought by one of your chaps. He's really the Head now—Singleton, I mean. He can give orders just when he likes."

"It's something like a farce!" grinned Gulliver.

"Yes, rather!"

And, meanwhile, some exciting events were taking place at St. Frank's.

Nothing was particularly noticed until breakfast-time, and then, of course, it was quite apparent to all that something remarkable had happened to the Remove, for the Remove had shrunken in the most astonishing fashion.

"Nipper!" exclaimed Mr. Crowell, the Form-master. "Can you explain the meaning of this remarkable state of affairs?"

"No, sir."

"Do you not know where the missing boys are?"

"I haven't the least idea, sir!"

"Most astonishing!" said Mr. Crowell. "I am completely at a loss. Fifteen or sixteen boys gone, and for no apparent reason! It is simple incomprehensible!"

"A mystery, sir!" exclaimed De Valerie.

"A most astounding mystery, De Valerie!" said the Form-master. "I remember noticing a crowd of boys in the Triangle some time ago. Is it possible that they left the schoolgrounds in a body?"

"They did, sir," said Pitt. "I saw them go."

"And Singleton was amongst them, sir."

"Singleton!" exclaimed Mr. Crowell, frowning. "But Singleton is forbidden to leave the school premises! Dear me! The boy will pay dearly if he has dared to defy the Headmaster's orders!"

Breakfast progressed, but there was no sign of the missing juniors. The meal came to an end at last, and then there was a further outburst of excitement when news came along that a large party of boys had been seen in the village.

"Where the dickens can they have got to?" asked Watson. "What's the idea of going out like that? You can't call it a rebellion to desert the school. It seems a potty idea!"

Pitt chuckled.

"Well, we sha'n't miss the absentees much," he remarked. "They're mostly fellows we can easily do without—Fullwood and Merrell, and those sort. If they cleared off for good, it'd be all the better."

"That's one way of looking at it," observed Hart. "But you needn't kid yourselves that they've gone for ever. We sha'n't be so lucky as all that. The bounders are certain to turn up again, like bad pennies."

"That's what I'm afraid of," said Pitt. Meanwhile, the Head was rather alarmed.

He received the report at breakfast-time, but did not think much of it. He assumed that the missing boys would turn up before lessons. But now—The time arrived, but the boys did not.

Mr. Crowell came to report again.

"Well, Mr. Crowell?" demanded the Head. "Have you heard anything?"

"Nothing at all, sir."

"It is most amazing," said the Head, "for so many boys to leave the school in a body! Where on earth could they have got to?"

"I couldn't possibly imagine, sir."

"You have heard nothing further since the report came from the village?"

"No, sir."

"Then I can only think that the boys

must have taken leave of their senses!" declared Dr. Stafford grimly. "As for Singleton, I shall make an example of him when he returns."

"I certainly should, sir."

"I can only think that the lad has deliberately defied me," continued the Head. "Perhaps he has taken these boys out for what they would call a spree, meaning to risk the consequences. If so, they will pay very dearly when they arrive back——"

Ting, ting, ting!

The telephone-bell rang sharply.

"One moment, Mr. Crowell, please!" said the Head.

He lifted the receiver from the instrument and placed it to his ear.

"Hallo!" he called.

"Ah! Is that you, Dr. Stafford?" came a voice.

"Yes. Who is it speaking?" said the Head.

"Singleton!"

"Eh?" exclaimed the Head. "What—what did you say?"

"I am Singleton!" came the voice over the wire. "I thought you might be interested to have a word with me, sir."

"Boy!" thundered Dr. Stafford. "How—how dare you act in this outrageous manner! You have deliberately defied my instructions!"

"That's all right, sir; I'm not coming back," said Singleton.

"What?"

"I have left St. Frank's for good."

"Good gracious!"

"It's a fact, sir!" came Singleton's voice. "You see, I got rather fed-up with the restrictions, and I don't see why I should stand it any longer. I mean to stay away from St. Frank's in future—I have found a better 'ole!"

The Head nearly went purple with anger.

"Boy!" he thundered. "Are you crazy?"

"Not quite, sir; but I should have been if I'd stayed at St. Frank's," said the

Hon. Douglas. "If you want to know the truth, I've bought a school of my own——"

"You—you've done what?" gasped the Head faintly.

"I've bought a school."

"Good heavens!"

"Yes, I thought you'd be a bit startled," said Singleton smoothly. "The fact is, sir, I couldn't stand it there, so I've come here, with a crowd of other chaps to keep me company. I expect you're in a bit of a stew, but that can't be helped. If you want my address, it's Beechcroft College, Bannington."

"Great goodness!" panted the Head.

"Are—are you actually serious, Singleton? Do you dare to tell me that you mean this?"

"Of course I mean it, sir!"

"And—and you have defied me?"

"Well, it went against the grain, I'll admit," said the Hon. Douglas. "But something had to be done, and as this school was for sale, I bought it. You needn't worry! We've got fine masters here, and we're all very comfortable. Good-bye, sir!"

Singleton rang off, and the Head turned to Mr. Crowell, fairly shaking with agitation and excitement.

"Mr. Crowell," he panted, "I hardly know what to say!"

"What has happened sir?" asked the Form-master.

"Those boys, led by Singleton, have actually gone to Bannington," said the Head faintly. "Singleton has purchased a school——"

"What?"

"He has purchased it, and has taken those boys with him!" roared the Head. "I do not intend this to continue for one hour longer. Come! We will fetch Mr. Lee, and we will go to Bannington at once!"

But the Headmaster of St. Frank's was to find that he would have some difficulty in dislodging the Hon. Douglas Singleton and his supporters from the rival school!

THE END.

NEXT WEEK

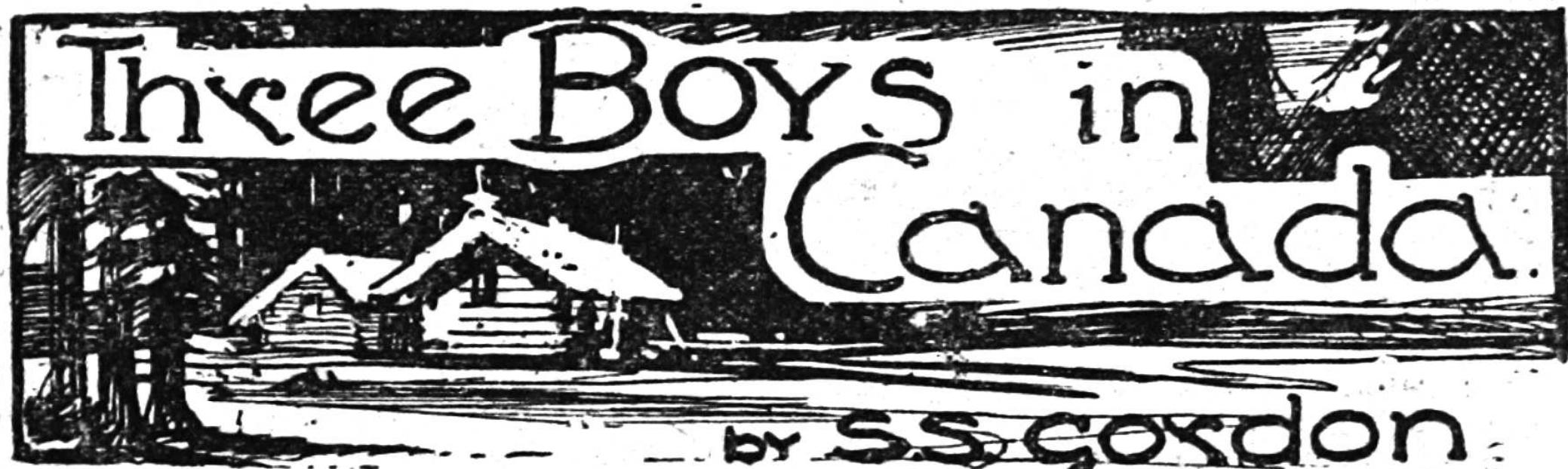
you must read all about the spendthrift's latest scheme in

"SINGLETON'S RIVAL SCHOOL!"

Appearing in Next Wednesday's

NELSON LEE LIBRARY.

PRICE THREE-HALFPENCE.

GRAND NEW SERIAL JUST COMMENCED!***A Tale of Life and Adventure in the North-West.*****INTRODUCTION.**

JACK ROYCE, home from Canada, is on a visit to his brother,

TEDDIE ROYCE, a clerk in London. Jack tries to induce his brother to join him in Canada, but Teddie has not money enough. While they are talking an unexpected visitor arouses them, followed by roughs. There is a set-to, in which the Royces rescue the stranger, a lad of about their own age, whose name is **GERALD TELFORD**.

Shortly following this incident Gerald is informed by his guardian, **MR. CARDONE**, that all the money the boy was to inherit had been lost with the exception of £50. With this sum Gerald joins partnership with the Royces, and the three lads agree to try their luck in Canada. They book their passages to Montreal. Little do they suspect being shadowed by a man in the pay of Mr. Cardone. This man secures a berth on the same boat. At last they set sail from Liverpool.

(Now read on.)

The Brothers Go Ashore.

"**P**OOOR Gerald would die in this," grunted Ted, hanging on to the sides with both hands, while the young Irish boatman spread an amount of sail that made his light craft sail almost on her beam ends. "I'm just glad we didn't persuade him to come."

"Bedad," said the boatman, with a grin. "The craft in front's a wan owned by me own brother, an 'tis myself that wants to catch up wid him. But Pat does be after ownin' the fastest boat on the shore of Ireland. Still, he'll only bate me after I've done me best."

He pointed to the boat in which the blue-chinned man was speeding shorewards.

The rest of the way was a race, and the Royces enjoyed it; but the boatman's

brother Pat won it, and landed his passenger nearly a minute before the Royces stepped ashore.

"'Tis meself that will be waiting to take ye back agin at three o'clock, gentlemen," said the Irishman. "The ship does be sailin' at four o'clock, Irish time."

The first thing that took the boys' attention was a row of Irish jaunting-cars, and each of their drivers was clamouring for custom as soon as they sighted the lads, who laughingly thrust them aside. But as they came to the last car in the line, the jarvey took Jack's arm, and, in true Irish fashion, began to wheedle him for his patronage. He was a jovial-looking man, with a pug nose and an infectious smile.

"Arrah, now, sor!" he said. "Ye'll be afther patronisin' Mike O'Hegan? Faith, 'tis the fastest mare in all Londonderry County I do be havin' between the shafts av the cyar, and the cyar itself has the rale injyrubber tyres. Begad, 'tis to Castle Muldoon I'd be taking ye before ye could say 'No Home Rule for Ireland!'"

"No, no!" said Jack, shaking him off. "We're just taking a stroll ashore to stretch our legs."

But the jarvey insisted.

"Av 'tis the terms! Well, sor, 'tis only five shilling I'll be charging ye, and the drive's a good fifteen miles, there and back. And, sor, the castle's a sight to behold. 'Twas there that King O'Toole held his court before England was invented. 'Tis there that to this day ye can hear the rale live banshee howlin' over her dead son, Brian O'Moran, who was hung for the moonlightin'—"

"Oh, for pity's sake, stop him!" cried

Teddy, putting his hands to his ears. "Let's go, Jack; we've lots of time, and we can economise later, if five shillings is too much to spend."

"'Tis sights ye'll see——" the jarvey continued.

But Jack laughingly interrupted him by climbing into the car. Teddy, full of boyish delight at visiting an old Irish castle, with a banshee thrown in, was not slow to jump up on the other side; and the jarvey took his seat, cracked his whip, and chirruped to the mare.

She was a splendid little animal—a true Irishman's horse. Her action filled Jack with delight, and she literally ate up the first few miles of the road she travelled; which led straight south. Soon, though, the road became a mere rutted track, and then it was the brothers were hard put to it to keep their seats, for it takes an experienced man to ride in an Irish jaunting-car with any gracefulness.

"Phew! We haven't much money, but we do see life!" grunted Teddy, as the jarvey mercifully slowed the mare down to a walk whilst passing a particularly rough piece of road. "How far is the castle away now, Paddy?"

"Not far," said the Irishman, with a grin. "'Tis only seven and a half Irish miles from Moville town, begorrah! I'll be tellin' ye when first ye see it."

But it was another hour before they came to Castle Muldoon, and Jack wondered at the difference between Irish miles and English statute miles. Teddy, shaken, was of the opinion that they had travelled twenty leagues at least, and it was with a sigh that he dropped to the ground when the jarvey drew rein on the sweating mare.

It was then one o'clock by Jack's watch, which he had not set since leaving Liverpool. He calculated that the Irish time was twenty minutes to one, and therefore warned his brother.

"We can't stay very long round here," he said. "We must allow enough time to get that boat. Now, Paddy, have you any sights to show us? We've only got half an hour to spare."

Left Behind.

THERE'S a purty dungeon in the castle, an' the kaper'll be after lettin' yez see ut for three-pence," said the jarvey eagerly.

"No, thanks!" returned Jack. "It

would be too interesting, and we might waste too much time there. We've got the boat to catch."

"Then ye'll just be lookin' at the ould livin'-rooms, whilst I give the mare a drink o' water," said Paddy.

Just then an ancient Irishman appeared from a small cottage near the moat which surrounded Castle Muldoon.

"The two gentlemen will be seein' your castle, Shaun Cregan," said the jarvey. "They've but half an hour to spare. I'll be waterin' the marcen while ye're showin' ut thim."

He leaned forward and whispered something into the old man's ear, and the boys did not see him, for they were then walking up a track that led to a tumble-down drawbridge across the moat. The old man gave a toothless grin and nodded, then trotted after his young patrons. The jarvey mounted his car and turned away from the castle.

"Where does he have to go to water?" asked Jack of the old man.

"Sure, 'tis an iligent well Widdy Malone does be havin', and that's at the cottage beyant," was the reply, as the old man pointed to a hovel in a hollow, a quarter of a mile away.

There were plenty of interesting sights to be seen, but Jack kept his eye on the time, so that, half an hour later, he touched the old guide on the arm.

"That'll do, thanks!" he said. "Now we've got to be going. The man will be waiting outside."

"Faith, 'tis the dungeon ye haven't seen yet," said the old man.

"No, and we sha'n't be able to see it," said Jack. "It's a quarter past one, and it took us two hours to drive out. Come along, Ted, old chap! Sorry to have to drag you away!"

The old man protested, but hobbled after them as they went outside. There they saw no sign of the jarvey.

"He's late. I told him we'd only half an hour," said Jack. "I'll only give him ten minutes, and then I'll go down and fetch him, if he's gone to that cottage."

At the end of the ten minutes there was nothing still to be seen of their driver. Then it was that Jack grew angry.

"He knows we want to catch that boat!" he said. "Let's go and fetch him. Widow Malone must have some whisky there."

A few minutes walking brought them to the hovel. There, tethered to a post, stood the little mare, still harnessed to the car. There was no sign of the jarvey, but Jack knocked at the door, and a pretty young girl opened it.

"Where's the man who owns that car?" asked Jack, raising his hat.

"Bedad, 'tis asleep he is entoirely," answered the girl, with a merry smile. "'Tis a shame it is to wake him."

"But he must be wakened, just the same," said Jack. "Now, young lady, ask him to come along, or we'll miss our boat."

They waited five minutes, and then the jarvey appeared, rubbing his eyes. Jack tried to scold him, but the man's jovial remarks made him and Teddy laugh so much that the point of the lecture was lost.

"'Tis the best mare in Derry, sor," he said. "She'll have ye back before ye can say 'smoke.' Hop up, gentlemen, and ye'll see her paces!"

He climbed into the seat and picked up the reins. Jack did the same, and Teddy, with a groan, followed him. Teddy remembered the shaking he had undergone on the journey inland.

For a couple of miles all went well, but soon after then Teddy forgot for a moment to hang on. The jarvey was speaking to him, pointing out some favourite bit of scenery with his whip, and Teddy was leaning forward to look. Just then the wheel of the car sank into a deep rut, and Teddy, with a yell, went flying into the road.

"Hurt, old chap?" asked Jack, as the driver pulled up.

Teddy came to his feet, looking foolish, and began to run towards the car. He stopped at the first step, and bit back a cry. Jack saw the change in his expression and jumped down.

"You are hurt?" he said.

"Just twisted my ankle a bit; that's all," said Teddy. But he was glad of Jack's help as he clambered into his seat again.

"You'll have to hang on better," said Jack. "Now, jarvey, drive on; we're losing too much time."

He looked at his watch. It was half-past two now.

The jarvey obeyed by giving the mare a sharp cut. For ten minutes the Royces hung on the backs of their seats, while

the mare galloped at top speed, the car jolting and rocking like a boat at sea.

"Is— isn't he going too fast?" asked Teddy breathlessly. "I believe the horse is running away."

"Steady, man!" roared Jack. "You'll have the boy in the road again, if you don't pull up!"

"Bedad," roared the jarvey, "the mare's boltin'! She'll have to have her head till she tires."

"Pull up!" roared Jack. "Do you want us killed?"

The man laughed, but did not tighten the reins. At length, as Ted all but went flying for the second time, he reached over and caught the man's hands. There was a little struggle, but Jack was the master of it. He secured the reins, and slowly began to draw up on them.

"Begorrah, they're rotten!" yelled the jarvey. "Ye'll be breakin' thim like threads!"

But Jack put out some of his vast strength and pulled back. The mare had the bit in her teeth, he knew, but he was accustomed to driving horses, and continued to pull, hoping to make her loosen her grip. Then, as she was beginning to flag in her mad career, the jarvey's words came true. The reins snapped. Jack shot backwards, and went sprawling into the road. The jarvey gave a yell and jumped, while the mare continued to gallop, though at an increased pace.

"The boy'll be killed!" cried Jack, coming to his feet.

The Irishman sat up, rubbing his head.

"And phwhy did ye pull at the reins?" he said sadly. "'Twas rotten; I told ye they were!"

Jack started to run after the car, but he did not go far before the outfit came to a halt. A boulder at the side of the road did its work well and quickly. As Jack ran, he saw the horse go down—saw Ted shoot out of the car, and saw the car itself splinter to matchwood.

When the frightened lad came panting to the scene, Teddy was sitting up and holding his head. The mare was kicking frantically on her side, and the trap was minus both wheels and shafts.

"I'm—I'm all right; but what an outing!" gasped Teddy, scrambling to his feet. "And what a wreck!"

He stood on one leg, his hand on

Jack's shoulder, while the jarvey came up, panting and crying excitedly.

"Bad cess to it!" he yelled. "'Twasn't this I was bargaining for! The cyar's splinters, and the mare's ruined! 'Tis dear at five pound——"

"Now you've landed us into a nice mess!" said Jack furiously. "In an hour or so the boat sails, and we're goodness knows how far from Merville!"

"And 'tis the cyar and mare that's ruined entirely!" wailed the jarvey. "'Tis the last time Mike O'Hegan will be dishonest!"

"What d'you mean?" asked Jack, turning upon him.

"Faith, 'tis the first time I've ever been paid to do dirty work!" moaned the Irishman. "Bridget, me darlin', ye'll have to be shot, wid them knees!"

The mare ceased her struggles, and lay comparatively still, but gazed at her master with large, soft eyes. Jack knew it was more than broken knees. Her two fore-legs were broken.

"'Twas a blue-chinned omadhaun that gave me five pounds to take ye out into the country and make ye miss the boat!" cried O'Hegan. "'Tis poor, I am, and I tuk the money, bad scran to ut!"

Jack raised his fist to strike him; but at the same moment the man fell to his knees beside his injured horse, and began to babble into her ears, so that, even in his anger, the Englishman's heart was softened. Instead of striking, he laid his hand on Paddy's shoulder.

"You've done your work well," he said. "But we still might be able to get the boat if you'll tell us exactly how far it is to Merville."

"Five honest miles," was the reply. "But ye can only walk."

"It's a quarter to three now," said Jack; "that's about half-past two, Irish time. We'll have to walk, Ted. Buck up, lad! You're limping, but we'll be stranded if we don't get the boat."

"I'm all right," said Teddy painfully, and set his teeth.

"If we don't get that boat," said Jack, turning wrathfully on the jarvey. "we'll look you up, and I'll half murder you!"

"Good luck, gentlemen!" returned the jarvey tearfully; and the brothers set off on their long tramp.

For the first three miles they pro-

gressed fairly well, although they took an hour to do it. Teddy did not complain about his twisted foot, but his face grew haggard, and Jack, while he forced him along unmercifully, felt many a twinge of regret. At the end of the third mile, he thrust his arm into his brother's, and they continued their weary march.

Half a mile from the outskirts of Merville, the air was disturbed by the shrill blast of a ship's whistle. It brought a dismayed shout from Jack's lips, and made Teddy, who had merely crawled the last half-mile, start excitedly forward. The rest of the way was covered at a jog-trot by Jack and a painful hobble by Teddy.

They came to the water's edge. The first man they met was the young boatman who had sailed them ashore.

"Quick!" cried Jack. "Get us out! Thank heaven, she hasn't gone!"

He pointed to the Empress, lying there, a mile out. As he spoke there came another whistle, and Jack shaded his eyes with his hand as he looked.

"She's started!" said the boatman. "Ye've missed her, bedad!"

It was true. The Empress was steaming out to open sea.

A Friend in Need.

JACK tore his hair; Teddy gazed miserably at the slowly receding Empress.

"Everything we've got aboard that ship!" he cried. "Even our cash and tickets. They're in our cabin baggage."

"And Gerald's there, too," said Teddy. "He'll have to land friendless, after all. Will he wait for us at Montreal?"

"I don't know," growled Jack. "Oh, that jarvey! I'd——"

"Excuse me, gentlemen," said a voice behind them. "I believe I can help you."

The brothers turned sharply. They saw standing there a young man of about twenty-five, who was dressed in oil-skins.

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

"My name's Dennis O'Hara," said this youth. "I can see a way out for you both, but it's a bold way to be after taking."

"What is it?" asked Jack eagerly.

Dennis O'Hara laughed merrily.

"Listen, boys, I have an elegant motor-launch, the Banshee. She could overtake that steamship."

"Then will you help us?" asked Jack. "We'll be indebted for life to you if you will."

"I'll be along here in ten minutes," said O'Hara. "Wait!"

They waited patiently at the water's edge, their eyes never leaving the Empress, which was growing swiftly smaller. At length they saw a motor-launch thrashing its way towards them.

"Jump in, and it's a wet skin you'll be getting," said O'Hara.

The brothers obeyed, and crouched down, while their newly-found friend restarted the engine and gripped the steering-wheel.

The launch cleft her way through the waves at a speed that made the Royces hold their breath, and the spray she kicked up drenched them. But it was soon quite easy to see that they were gaining on the Empress. The sea became rougher as the shores of Ireland became more distant.

"Bedad!" O'Hara bawled, dashing the spray out of his eyes, "it's a tricky climb you'll have to get aboard!"

Jack Royce laughed grimly. He had guessed that already.

In twenty minutes' time they were in the backwash of the stately liner. By then it was plain that the passengers aboard were watching the chase, for the rails were crowded with figures. The tossing became worse as the motor-boat came nearer to the towering sides. When they were abreast of the Empress' amidships, Jack hollowed his hands and shouted through them.

"We're passengers," he yelled. "We want to come aboard."

There was a stir above him, and then Teddy distinguished a face amongst the rest there.

"Gerald!" he shrieked. "We want to come aboard!"

There was a cheer from the liner's passengers. A uniformed figure bent over the rail. It was the second officer.

"What does this mean?" the officer barked. "We can't let you come aboard, if that's what you're after."

He turned as Gerald Telford touched his arm. Gerald engaged him in close conversation, while the Empress pounded along at a good eighteen knots, and the Banshee rocked and tossed alongside her.

"What if they won't let us get up?" asked Teddy, watching the faces that were bent down to him.

"Ahoy, below!" cried the ship's officer, after a while. "I've spoken to the officer of the watch. The captain's below, so he probably won't see you. You can come aboard, if you can get. Of course, we can't let a ladder down for you."

Gerald Telford slipped half a crown into a grinning deck-hand's fist, and that man, chuckling at the easy money, and knowing his officer would wink at the act, produced a coil of rope.

Gerald tied one end of this to the rail, took the free end, and tossed it down to Jack.

"You shin up first, young 'un," said Jack, to his brother.

Setting his teeth, Teddy gripped the rope and began to draw himself upwards with his hands. He climbed like a monkey. Before he was half-way up, brawny hands were reaching down to help him. At length a fist gripped his collar, and, panting, Teddy was hauled over the rail and set on his feet on the deck.

Jack Royce turned to his benefactor. He held out his hand.

"Thanks, old chap," he said simply.

O'Hara grinned, but returned the grip. Then Jack also swung himself into space. Panting, he at length was drawn up and set down beside his brother, where Gerald, laughing a little hysterically, shook him by the hand.

"Tickets, please!" said the second officer, in a gruff, official voice, but with a twinkle in his eye.

"They're down below," said Jack, "so are our dry togs. You shall see them, sir; and let me thank you for giving us the chance to get aboard. I'm glad we didn't miss the Empress. I rather think there's somebody aboard now that I want to see particularly."

(Continued overleaf.)

Those of the crowd who overheard his words stared at him; but one man—a blue-jowled fellow, who looked as though he had only recently shaved off a heavy black beard, slipped away from the rest, and, when alone, gave himself up to a long round of deep, bitter cursing, the while his face took on a very evil look.

"Foiled!" he snarled at length. "Those Royce lads are smarter than I thought. But, by heaven, I'll separate Telford from them somehow!"

In the meanwhile, Jack and Teddy Royce and Telford were going below to the cabins.

Fifteen minutes later, the Royces had had hot baths and changed their clothes, and were sitting in the cabin shared by the three.

Neither Jack nor Teddy was a jot the worse for their adventure, and Telford had quite forgotten his seasickness. He listened to what the Royces would tell him about the jarvey's attempt to delay them.

"I've got an idea," said Jack quietly, "that the blue-chinned omadhaun the jarvey mentioned is aboard this ship right now. Somebody must have bribed the jarvey to do the dirty on us, and I'm sure nobody at Moville would have done. I have an idea the fellow's aboard this ship."

"But why should anybody want to hinder you?" Telford asked, in surprise. "You haven't got any enemies, have you?"

Jack said nothing to this, but that he was thinking was plain to be seen on his strong, rather hard face.

The remainder of the voyage was uneventful. Though Jack kept his eye out for anybody who might answer to the description given by the jarvey, Obed Snaith was careful to keep out of his sight all the while the Empress was crossing the Atlantic.

Accordingly, the stately liner moored up on the quay at Montreal, and, having passed through the customs, and having gone through all the formulas that the immigrant must go through, the three

chums boarded an emigrant train bound for Winnipeg the same evening they were landed.

Much though they would have liked to explore the sights of that fine city, they had to deny themselves that pleasure. Their funds were getting very low, and Jack was anxious to reach somewhere about the scene of his labours without loss of time.

Nor did they know, they did not even guess, that Obed Snaith followed them. While the three boys found bunks in a colonist coach fairly well forward, Snaith found one in a coach near the conductor's caboose.

The railway journey, lasting as it did three days, was also uneventful. They arrived at Winnipeg rather late at night, and, under Jack's guidance, sought a cheap hotel that he knew of. By the time they had obtained their room, it was half-past nine, and it being early summer still, it was quite dark.

"What about a stroll through the streets," said Jack, "before we turn in. If nothing better offers, I think we'll take a train to Medicine Hat to-morrow morning. There at Medicine Hat one can take a choice of jobs at this time of the year. One can go in for ranching, farming, or try for a town job. Personally, I'm for ranching. You can ride, Telford?"

"Have ridden after hounds," said Telford modestly. "Of course, I'm in you fellows' hands about the job. Yes, I'd like to take a stroll through Winnipeg before I leave it."

Jack knew Winnipeg well. He had been in the big Western city several times. He acted as their guide. But even Jack took a wrong turning once, and, after they had walked through what was equivalent to the slums of the city for some time, the elder Royce had to admit that he was beaten. He'd got "turned around."

He scratched his head, the while his companions chaffed him immoderately that, the first time he should be acting as their guide, he should lead them astray.

(To be continued.)