

Given Away—PLATE OF FAMOUS FOOTBALLER & "NIPPER'S MAG."!

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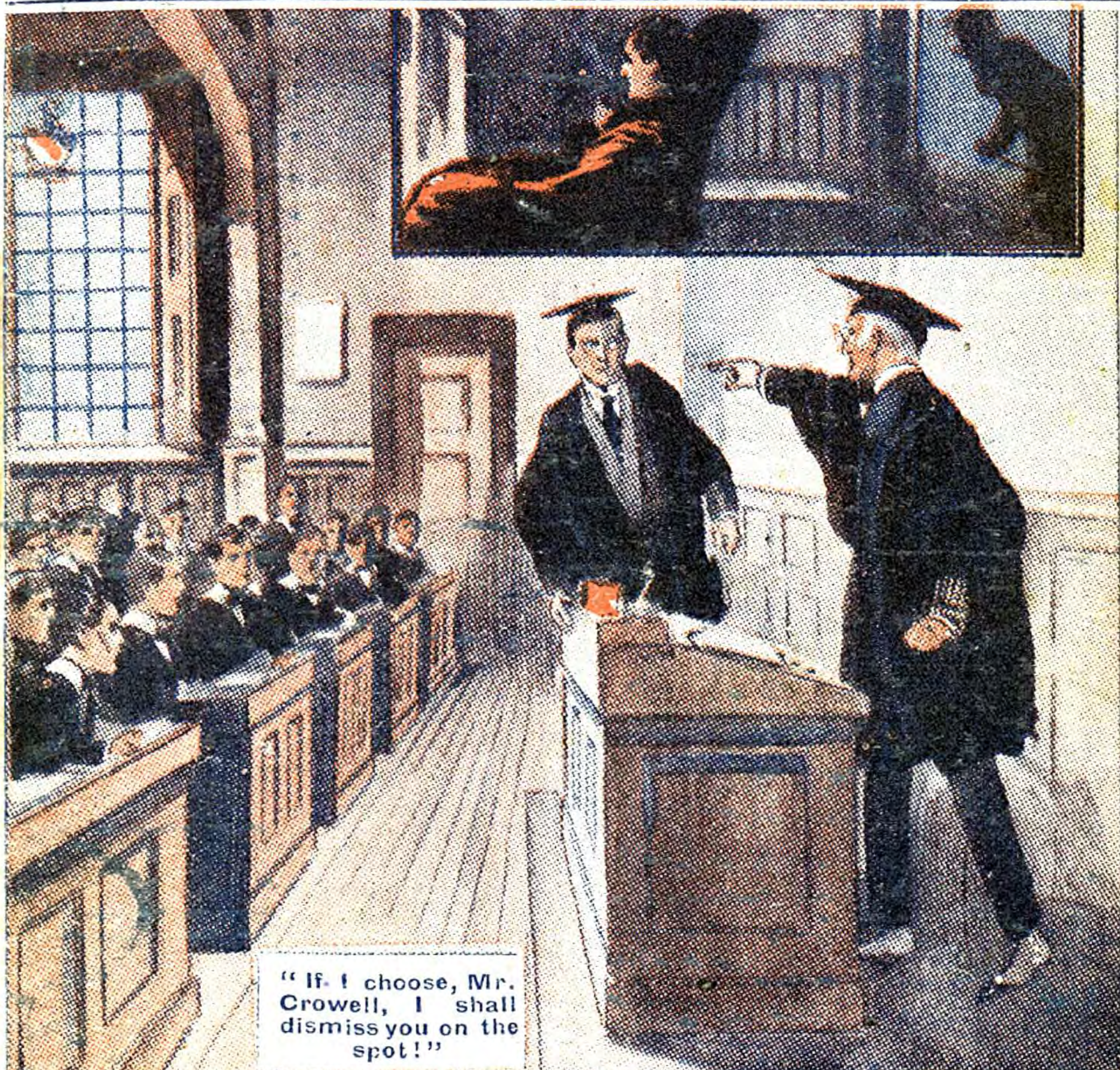
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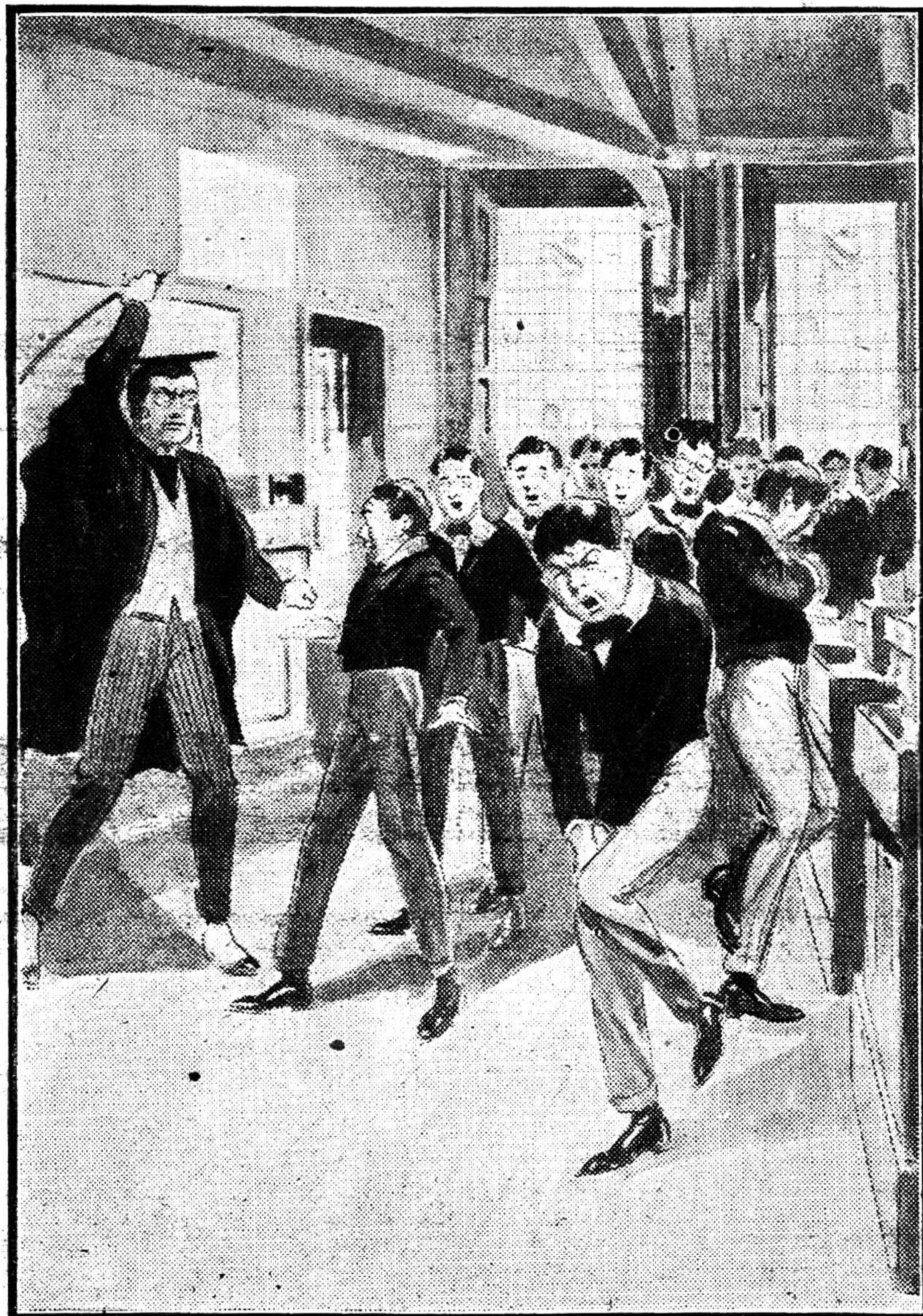
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December 3, 1921.



"If I choose, Mr. Crowell, I shall dismiss you on the spot!"

SHUNNED BY HIS SCHOOLBOYS



Armstrong, Griffith and Owen Major were not made of such stuff. They fairly howled—and received double rations.



SHUNNED BY HIS SCHOOLBOYS

A Splendid Long Complete Story of School Life and Detective Adventure at St. Frank's College, introducing **NELSON LEE, NIPPER**, and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "The Fifth at St. Frank's," "The Secret of the Box-room," "The Head's Other Self," and many other Stirring Tales.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER I.

AFRAID OF THE HEAD!

"CAVE!"
 "He's coming!"
 "Look out!"

Owen major, Hubbard, Armstrong, and one or two more of the lesser lights of the Remove at St. Frank's scuttled hastily out of sight behind the gymnasium. They ran like rabbits, and concealed themselves hastily.

One might have imagined that a demon was approaching.

An expression very much like fear could be seen in the eyes of two or three of the juniors. They watched cautiously and carefully from their cover. And the reason for their hasty retreat was not so terrible looking, after all.

In fact, he was no less a person than Dr. Malcolm Stafford, the Headmaster of St. Frank's!

The Head was striding sedately along, crossing the Triangle. His gown was waving in the breeze, and his mortar-board was planted firmly upon his head. He was dignified, serious, and supremely scholastic.

Dr. Stafford had a kindly face — and, indeed, he had always possessed a reputation



for being considerate, just, and absolutely fair. During the past week, however, that reputation had been utterly lost.

For it was from the Head that these juniors had scuttled.

Dr. Stafford himself had not failed to notice the action of the boys. He merely compressed his lips, and walked on. He turned the angle of the gymnasium, and came within sight of De Valerie, the Hon. Douglas Singleton, Dick Goodwin, and Tom Burton, who were chatting in a group.

They looked up as he approached.

"Look out!" muttered De Valerie. "Better shift!"

They were not so hasty as the other juniors. But their concerted movement towards the playing-fields was plainly obvious and apparent. They had shifted in order to avoid coming in close contact with the Headmaster.

Again Dr. Stafford saw this, and he compressed his lips even tighter.

"They shun me!" he muttered bitterly. "Good gracious! What a terrible state of things! What an appalling pass! My own boys turn from me, and make off so that I shall not come in contact with them!"

The Head was under no delusion regarding the matter. And twice more before he reached his own door did he experience the same thing. Chambers and Bryant, of the Fifth, were crossing the Triangle. As soon as they saw the Head, they deliberately altered their direction.

A little further on a group of fags were larking about with a tennis ball. The instant they saw the Head they turned with a chorus of squeals, and raced like a crowd of mice into the Ancient House.

"Terrible!" murmured the Head. "Far, far worse than I thought!"

He entered his doorway, and made his way with flagging footsteps to his study. He reached that apartment, sank down into his favourite easy-chair, and absently poked the fire.

A more kindly man than Dr. Stafford it would be impossible to find. Why, therefore, were all the boys shunning him as though he were the plague? Why did they exhibit fear when he came anywhere near them?

In the lower school the first question asked that morning had been "How is

he to-day?" And very soon it had been found that he—the Head—was his normal self. He was the Head that St. Frank's had known for many years.

But the boys had every reason to ask this question.

"Goodness knows how long we shall live in peace," remarked Reginald Pitt, as he lounged against the Ancient House steps. "I'll guarantee we don't go through to-day without some trouble of some sort. I've got a feeling in my bones that there'll be ructions."

It was nearly time for morning lessons. Breakfast, of course, was over, and the fellows were strolling about the Triangle, or chatting in groups, waiting for the bell to sound. The air was crisp and clear, and the sun was shining with a certain watery brilliance. There had been rain the previous day, and it was quite probable that some more would shortly arrive.

"Well, there's no need to anticipate trouble before it actually arrives," said Jack Grey. "I wonder what the dickens happened to the Head the day before yesterday? He seemed to go raving mad for the time being. I shall never forget the way he came into the common-room the other night."

"That was nothing compared to the other affair," said Pitt. "The way he thrashed that poor horse was awful, and then to kick Bryant like that! My only hat! It's a wonder the fellows calmed down at all. I was expecting a giddy revolution on the spot."

"Well, we couldn't very well jib against the Head," said Grey. "That's the trouble. The whole position is a jolly difficult one, and we're simply waiting to see what will happen next."

And this, as a matter of fact, was what the whole school was doing. Everybody had an idea that the present peace would not go on for long. The Head would assuredly have another outburst soon.

The facts were most unaccountable and singular. Until recently, the Headmaster had never shown any sign of fierce temper. He had become angry, occasionally, of course—but even in his anger he had been just and fair.

And then, suddenly, had come the change.

Poor old Tommy Watson had been the victim of the Headmaster's rage—this new kind of rage which cast fear into

everybody who saw it. Without any just cause, the Head had flogged Tommy Watson until the junior was a mass of ugly weals. Even now, Tommy could still feel the effects.

The juniors, as a whole, had not absolutely believed Watson's statement regarding the Head's demoniacal fury. But then, the very same evening, Dr. Stafford had descended upon the common-room, and behaved like a wild thing. He had even struck Morrow, of the Sixth, and his fury had been awful to behold.

This exhibition, which had caused consternation throughout the school, had been followed the next morning by a public statement by the Head himself. He explained to the whole school that he had suffered from some evil influence over which he had no control—and the school had responded nobly, and had cheered him.

Then had come another grave incident—another terrible outburst of tyranny and violent temper. But it was more than temper—the Head seemed to have lost his own personality entirely, and assumed that of a savage. He was cruel, heartless, and merciless.

In the view of scores of fellows he had beaten a horse until the poor animal bolted. One of the seniors was knocked down in the rush, the Head's trap was wrecked, and the Head himself thrown out. Unharmed by this mishap, Dr. Stafford had picked himself up, almost foaming at the mouth with blind rage.

And this rage he had vented upon the fallen senior, kicking him in the most brutal manner possible. Those who had witnessed the whole scene were never likely to forget it.

And, afterwards, the Head had retired to his study, and nothing more had been seen of him until this morning. And now, as he had found out for himself, he was shunned and avoided.

Could it be wondered at?

"I can't help thinking there's something fishy about it," I remarked, as I chatted with Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West, in Study C. "The Head would never act as he did of his own accord."

"But he must have done," said Watson. "He wasn't following somebody else's orders, I suppose?"

"It's very strange," I said thoughtfully. "Between you and me and the

coal-scuttle, I've got an idea in the back of my napper that Mr. Trenton has got something to do with the Head's queer behaviour."

My chums stared.

"Mr. Trenton?" repeated Watson blankly.

"Yes."

"Begad!" ejaculated Sir Montie. "But, dear old boy, that is utterly ridiculous! You are frightfully off-side—you are really! How could our new science master be connected with the Head's fits of temper?"

"I don't know how—that's what I want to find out," I replied. "Of course, this sounds silly to you—"

"It does!" agreed Tommy Watson bluntly.

"At the same time, there may be something in it," I went on. "Mr. Trenton is a very pleasant chap—genial, free-and-easy, and always smiling. He's immensely popular with the chaps."

"And deserves to be," declared Watson. "I like him very much."

"Dear old fellow, have you anythin' against him?" asked Montie.

"Well, no, not exactly—nothing that I can name, anyhow," I admitted. "But, in spite of myself, I don't trust the chap."

"Why not?"

"He always strikes me as being insincere," I said. "I don't know why, but I feel uncomfortable when he's near by. And if you care to think over the past week or two, you will remember that the Head had his first outbreak of rage only a day or two after Mr. Trenton arrived. Before that man came to St. Frank's, the Head was as gentle as a mouse."

Sir Montie shook his head.

"Merely coincidence, dear old boy," he observed.

"Possibly—but possibly not," I said. "Anyhow, I'm going to keep my eye on Mr. Hugh Trenton. Then there was that affair of the silver disc. Remember? Handforth and Co. chased a man in the Triangle one night—and the stranger broke through a bush, and left a little silver disc behind. When Mr. Trenton saw it he turned pale and staggered back."

"Yes, and within an hour somebody broke in Study D. and pinched the disc from Handy's table," said Watson. "That was queer, I'll admit. But that's got nothing to do with the Head."

"It may not seem to have——"

"And there's another point," interrupted Watson. "Look here, has it struck you that there might be an impersonation dodge going on here?"

"A which?"

"Well, you know what I mean," said Tommy. "The Head looks like another man when he's in this terrific rage. Do you think it possible that he might be the victim of a plot?"

"What kind of a plot?"

"I've been wondering if there's another man pretending to be the Head," said Watson eagerly. "See? He gets dressed in the Head's clothes and then goes about creating the merry dickens——"

"My dear ass, you're talking out of your hat!" I interrupted. "Didn't the Head publicly state that he was responsible? Hasn't he had talks with Mr. Lee? Do you think the gov'nor would be deceived by an impostor? No, not likely! It's the Head all right, and he's either going mad or bad—one or the other. Whichever it is, he's not fully to blame."

Watson shook his head.

"I don't agree," he said. "And the sooner he leaves St. Frank's the better. Why, the governors will be obliged to kick him out if he gets up to any more of his tricks."

"It's all very well to talk about kicking a Headmaster out," I said. "He's not a boot-boy, or a stable-hand. He's the Head—the chief of the whole school. He can't be hurled out into the cold world at a moment's notice."

"He can be—if he's guilty of rotten conduct," said Tommy Watson. "And if he isn't, and these sort of things go on—well, the whole giddy school will rise in revolt against him."

"That's possible, of course," I agreed. "But, somehow I'm rather on the Head's side."

"You're on his side, my dear fellow?" asked Sir Montie mildly.

"Yes, I am."

"You approve of the way he lammed into me?" asked Watson, with a glare.

"Well, no——"

"But you said——"

"My dear chap, why don't you let me explain?" I said. "I'm on the Head's side in this way—I sympathise with him because I believe that he is good, kindly, and as considerate as ever.

When he gets into one of those black rages he's beyond his own control. Do you catch what I mean? He probably knows that he's giving way and acting in a beastly manner—but he sort of can't help himself."

"That's no excuse!" grunted Watson. "Why, any blessed murderer could put up a defence like that when he was being tried! Plenty of murders are committed in a fit of rage—but that doesn't make the murderer innocent."

"You don't seem to understand what I'm driving at," I said. "The Head doesn't get into these rages naturally—they're a new form of mania with him. And it's quite likely that some hidden influence is at work. Something we can't see—something which even the Head himself is unable to fight. Now, if that really is the case, it's hardly fair to blame him. He ought, in fact, to receive our sympathy, and I'm not doing any condemning until I know a bit more of the truth."

Sir Montie adjusted his pince-nez.

"Dear old boy, you are getting beyond me," he said. "I simply know that the Head has recently been givin' way to shockin' fits of temper. If I get in a temper I don't blame anybody else for it, and if I do anything frightfully bad at such a time—well, it's up to me to accept the consequences."

"Hear, hear!" said Tommy Watson.

"Well, of course, that's logic," I replied. "Upon the same line of reasoning, the Head ought to be made to accept the consequences of his own actions. In any case, we sha'n't do any good by arguing the point. We'll just let matters stand, and see how they progress."

Very soon afterwards we all trooped into the Remove Form room, for morning lessons were about to begin. There was still an air of rather subdued excitement about—for the one topic of conversation in the whole school was the recent extraordinary behaviour of Dr. Stafford.

Lessons progressed smoothly for a while. Mr. Crowell, of course, made no reference to the subject which had caused such general comment. Among the masters the whole thing was tabooed, except between themselves.

And then, somewhere about the middle of the morning, the door of the Form room was thrust open. I glanced

up, stared, and then felt my heart beat a little more rapidly than usual.

The newcomer was the Head.

And he was different. His hair was untidy, a cold, cruel light gleamed in his eyes, and in his right hand he held a birch.

Evidently some trouble was brewing.

CHAPTER II.

FRIGHTFULNESS!



MR. CROWELL looked up with a start, adjusted his spectacles, and was visibly agitated. He, too, could see that Dr. Stafford was different.

With one accord every junior in the room rose to his feet, and stood respectfully at attention. This, of course, was the regular custom at St. Frank's. No matter what Form room the Head entered, every boy at once rose.

"We're in for something, by the look of it!" murmured Handforth.

"Shush, you ass!"

Mr. Crowell rapped his desk.

"Silence!" he commanded. "Er—I am glad to see you, sir," he added, turning to the Head. "Is—is there anything—"

"Thank you, Mr. Crowell, but you will please speak when I address you!" interrupted the Head coldly. "H'm! So this is what goes on during the morning—eh? I must tell you frankly, Mr. Crowell, that I am disgusted."

The Form-master raised his eyebrows.

"Really sir—"

"The boys are untidy, far from clean, and the whole Formroom has the appearance of disorderliness and slovenliness which is positively detestable to me!" proceeded Dr. Stafford harshly. "I must see an improvement upon this, Mr. Crowell. Within the next few days I shall expect to find a very different order of things in this class room. I am surprised, sir, that you can be content to sit in an apartment so disgustingly untidy!"

Mr. Crowell tried to speak, but only gulped.

Then he looked round the Formroom, vainly seeking for justification from the Head's remarks. There was none. As a matter of fact, Mr. Crowell took a particular pride in keeping the Form-

room tidy and neat. The juniors were punished if they were slovenly in any way.

More than once Mr. Crowell had expressed regret that the distempered walls were shabby, that the paintwork was old—and that, in fact, the whole room badly needed redecorating. Mr. Crowell could not be blamed for the walls being grimy.

"I am sorry, sir," he said quietly, at length. "I was not aware that this Form room compared badly with any of the others—"

"That is enough!" shouted the Head.

"Really, Dr. Stafford—"

"When I command silence, Mr. Crowell, silence I shall have!" thundered Dr. Stafford. "Please understand that I will accept no impertinence from you!"

Mr. Crowell staggered.

"Im-impertinence!" he gasped. "I—I am amazed—"

"Further, I require you to be silent when I order silence!" interrupted the Head. "It is not my wish to have a quarrel with you, Mr. Crowell, but I can tell you frankly that there will be a serious disagreement between us unless you immediately bow to my commands."

Mr. Crowell, red in the face, and nearly choking with indignation, stood silent. He had never been addressed in this manner before. The Head, in fact, had always treated his under-masters as equals, and had never made the slightest attempt to browbeat or bully them.

"I must protest against this treatment, Dr. Stafford!" said Mr. Crowell coldly.

"What!"

The Head barked out the word so suddenly that the Form-master jumped.

"I—I must protest!" repeated Mr. Crowell shakily. "I—I am not in a position of a stable-boy or a footman, sir. It is most distasteful to me to be addressed in such a manner—"

"Distasteful!" shouted Dr. Stafford.

"Oh, indeed! And who are you, pray? Who are you, Mr. Crowell, to state your likes and dislikes? A Form-master—a man who is by no means indispensable to the school, and who could be replaced without the slightest difficulty. Please have no misapprehension upon that point, Mr. Crowell. Further, if you will persist in being impudent, I shall be compelled to adopt drastic measures."

"My only hat!" muttered Jack Grey. And his amazed exclamation was merely an indication of the whole attitude of the Remove. Every boy there was astounded to hear this squabble between the Headmaster and Mr. Crowell. He was the last Form-master at St. Frank's who deserved such harsh treatment. For Mr. Crowell was conscientious, thoughtful, and always applied himself to his work keenly and assiduously.

"If I have displeased you in any way, sir, I shall have no hesitation about handing in my resignation," said Mr. Crowell stiffly. "In any case, it would be far better, I think, to discuss such intimate matters as these in private, and not before the whole class——"

"You appear to think you are a person of considerable importance, Mr. Crowell," said the Head, with acid contempt in his voice. "Importance! Dear me! What an absurd idea! With regard to your resignation, you surely do not think I should wait to receive such a paltry document? If I choose, Mr. Crowell, I shall dismiss you on the spot!"

"Upon my soul!" panted Mr. Crowell. "This is too much, sir——"

"Hear, hear!" shouted a number of juniors.

"Silence!" roared the Head, twirling round.

He glared at the Remove fiercely. There was something a little different about the Head to-day. He was not himself, certainly. That kindly, benevolent look had vanished from his face. His features had become drawn and hard; his eyes shone coldly and cruelly. Every trace of goodness had left him. And there only remained the well-known, easily recognisable features. The man who faced the Remove at that moment was undoubtedly Dr. Malcolm Stafford—but his own personality had vanished, and another had taken its place.

And the difference in him was obvious. On the previous occasions when he had "gone queer"—as some of the fellows put it—he had been in a fit of blind rage. But this time he appeared to be perfectly cool and calm. It was not rage which possessed him, but an evil kind of brutality. It was written on every line of his face—harsh, relentless cruelty.

Personally, I was somewhat staggered

to see it. Ever since the Head had entered the Formroom I had watched him closely, keenly. Tommy Watson's wild suggestion that some other man was impersonating Dr. Stafford, occurred to me. And I smiled grimly to myself as I realised how impossible it was.

There was no case of impersonation here. This man was Dr. Stafford himself—beyond the shadow of a doubt. But the spirit was not that of our beloved Head. That was the queer part of it—the extraordinary, astounding puzzle. And I even found it difficult to make myself believe that the Head was not responsible for his present actions.

"Who has dared to interrupt me?" demanded the Head gratingly. "Every boy who spoke just now will come forward and stand before me!"

Not a boy moved.

"Oh! So you defy me—eh?" rapped out the Head. "I expected something of the kind. Very well. I can see that it will be necessary to adopt somewhat sterner measures. Nipper!"

I came forward at once.

"You, I believe, occupy the position of captain of this Form?" asked the Head, glaring at me ferociously.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know who those boys are?"

"I prefer not to say, sir," I replied.

"Come, come! That answer will not satisfy me!" snapped the Head. "What you prefer, and what you do not prefer are of no consequences, Nipper. You have, in fact, admitted by your very words that you can name the boys who shouted out."

"I am sorry, sir, but I couldn't possibly tell you their names," I replied quietly. "Quite a number of fellows called out, I believe, and from every corner of the room. I couldn't possibly know them all."

"Do you know any of them?"

"Well, it's hardly fair——"

"Do you know any of them?" thundered the Head, shaking me fiercely.

"Yes, sir!" I replied.

"Then tell me their names!"

"No, I can't, sir!" I said hotly.

"Good old Nipper!" shouted several juniors.

The Head went purple with fury for a second. He glared round the room, he clenched his fists, and he breathed hard.

Then, with an effort, he regained control of himself, and gave his full attention to me.

"I am making discoveries!" he said harshly. "I never imagined that such insubordination and insolence existed among the junior Forms. I have commanded you to tell me the names of the boys who interrupted me, and you have refused. Unless you reconsider your decision within ten seconds, Nipper, I shall thrash you!"

There was a tense silence.

"The ten seconds have gone, sir!" I said quietly.

"Upon my soul!" shouted the Head.

"Oh!" he said, his voice cutting like a knife. "So you are the culprits? You are the boys who dared to——"

"We didn't do anything wrong, sir!" said Handforth boldly. "We only reckoned that you were going a bit too far with Mr. Crowell——"

"Silence, boy!" roared Dr. Stafford. "Good heavens! What are things coming to? You—you, a junior school-boy, dare to criticise my actions and my words? You reckoned that I was going too far with Mr. Crowell? How—how dare you? How dare you have the unexampled audacity to have any opinion whatever on the subject?"



Handforth stalked away, fondly imagining that every other fellow in the Remove would follow him.

"You—you dare to add to your impertinence! We will see, Nipper—we will see!"

He swished his birch suggestively.

"Hold on, sir!" said Handforth grimly. "We're not going to stand by and see you lam into Nipper when he's done nothing! I'm one of the boys who interrupted you a little while ago."

"And I'm another, sir!" sang out Pitt.

"And I!" said Grey.

"Here, too, sir!"

Over a dozen fellows held up their hands. They were certainly not going to see me birched because I wouldn't give their names away. The Head released me at once, and eyed the juniors from beneath lowering brows.

"Dash it all, sir, we ain't blocks of wood!" said Handforth.

It was quite characteristic of the leader of Study D to argue the matter out—even with the Head. Any other junior, endowed with an ounce of common-sense would have remained meekly silent, whatever his thoughts. But Handforth was not like that. If he had been facing the whole board of governors, he would have had his say.

"What—what is that?" demanded the Head harshly. "Blocks of wood? And since when has it been taught in this school to make use of such a detestable expression as 'ain't'? For that gross coarseness, Handforth, you will write me five hundred lines, and each line will consist of these words—'there is no such word in the English language as

'ain't.' I shall require those lines by seven o'clock this evening."

"But—but——"

"Silence!" interrupted the Head. "And now, with regard to the other matter, I have a few words to say to you. Let me tell you, Handforth, that you are not allowed to have any opinion at all regarding my actions. Whatever I choose to do, I shall do without——"

"It's not only my opinion, sir, but the opinion of the whole Remove," broke in Handforth stoutly. "Every fellow here reckons that you went a bit too far with Mr. Crowell. He's the best Form-master at St. Frank's, and it's not fair to say that we're a slovenly lot, and—and all the rest of it!"

"Oh, the hopeless ass!" groaned Church.

"He'll be skinned alive for that!" breathed McClure.

Dr. Stafford, however did not fly into a rage as everybody expected. He merely looked at Handforth with the expression in his eyes becoming somewhat grimmer. Then he turned to the class.

"Tell me, boys, is Handforth correct?" he asked sharply. "Is he correct when he states that the Remove, as a whole, disapproves of my little battle of words with Mr. Crowell?"

"Yes, sir!" shouted the Remove, in one solid voice.

And every hand was raised—even Fullwood and Co. joined in.

"That will do, boys—that will do!" said the Head. "So now we have got to the rock bottom truth. We have here an entire Form which disapproves of its Headmaster's actions. And we have here, I may add, an entire Form which is going to pay very dearly for its display of gross insubordination."

There was a silence.

"Nipper—Handforth, you may go back to your seats," went on the Head. "I shall not punish you individually. It is quite apparent that every boy in this room is equally guilty. Therefore, you shall all suffer the same."

"Pardon me, sir, but do you not think——" began Mr. Crowell.

"What I think, sir, is my own concern, and I have not asked for any interruption!" snapped Dr. Stafford curtly. "My eyes have been opened this morning in a way that has appalled me. This Form is unruly, insubordinate, and its general manners are

little removed from the manners of a set of young hooligans!"

"Oh!" said the Remove.

"And, as a punishment, every boy here will remain in the classroom until eight o'clock this evening!" exclaimed the Head, with a certain ghoulis relish. "Understand—until eight o'clock this evening. Perhaps that will cool your ardour!"

The Remove was somewhat surprised—and relieved. The punishment was by no means as harsh as they had been anticipating.

"Since you have displeased me, Mr. Crowell, I must insist upon you remaining with the boys the whole of the time," went on Dr. Stafford curtly. "You quite understand the nature of this punishment, I believe?"

"I think so, sir," said the Form-master. "I am to bring the boys into the Formroom after tea, and detain them until eight o'clock."

"No, no, no!" shouted the Head impatiently. "Good gracious! What on earth put such an absurd idea into your head, Mr. Crowell? Have you no wits? Are you deaf? Did you not hear the nature of my command?"

"I understood you to say that the boys were to remain, detained, until eight o'clock this evening," exclaimed Mr. Crowell, who was rather confused and bewildered. "Surely that is what you said, sir?"

"Precisely!" said the Head. "And I meant it—literally. You realise what that means? The boys and yourself are not to leave this apartment, under any circumstances, until eight o'clock to-night."

Mr. Crowell started back.

"But—but dinner—tea——" he began.

"There will be no dinner for the boys in this classroom!" rapped out the Head. "Neither will there be any tea. It is now—let me see—just about eleven o'clock. In other words, the Remove is detained within this apartment for the period of nine hours."

"What!" gasped Fatty Little, aghast.

"You may well look startled!" said the Head, with a smile of cruel pleasure. "Possibly you did not understand the nature of my command? But you surely understand it now. Until the hour of eight o'clock to-night, no boy will leave this room. Lessons will con-

tinue uninterruptedly throughout the morning, afternoon, and evening. There will be no dinner and no tea. And let me say at once that any boy who dares to disobey will be instantly expelled from the school."

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Detained for nine hours!"

"No dinner!" moaned Fatty. "I shall be dead before eight!"

"My only hat!"

Mr. Crowell was positively panting with excitement.

"Dr. Stafford, this—this is surely a joke?" he panted breathlessly. "Under no circumstances can you intend to enforce this—this impossible detention. Consider, sir—consider what it means! It will be a type of refined cruelty to keep the boys here for so long—literally starving them—"

"It will do them good!" interrupted the Head harshly. "And we will not discuss the matter any further, Mr. Crowell. I will simply say this, however. It will depend upon how this Form behaves itself whether any supper will be allowed to-night. If I receive a bad report, the whole Remove will be sent to bed the instant it is released."

And the Head turned on his heel without another word, passed out of the classroom and slammed the door behind him.

CHAPTER III.

NOTHING DOING!



"WELL, I'm jiggered!"

Handforth looked round somewhat dazedly as he uttered the words.

"Detained until eight o'clock," he went on. "No dinner, no tea! I—I've never heard anything like it in all my giddy natural!"

"It—it's awful!" said Church.

"We—we can't do it!" howled Fatty Little. "I—I'm feeling faint already! I was wondering how I could last until dinner-time. I can't go through the afternoon and evening without—"

"Oh, dry up!" interrupted Pitt.

"It wouldn't do you any harm to starve for a couple of days, Fatty. You're like a camel—you carry about a week's supply on board always."

"Why, you ass, I'm empty!" roared Fatty.

"Boys, boys!" protested Mr. Crowell sharply. "Please remember that you are in the Formroom. I must call for silence at once. This will never do; I cannot allow you to shout in such a manner."

The Remove settled itself down, and became fairly quiet.

"Perhaps it would not be wise for me to discuss Dr. Stafford's recent visit," went on Mr. Crowell quietly. "I can only say, boys, that I am very amazed, and I can hardly believe that the Headmaster is in his usual state of health."

"You mean he's going dotty, sir?" asked Handforth bluntly.

"Ahem! I did not use such an expression as that, my boy," said Mr. Crowell. "So far as I can see, Dr. Stafford was irritated and annoyed, and the punishment he has inflicted is not only severe, but quite unprecedented in the history of the school. Since it is not within my power to make any change, it would be quite idle to discuss the subject."

And Mr. Crowell, with bowed head, looked down at his papers. The Form-master, in fact, was feeling humbled and humiliated. He had received unheard-of treatment from the Head. Indeed, if Dr. Stafford had continued in the same strain a minute longer, Mr. Crowell would have walked straight out of the room. The Form-master was rather glad now that he had retained full control of himself.

"Well, my beauty, what have you got to say?" muttered Watson, nudging me.

"Yes, dear old boy, we shall be delighted to hear your opinion—we shall, really!" said Sir Montie softly. "Do you sympathise with the Head now?"

I had expected something like this.

"In a way—yes," I replied calmly.

"What!"

"I don't believe he really means it," I continued. "He was serious enough at the time, but something tells me that it wasn't Dr. Stafford who was acting in that way. It was another personality altogether."

"Oh, rot!" growled Tommy.

"You're dotty!"

Mr. Crowell was still bending over his papers. He took no notice of the low

chatter which went on freely all over the classroom. Under the circumstances, Mr. Crowell knew that it would have been useless to command silence. The juniors simply had to deliver themselves of their pent-up feelings.

"Are we going to stand it?" demanded Handforth fiercely. "That's what I want to know."

"What else can we do?" asked Church.

"Well, we could ignore it, and all walk out in a bunch when morning lessons are over," said Handforth. "That would show the Head that we ain't standing any of his beastly rot!"

"Oh, dry up!" muttered McClure. "Do you think we can defy the Head like that? He's not a Form-master or a perfect. He's the Headmaster of St. Frank's; his giddy word is law!"

"Yes, and if we walked out, as you suggest, Handy, a dozen of us would get the sack," added Church. "We can't do anything. We've simply got to stick it, and all the talking in the world won't make any difference."

Handforth glared.

"You've got no spirit!" he said witheringly. "You've got no backbone! The Head couldn't sack the lot of us, and if he tried it on half a dozen or so, the rest would go on strike or something. The whole school would back us up, I tell you. I vote we clear out at half-past-twelve, as usual."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Bob Christine, who was just behind.

"We're with you, Handy!" added Pitt.

"It's all very well to talk like that," said Talmadge, "but we shall look a bit blue if the Head sacks a dozen of us. It's one thing to jaw about striking, and another thing to do it."

"Well, I'm game!" said Handforth stubbornly. "I don't mind risking——"

Rap, rap!

"Now, boys, we really must return to our work," said Mr. Crowell, striking his ruler sharply on the desk. "This won't do at all. Dear me! Go back to your place at once, Handforth! You, too, Burton. And you, Singleton. Come, come, we must make an alteration!"

Mr. Crowell was almost himself again. His face was a trifle pale, perhaps, and there was a sad, hurt look in his eyes. But the way in which the

Remove had taken his part had plainly told him that the boys were loyal, and he was not so sharp as he might have been.

The juniors settled down—or pretended to. But Handforth had an obstinate set about his jaw.

"What are we going to do about it, sir?" he asked bluntly.

"Eh? Oh, I don't know, Handforth!" said Mr. Crowell. "It is quite useless to discuss the matter now——"

"Why is it, sir?" interrupted the leader of Study D. "It's got to be talked about some time, hasn't it? What about dinner? Does the Head really think that we're going hungry?"

"Yes, what about dinner, sir?" asked Fatty Little anxiously.

Mr. Crowell made a helpless gesture.

"Really, boys, I do not know what to say!" he exclaimed, with a worried look in his eyes. "Perhaps Dr. Stafford will be himself again before dinner-time. It is most probably that he will regret his decision, and cancel the extraordinary punishment. We must wait and see."

"But supposing he doesn't, sir?" persisted Handforth.

"You must not keep bothering me, my boy," said Mr. Crowell, frowning. "It's only just after eleven, and we must continue our lessons."

"Will you stay in with us all the time, sir?" asked Pitt.

Mr. Crowell's jaw became firm.

"No, Pitt, I shall not," he replied grimly. "Most decidedly I shall not submit to such treatment! But I have told you before that we must not waste any further time. Attend to your lessons at once!"

And, reluctantly, the juniors were compelled to think of work. The Form-master would not allow any more talk. The work was, however, more or less of a pretence, for not one of the fellows could keep his mind on the lesson.

I could not help being slightly amused at the anxious, half-scared expressions on some of the faces. The prospect of going without food until eight o'clock at night seemed to frighten the juniors stiff.

Personally, I was not troubled by the slightest heart-tremor. Sometimes, when working on an intricate detective case with Nelson Lee, I had not thought of

food for sixteen or twenty hours on a stretch. It would be no particular hardship to me to carry on until night-time.

I was immensely curious to see how this strange matter would develop. Surely the Head would not actually stick to his guns? He had passed that decree in the heat of the moment, but due reflection in his own study would surely permit him to see the folly of pursuing such a course.

Indeed, I half-expected to see Dr. Stafford appear towards twelve-thirty—the time we should have been released. But the half-hour struck, and nobody came near the Formroom. Mr. Crowell sat at his desk, worried and jumpy.

"You may put your books away, boys," he said, looking up.

"May we—we go out, sir?" asked Fatty eagerly.

"No, Little, you may not," replied the Form-master. "You know perfectly well that Dr. Stafford has detained the whole class. I am sorry, boys—I feel for you keenly—but, unfortunately, I am unable to help you."

"The fags are out in the Triangle already!" growled Hubbard, from the window.

"I should not look out, if I were you, Hubbard," said Mr. Crowell. "Strictly speaking, I ought to keep you at work—for that is what Dr. Stafford ordered. But I cannot bring myself to the point of carrying this farce to such a length. You may talk freely, but please do not raise your voices. And keep your places. We will resume work proper at two-thirty."

"Oh, by gravy!" groaned Fatty. "That means no dinner. We shall starve!"

"Mr. Crowell's a sport," murmured Pitt. "He's making it as easy as possible for us; he can't do more. If he let us out, and the Head knew that he was responsible, he would get the bullet straight away."

"Of course he would," I said. "He's a brick!"

Mr. Crowell paced up and down for a few minutes, thinking deeply. The position was a galling one for him. He was detained with the class! He was kept in, just as though he had been a junior himself! It was humiliating and—and— Well, it was impossible!

Mr. Crowell was not standing it. He could not. His dignity would not allow him to.

"Listen, boys," he said suddenly.

There was silence at once, and we all looked at Mr. Crowell.

"I am going out now, and I look to you to remain in the Formroom," he said quietly. "Indeed, it will be bad for you if you take your leave, for you will have to answer to Dr. Stafford. What you do is, strictly speaking, your own concern. I strongly advise you to obey the Head's command. It would grieve me terribly to see several of you expelled."

"Do you think it would really come to that, sir?" asked Grey.

"I do," replied Mr. Crowell. "Having taken up this position, the Head cannot very well depart from it. So let me again urge you to remain within this apartment. I am going straight to Mr. Nelson Lee."

"Hurrah!" yelled several juniors.

"Mr. Lee is our Housemaster, and it is right that he should know of this," went on Mr. Crowell. "I will persuade him to interview Dr. Stafford at once, although I fancy that Mr. Lee will need no persuasion. It is possible that, between us, we may effect your release from this detention almost at once."

"Oh, good!"

"We wish you luck, sir!"

"Rather!"

Mr. Crowell nodded and passed out of the Formroom, closing the door after him. He had taken the only course possible. He simply could not submit to remaining a prisoner. Action of some sort was vital.

The instant the door closed the juniors left their places and crowded round in bunches. Some of them talked about leaving the classroom, but none of the fellows seemed inclined to lead the way.

And in the middle of the excited talk the door opened. Chambers and Phillips and Bryant, of the Fifth, looked in. They were somewhat excited, it seemed, and they whistled as they surveyed us.

"Hallo!" said Chambers. "You, too!"

"What do you mean—'we, too'?" I asked, pushing forward.

"Why, don't you know?" said Phillips. "The Head's been going the

pace this morning. Came into the Fifth Formroom and kicked up old Harry."

"What!"

"Tell us about it!"

"What did he do, Philly?"

The Removites crowded round excitedly.

"Oh, we've been having verbal earthquakes, and things of that sort!" explained Chambers, grinning. "Old Pagett got it in the neck properly from the Head—not that he didn't deserve it, the old reprobate! He's been wanting something of this kind for years. We hugged ourselves when the Head threatened to kick Pagett out of St. Frank's."

The juniors were thrilled by this news. The Remove was not alone! Mr. Pagett, the master of the Fifth, had evidently been in trouble, too! He was a sour-tempered gentleman, and the Fifth would have shed no tears if their Form-master had left the school never to return. But there was no such luck.

"The Head came in here and kicked up the dust no end," said Handforth. "And he's detained the whole giddy Form until eight o'clock to-night! We've got to stick in here, without grub, until bed-time nearly!"

"What?" gasped Chambers. "Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed Phillips and Bryant.

The Remove glared.

"Funny, isn't it?" asked De Valerie tartly.

"Rather!" grinned Chambers. "Why, you young fatheads, you ain't taking any notice of that rot, are you? The Head ordered us to go without dinner—to stay in our Formroom until tea-time. The same punishment as you've got, only yours is more so. Do you think we're taking any notice?"

"Not likely!" said Phillips and Bryant.

The juniors looked at one another.

"Did he say the whole of the Fifth?"

"Yes."

"And are you the only chaps who've come out?"

"No, we're all out," replied Chambers. "We're not such asses as to take that kind of treatment lying down. The best thing you can do, my children, is to come out of this Formroom in a body. Only don't blame me if any-

thing happens. I expect I shall have quite enough trouble on my own shoulders."

"Yes, let's all clear out!" shouted Handforth.

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, good!" said Fatty Little. "I shall have time to go to the tuck-shop."

"Come on!"

There was a rush towards the doorway. Just two seconds of consideration would have led the juniors to remain, perhaps. But in the heat of the excitement the whole Remove swept out into the passage.

And after that, of course, it was too late.

The juniors had broken out. And Chambers was quite correct when he said that the Fifth had been detained also; but the seniors were not likely to receive such drastic punishment.

However, having broken detention, the only thing was to brazen it out. As Handforth explained, when it came to obeying such a ridiculous command—there was nothing doing!

Fatty Little did not know exactly how things were going, and he believed in making hay while the sun shone. So he spent every penny of his available cash in Mrs. Hake's tuck-shop. He stoked himself up well, so to speak, and carried a further supply about with him, to be consumed when there was available space.

The rest of the fellows lounged about the Triangle, trying to look careless and at ease. They were waiting for dinner. But, in spite of themselves, they were rather jumpy, and every time a master appeared they looked at him with nervous expressions.

"It's a good thing we didn't give old Crowell our promise not to shift out," I remarked. "In any case, it wouldn't have been much good for a few of us to stay behind. We're probably in for it now."

Tommy Watson nodded.

"Well, I don't care," he said. "The Head can't do much; he can't sack the whole Remove and the Fifth as well. There's safety in numbers."

Tregellis-West was about to add a remark of his own. He certainly said one word, but it was full of expressive dismay. He had glanced at the Ancient House doorway, and now he was still looking in that direction.

"Begad!" he ejaculated.
Dr. Stafford had just emerged, and was now standing in the doorway looking out ferociously into the Triangle. And upon his face there was an expression of harsh, relentless fury.

CHAPTER IV.

SOMETHING DOING!



"TROUBLE," I remarked, "is about to arrive."
"In chunks!" said Tommy Watson.

The Head came out of the Ancient House doorway and stood at the top of the steps. One glance at him was sufficient to tell us all that he had not changed, except, perhaps, in the one aspect that he had gathered more fury together.

"Attention!" he shouted abruptly.

Instinctively, mechanically, every junior within hearing brought himself upright and stiff. The slightest word of the Head was always a command. Some of the fellows who were in the act of sneaking off came to a halt as they stood.

"Form up and collect in double file!" ordered the Head. "Yes, the Remove and the Fifth. Any boy who fails to obey me will be publicly flogged and expelled!"

"That's done it!" said Church huskily.

"I don't see why we should obey!" growled Handforth. "If all the other chaps would ignore him, it would be all right. I'm game, but it's no good me doing it alone. The only thing is to keep together."

"You ass!" muttered McClure. "We're helpless!"

Handforth glared at him.

"Are we?" he roared. "We'll jolly well see about that! Back up, Remove! Are we going to submit? No! Let's walk the other way! Come on; rally round! Our motto is—no tyranny!"

Handforth stalked away, fondly imagining that every other fellow in the Remove would follow him. Unfortunately he stalked alone.

"Oh, the hopeless duffer!" groaned Church.

The Head smiled evilly.



For this, as Lee knew, was a battle for his life.

"Take no notice of that insubordinate young rascal!" he shouted. "Come along, boys—form into double line! Handforth, stop at once! You hear me? Come here! Come here this instant!"

Handforth paused, hesitated—and was lost.

"Why, you—you rotters!" he gasped. "Ain't you going to rally round?"

"We can't defy the Head, you fat-head!" hissed Owen major.

Every fellow in the Remove, with the exception of about half a dozen, was in the Triangle at the time. They all formed into line, since there was really nothing else to be done. To talk about defying the Head was one thing—to actually defy the Head was another!

I should have been ready enough to follow in line with the rest of the Remove, whatever they did. But I was certainly not going to lead any revolt. This was no time for open rebellion. I knew perfectly well that no revolt could possibly be successful if it was started in a rush.

Failure was bound to come—dismal failure. For a school rebellion to be successful, careful planning was necessary. Much had to be done in advance—in secret. No army can hope to succeed if it goes into battle unprepared. And the Remove was certainly very unprepared just now!

There was not any doubt that the Head's strange actions were sewing the seed of revolt. But whether the seed would ever develop remained to be seen. To break out in open defiance of the Head just now was simply asking for trouble. Handforth had asked for it—loudly.

The Remove, nervous and agitated, stood in double file. The Fifth had followed suit. They were seniors, certainly, but when face to face with Dr. Stafford they had no defiance left in them. Only about half the Fifth was present, but they formed up meekly enough.

The Head looked round, and then waved his hand.

"Morrow, Wilson, Carlile," he shouted, "come here at once!"

The three perfects were all within sight. Morrow and Wilson had been chatting together, and were now looking on at the scene, and speculating what would happen. They started as their names were called.

"What, are we going to catch something, too?" said Wilson.

"Looks like it," murmured Morrow. "We'd better go."

They went, Carlile coming from another direction.

"You boys are all prefects—eh?" barked the Head. "Quite so! Search the school at once, and bring every member of the upper Fourth and the Fifth Forms to their classrooms at once. Go!"

The prefects went—words appeared to be unnecessary.

"Handforth!" rapped out Dr. Stafford.

The reckless Edward Oswald was still standing on his own, having failed to fall in line with the rest.

"Spe—speaking to me, sir?" he said, with an air of assumed ease.

"You know very well, Handforth, that I am speaking to you!" retorted the Head. "You will stand at attention for the moment! Ah, you could

not have appeared at a more opportune moment, Fenton!"

Fenton, of the Fifth, had just come out of the doorway.

"Anything wrong, sir?" he asked, looking round.

"There is a great deal wrong, Fenton," replied the Head harshly. "However, I am capable to dealing with such a situation. Kindly take charge of Handforth at once."

"Take charge of him, sir?"

"Exactly. Lock him in the punishment-room."

Handforth went a sickly colour.

"Pun—punishment-room!" he gasped.

"It may interest you to know, Handforth, that your recent act of defiance will cost you the full penalty," said the Head. "I am not the kind of man to make idle threats, as you are well aware. I told you in advance that any boy who defied me would not remain at St. Frank's."

"You—you don't mean that you're going to sack me, sir?" panted Handforth.

The Head rubbed his hands together gloatingly.

"This evening you will be flogged in the presence of the whole school," he replied. "Immediately afterwards, Handforth, you will be publicly expelled, and will leave these walls within the hour."

"But—but——"

"Silence!" thundered Dr. Stafford. "Not one word, Handforth. I have told you my decision. It is final!"

Handforth swayed slightly, and looked at Fenton in a haggard kind of way.

"Oh, my goodness!" he whispered hoarsely.

"Steady on! Keep a stiff upper lip!" muttered Fenton. "Sorry, kid, but you'll have to come. I've got to obey orders."

They went inside, the Head looking after them with a fierce glint in his eye. And all the other fellows in the Remove felt nervous and uneasy. Handforth was sacked! What was about to happen, then? Open defiance, it seemed, was utterly useless. It simply brought dire trouble for the defiant ones.

"Mark time!" shouted the Head sharply.

The juniors, flustered, hardly knew

what they were doing. Never before had anything of this nature occurred at St. Frank's. It was unheard-of for the Head to take personal command of a Form.

"Now, march straight into your classroom at once!" shouted Dr. Stafford. "If any boy dares to fall out, he will share the same fate as Handforth!"

Nobody fell out; the Remove Form-room was reached within a few minutes. The Fifth, at the same time, trooped into their own apartment. The stragglers were brought in a few minutes later by the prefects.

"Morrow, you will go into the Fifth Form classroom and remain there until I arrive," said the Head curtly. "If any boy is absent, I shall hold you responsible. If you desert your own post, expulsion will await you. Go!"

Morrow compressed his lips and went. "And now," went on the Head, "I will deal with you!"

He turned to the Remove, who were all standing in their places, looking nervous and uncomfortable. The Head was apparently enjoying the whole business. He took a kind of fiendish glee in witnessing the discomfiture of his victims.

"You will sit down!" he commanded. "Good! Now, I intend to say a few words before proceeding with the punishment. It was grossly insubordinate of this Form to leave the classroom after the strict instructions I had given. Mr. Crowell is largely to blame for the whole occurrence, and I may tell you at once that Mr. Crowell will leave the school at the end of this present month."

"Oh!" said the Remove. "I require no interruptions!" proceeded the Head. "I intend to make you bow to my will. While I am Headmaster of this school, no junior boy shall defy me. You were ordered to remain here until eight o'clock to-night. Yet, soon after my back was turned, you thought that you could ignore my orders and walk about as you pleased. I intend to show you the error of such ways. As a lesson to you, every boy will remain in this apartment until bedtime."

"Oh!"
 "But—but——"
 "Silence!" barked the Head. "Until

bedtime, I said, and until bedtime I meant! Any boy who utters one word will be soundly flogged. You will not leave this apartment until the bell for retiring rings to-night. And for the rest of this week you will all be confined within gates. Further, there will be extra lessons every evening from six-thirty until eight-thirty. I am determined to have complete and absolute submission from you!"

The Remove sat dumb, appalled by the severity of the sentence.

"That is better! I can see that you are realising who is master!" went on the Head harshly. "De Valerie, stand out here!"

De Valerie, who sat at the end of the front row, came forward.

"Hold out your hand!" commanded the Head.

The junior held it out.

Swish!

"Oh!" gasped De Valerie, taken aback.

"Again," said Dr. Stafford curtly.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

Cecil de Valerie received four stinging cuts—two on each hand. And the Head laid it on with all his strength. De Valerie was rather staggered—he had not been expecting anything of this kind. And he wondered why on earth he had been selected for this special punishment.

As it turned out, it wasn't special at all.

For the Head proceeded to take every boy in turn—and each one received four stinging slashes. In short, Dr. Stafford was caning the whole Remove! This punishment was in addition to the unheard-of detention.

Some of the fellows at the back congratulated themselves that they would come last. By the time the Head had reached them, he would have exhausted himself, and they would thus get off lightly. Unfortunately, however, Dr. Stafford was displaying quite unsuspected energy.

The last ten juniors were swished every bit as severely as the first ten. Certainly the Head was breathless, and was perspiring freely. But he had carried out his intention.

My hands were burning and filled with agony. I had "copped out" like all the others. If anything, the Head laid it on a bit harder for me. And those fellows

who howled—such as Teddy Long and Gulliver and Merrill—they received an extra cut each. So the howling didn't do them much good.

Finally, Dr. Stafford stood back, and gazed at the Form.

"Now, perhaps, you will try to remember that I am the Headmaster of this school, and that my orders are not to be flouted!" he said fiercely. "I am going now—but, if any boy leaves his place he will be expelled. Remember—I am in earnest! I intend to make you obey!"

The Head strode out of the Formroom. And after the door had closed behind him not a single fellow had moved from his place. At least, not until several minutes had elapsed.

"The beast—the brute!" said Owen major. "And—and we've got to stand it! We've got to submit like a lot of galley slaves! The Head's a beast and a bully!"

"Hear, hear!"

But the voices were now subdued.

"It'll end in a revolt!" said Pitt.

"That'll be the end of it, you mark my words. I'm ready even now——"

"Steady on, Reggie, old son," I put in. "That kind of talk won't do. A revolt would be useless—in any case, it couldn't be managed unless it was properly planned in advance. We're up against the Head, and we've got to submit. There's no alternative."

But the Remove seethed with fury and impotent helplessness.

CHAPTER V.

THE HEAD'S TWO PERSONALITIES.



ST. FRANK'S was in something of a ferment.

Afternoon lessons were just over—over, that is, for all the fellows excepting those belonging to the Remove and the Fifth. These two unfortunate Forms remained in their classrooms—and were destined to remain there, by the Head's orders, until bedtime.

Dr. Stafford's harsh punishments were the talk of the whole school. The fags were rather awed, and gathered together in little clumps, discussing the situation with bated breath.

They were, in fact, in mortal terror of

some dire punishment falling upon their own heads. Even the Sixth, lordly and aloof, had an uncomfortable feeling that they might be in for some trouble of their own.

With the Head in his present mood, there was no telling what might happen.

The Remove fairly seethed with helpless fury and indignation and irritation. To be hemmed in the Formroom like this was galling. The Fifth suffered in the same way. Their experience with the Head—their hands were still tender—had told them that it would be fatal to "jib" again. A revolt against the Head's authority was quite out of the question—at least, without careful preparation.

Edward Oswald Handforth languished in the punishment room.

Miserable and sick at heart, his outlook was black and terrible. Within an hour or so now he would be publicly flogged and expelled. It was almost too awful to be believed—but the Head had said it. And the Head had a terrifying way of carrying out his word.

Handforth, of course, had done nothing to deserve expulsion. He had been foolish, certainly, in openly defying Dr. Stafford earlier in the day—but quite an ordinary caning would have met the requirements of the case.

Mr. Crowell was in charge of the Remove. He seemed subdued, unusually quiet, and there was a sad expression in his eyes. Some of the spirit had been knocked out of him, and he could give the fellows no hope.

He had interviewed Nelson Lee, and the latter had promised to see the Headmaster. But Mr. Crowell expressed the opinion that such an interview would be barren of result. Nothing, in fact, could be done.

Mr. Pagett, in the Fifth Formroom, was like a bear with a sore head. Instead of helping the Fifth to go through with the undeserved punishment, he made matters worse by barking at them and generally behaving in an unsympathetic manner.

Personally, I had expected a visit from Nelson Lee during the afternoon. But the gov'nor had not come anywhere near. And now that lessons were over—in the usual sense—I was beginning to feel rather despondent. It was getting on for teatime, and I was the owner of an extremely healthy appetite.

We had all gone without dinner, and now that teatime was at hand, we felt ravenous. But there was little prospect of partaking of any food that day. Many of the fellows declared that they would write home at the first opportunity. Some of the wild suggestions included a scheme to break out and go for the police. But all this, of course, was mere talk—and idle talk at that.

As a matter of fact, Nelson Lee was by no means as indifferent to the situation as his non-appearance would seem to show. Earlier in the afternoon he had approached Dr. Stafford. The House-master-detective had been with the Head for exactly two minutes—quite sufficient time.

For the Head had fairly raved at him.

He would not listen to reason, and any attempt at argument was futile. The only course, therefore, was to wait. And Nelson Lee now considered that he had waited long enough.

He left his own room, and made his way straight to Dr. Stafford's study. And there was a somewhat grim look in his eye as he entered, after a preliminary tap. He found the Head sitting right back in a deep armchair.

It was dusk, and the study was gloomy, except for the faint flickerings from the fireplace.

"Well? Who is that?" came the Head's voice, harsh and irritable.

Nelson Lee compressed his lips. Apparently, there was not much change for

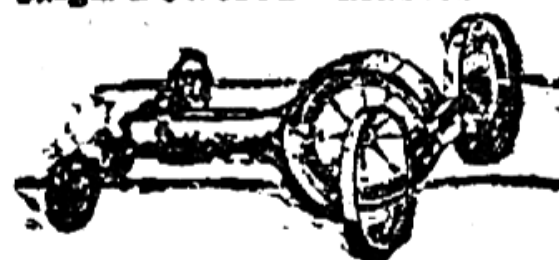
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(Continued from page 17.)

the better. Lee advanced into the study, and stood close to the Head.

"Perhaps you can spare a few minutes, Dr. Stafford," he said quietly.

"No, no—it is quite out of the question" snapped the Head. "Please go at once, Mr. Lee. I wish to be alone—quite alone. Go!"

"I am sorry, but I think it is my duty to remain," said Nelson Lee firmly.

"To be frank, Dr. Stafford, I want to have a quiet talk with you, and——"

The Head waved his hand.

"I want no talk—get out of this room!" he shouted. "Who do you think you are? I am the Headmaster of this school, and I will not be dictated to by you, or anybody else. Don't make me lose my temper, Mr. Lee!"

"The loss of your present temper would not be regrettable," said Nelson Lee gently. "Come, Dr. Stafford, we must not quarrel. I am seriously afraid that you are not well, and I am hoping that we may come to a better understanding."

He seated himself in a chair opposite to the Head, quite ignoring the latter's impatient snort and angry glare. Lee lifted the poker and gave the fire several hearty digs. The coals broke up, and a cheerful blaze resulted.

"Upon my word, Mr. Lee, your audacity is unexampled!" exclaimed the Head harshly. "Shall I tell you once more to leave this room—or shall I be compelled to resort to violent measures?"

Nelson Lee made no reply. He sat forward in his chair, and looked Dr. Stafford up and down with those clear, penetrating eyes of his. He searched the Head's face—his eyes—his wrinkled forehead—his mouth. He examined every line, and did not fail to notice the slight twitching of the Head's fingers.

"No, Dr. Stafford, I am not going," he said firmly.

"You're—you're not going!" snarled the Head. "How dare you? How dare you defy me in this disgraceful——"

"It is necessary that we should face this matter out," interrupted Lee.

"Threats are useless. I shall take no notice. Violence would be not only undignified, but equally futile. Sit still, Dr. Stafford—try, if possible, to sleep."

For a moment it seemed that the Head was about to fly off into an uncontrollable

fit of temper. But he seemed to pull himself together, and, with clenched fists, he relaxed himself into the cushions of the chair. He remained there, glowering at Lee, and breathing hard.

The detective had tried this with a deliberate purpose. And he had proved that the Head was not capable of withstanding his strong will. Lee had, by sheer force of his own personality, compelled the Head to calm down.

But Nelson Lee was worried and puzzled.

This Dr. Stafford was not the Dr. Stafford that Lee had previously known. He was like another man. Even his voice sounded different—it had a harsher, more discordant note. His very facial expression was changed. The soft lines had vanished altogether, to be replaced by a cruel tightening of the lips and a menacing lowering of the eyebrows.

And yet the Head was healthy enough. He was not feverish, he showed no sign whatever of any type of illness. It might have been supposed that his brain was affected—but, even in his worst tempers, he knew precisely what he was doing and clearly indicated that he was perfectly rational.

And while Nelson Lee was studying the problem in this way there came a tap at the door, and Mr. Hugh Trenton appeared. At the first moment he did not see Nelson Lee sitting there, for the room was nearly dark except for the gleam of the firelight. And the science master looked straight at the big chair where Dr. Stafford sat.

"I am sorry to disturb you, sir," said Mr. Trenton softly. "I trust you are feeling better—— Why, what—— I—I beg your pardon, Mr. Lee! I did not catch sight of you sitting there until this moment!"

Nelson Lee looked keenly at the science master.

"If I were you, Mr. Trenton, I should withdraw," he said. "Dr. Stafford is not quite himself——"

"Must you discuss me as though I were a patient in hospital?" snarled the Head abruptly. "Who is this—who is this? Oh, Trenton! Get out of this study before I kick you out!"

Mr. Trenton started back.

"Really, Dr. Stafford!" he protested. "I—I——"

"One more word from you, sir, and I'll pitch you out of the school to-night!"

shouted the Head fiercely. "Go away! Do you hear? I won't be bothered by every infernal fool who chooses to come into this room!"

Mr. Trenton's eyes gleamed for a second, but he bowed.

"Very well, Dr. Stafford!" he said quietly. "I will withdraw."

He turned, walked quietly across the room, and went out, closing the door behind him. Nelson Lee said nothing. He sat quite still in his own chair, and watched the Head as he lay back and closed his eyes.

Now and again the Head would start up—but always he found Lee there, watching him closely and intently. And at last it seemed that Dr. Stafford went off into a doze. His breathing was even and regular.

For well over half an hour he remained like this—until he gave a sudden shiver, and sat up. Nelson Lee was there, having remained motionless. Dr. Stafford passed a hand across his brow, and shivered again.

"The room is chilly!" he muttered. "Would it be too much trouble, Mr. Lee, for you to poke the fire up somewhat?"

"Not at all," said Nelson Lee readily.

He bent forward, and there was a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes. He poked the fire into a blaze again, and when he looked up the Head was himself. That is to say, the cold compression of his lips had relaxed, his glowering eyebrows were softer and more gentle. His whole expression, in fact, was that of a kindly, elderly gentleman.

"Heaven help me, Mr. Lee!" he muttered brokenly.

The detective pretended to appear surprised.

"You are in trouble?" he asked gently.

"In trouble!" echoed the Head, with a bitter note in his voice. "Good gracious, Mr. Lee, don't you know—are you in ignorance of the truth? I have been acting like a brute—a bully—a blackguard! I know it—and that is just the ghastly nature of the whole business!"

"Why have you acted in that way, Dr. Stafford?"

"Why? Because—because I was unable to prevent myself," replied the Head huskily. "It may sound absurd to you, Mr. Lee—it must surely sound absurd to any man in his right senses.

But I am telling you the absolute truth when I say that I had no power to alter my actions of the earlier part of the day. I know quite well that I behaved worse, perhaps, than any hooligan would behave. And, yet, during that ghastly spell, I actually took a keen delight in making my poor boys suffer. What can I do, Mr. Lee? Heaven above, what can I do?"

"That is one of the matters I am anxious to discuss," replied Nelson Lee. "I came here this afternoon, Dr. Stafford, to have a quiet talk with you, but I found that you were hardly in a—well, in a normal condition—"

"I insulted you, Mr. Lee—I know it," interrupted the Head brokenly. "I treated you in a dreadful manner. Please forgive me—please try to understand that I was incapable of controlling myself. Indeed, it was not I who spoke to you—it was another being! I seem to be two people, Mr. Lee! At times everything that is good and noble in me vanishes—and I become a bully and a cur. Every bad instinct within me comes to the surface and holds full sway. Every man—even the best of us—has a strain of wickedness in his personality. Those men whom we call good and kindly and honourable succeed in keeping their wicked self in check. Their good qualities far exceed their bad. Thus the badness in these men never has the opportunity of an outlet."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"That is certainly a very clear and reasonable definition, Dr. Stafford," he said. "In the same way, a man who is an habitual criminal can never succeed in bringing his better self to the surface. In his case it is the bad qualities which are foremost—which hold the reins. That man never succeeds in getting the upper hand of his evil qualities."

"I don't know what has come over me, Mr. Lee," said the Head huskily. "Until quite recently I never suffered from these horrible bouts. I was always successful in curbing whatever badness there exists within me—and, indeed, I did not know that I possessed many blackguardly qualities. But of late, I have periods when I find it impossible to account for my feelings. My good qualities seem to lose their grip—I cannot keep control of myself. And everything wicked and brutal and bad comes to the fore. I am appalled—terrified. I had

not the faintest idea that I possessed such sinister, wicked characteristics."

Nelson Lee bent forward in his chair.

"Dr. Stafford, I am convinced that you are not to blame for what has been taking place," he said quietly. "I have been observing your actions very closely and carefully, and I have come to the conclusion that you—that is, your present self—cannot be held responsible."

"Thank you, Mr. Lee! I am indeed grateful for those words," said the Head wearily. "But I do not deserve them; my wickedness should be punished, for it is futile to say that I am not responsible. If I am not, who is? I have committed these actions; it is a part of my own personality which causes me to do these things."

"Possibly—possibly!" admitted the detective. "But are you quite sure that the blame is yours, and yours alone? I am becoming suspicious, Dr. Stafford."

"Suspicious?"

"Yes."

"Of what?"

"I cannot put my suspicions into words at present," said Nelson Lee.

"But I am certain of this much: There is some evil influence at work—some influence of which you are in total ignorance. I am even ready to believe that some cunning and clever enemy is using his powers—"

"Enemy?" echoed the Head, startled. "That is impossible, Mr. Lee—quite, quite impossible! I have no enemies. I am two characters in one—my good self is fighting against my bad self, and the latter, it seems, is getting the better of the tussle. More than once of late I had feared that my mind is becoming unhinged."

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"I do not think you need alarm yourself in that way," he said. "According to my observations, Dr. Stafford, your brain is as clear and level as ever it was. These peculiar moods of yours are apparently brought on by some mysterious influence of which we are completely in ignorance."

"I feel so helpless, Mr. Lee—so appallingly helpless!" exclaimed the Head. "And I am intensely worried by the thought of my actions during these—these attacks. Really, I can call them nothing else. This morning, for

example, I acted like a bully and a blackguard. I punished the Fifth Form and the Remove, and even now, at this minute, both those Forms are confined in their own classrooms."

"And Handforth is awaiting a flogging and expulsion," said Nelson Lee quietly.

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated the Head, starting up. "You are right, Mr. Lee—you are right! I had overlooked that unfortunate junior for the moment. I fear I insulted both Mr. Crowell and Mr. Pagett, and I shall make it my duty to apologise to them at the earliest opportunity. In the meantime, please let me thank you for having such patience with me, Mr. Lee."

"Were I not convinced that you are helpless in this matter, my attitude would be different," said Nelson Lee. "But, as I have already told you, Dr. Stafford, I cannot bring myself to believe that these strange attacks of yours are a natural phenomenon. Your theory of brain-trouble is quite wrong."

"I trust it is, Mr. Lee; but, in my opinion, there is no other possible explanation. And I may tell you at once that Sir Howard Tukesdale, the famous brain specialist, is visiting me to-morrow morning. I shall ask him to be perfectly frank, for I want the complete truth regarding my mental condition. In the meantime, I must do my utmost to repair the damage that I have caused. I am wasting time here while those unfortunate youngsters are suffering punishment which they do not deserve."

"You intend to cancel the impositions you have imposed?"

"Yes, at once, Mr. Lee!" replied the Head decisively.

CHAPTER VI.

NELSON LEE'S STARTLING ADVENTURE!



"SIX o'clock!" said Fatty Little, in a hollow voice.

"Over three hours before bedtime, and no grub!" remarked Hubbard, with a kind of gloomy relish. "Do you think you'll last out, Fatty? Will you still be alive?"

(Continued on page 21.)

NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

No. 2

THE JOURNAL OF THE REMOVE OF ST. FRANK'S
Edited By Nipper.

Dec. 3.
1921



HANDFORTH. AS HE SEES HIMSELF

NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

THE EDITOR'S DEN

ENTRANCE

EXIT

EDITOR

EDITORIAL OFFICE,
Study C., Ancient House,
St. Frank's College.

My Dear Readers,—

The success of the first number was so unprecedented that my gratification is unbounded. I have searched several dictionaries through in the vain endeavour to find adequate words to express my feelings. I even approached Hussi Kahn on the subject, but his words were so weird and wonderful that I hesitate to use them. In any case, I can't remember even a quarter of his jaw-breaking expressions.

Less than three hours after publication the entire edition was sold out, and as it was impossible to reprint, a large number of fellows were disappointed. This week double the quantity will be available, so there ought to be no grumbling. The Editorial Staff and myself have decided that the nominal charge of one penny will cover all expenses providing the whole edition is sold out. With No. 1 we lost a bit, but that was only to be expected, as the whole thing was in the nature of an experiment. But from now onwards we hope to clear all exes., and make a little profit.

If such a happy state of affairs comes to pass, this profit will not go into Editorial pockets, but will be set aside as a kind of Reserve Fund, to be drawn upon in case of a lean week. At the end of Term, if any cash is left, this will be presented, free, gratis, and for nothing, to the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society, or to the Junior Sports Club, which ever happens to be in the most need of tin. I hope there'll be enough for both.

Contributions have been pouring in from all sides. Most of these are ghastly beyond words, hopeless from the first word to the last. The majority are miles too long, and I want to impress upon everybody the fact that no contributions above six or seven hundred words can be considered. To give only one example, a certain celebrated author named Edward Oswald Handforth, marches into the Editorial sanctum with a roll of wallpaper, on the back of which is written five thousand words of a thrilling serial of pirates and buccaneers! Now this sort of thing is sheer waste of time, and a really wicked waste of excellent wallpaper. Will would-be contributors please clearly understand that wallpaper is not an ideal medium for the setting down of articles and short stories! Manuscripts should be written clearly on exercise paper for choice, and on one side of the paper only. And don't roll it up. It's amazing how many fellows seem to think that all contributions should be made into a kind of funnel. At the most, they should only be folded. This makes it far easier for the Editorial Staff to screw them up and cast them into the happy oblivion of the w.p.b.

Next week I shall have something to say regarding one or two new features which I am thinking of introducing.

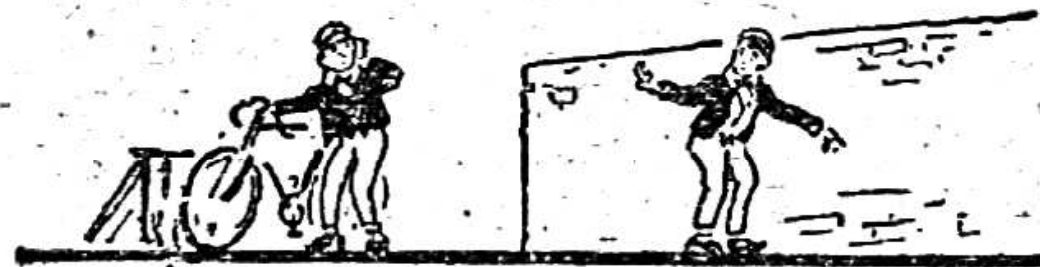
NIPPER (Editor).



We learn that Teddy Long, of the Remove, has recently been suffering rather severely from earache. That's the worst of these droughty keyholes!



Stevens of the Fifth has been making inquiries as to how he can make a bicycle stand. We have thought the question over thoroughly and suggest this as the most sensible method—lean it against a wall!



We understand that our respected Head generally indulges in forty winks during the afternoon. But strangely enough, no one can ever catch him napping!



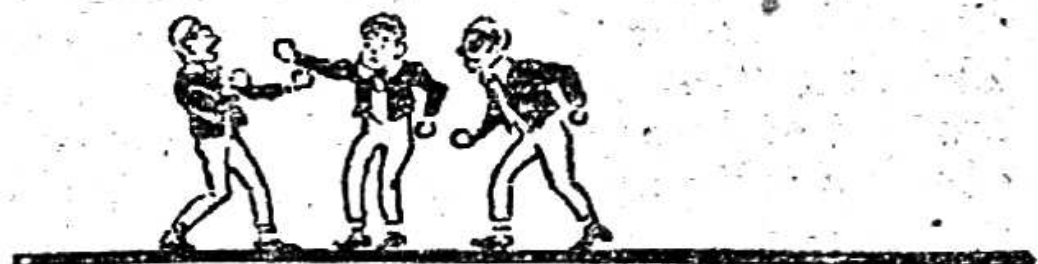
Tregellis-West has been complaining a great deal of late about the quality of his newest pyjamas. He bitterly declares that the silk is of an inferior kind. We suggest that what he really wants is "muzzlin'!"



Simms and Hodder of the Fifth, who couldn't agree for toffee last term, are now as thick as thieves. It seems odd to some fellows that these two should chum up like this. It Simms even Hodder to us that they haven't had a scrap yet!



We regret to hear that such good chums as Turner and Page and Harron, of Study X in the College House, have recently been squabbling a lot. This can't go on, and we suggest that they Turner new Page over and begin afresh. We further advise that they keep their Harron! (Mercy! We won't do it again!)



Solomon Levi, of the Remove, is highly indignant at the rumour that he made fifty per cent. profit over the sale of a pocket-knife last week. Such a rumour is palpably absurd. He really made a hundred!



We can't help it—this one must come out! Pitt and Grey, of Study E, have had trouble with Timothy Tucker, their tame lunatic study mate. He has been writing reams of articles for the Mag. He certainly Tucker long time to pen these effusions, and if his hair doesn't turn Grey it'll be a Pitty!



The rumour that Nicodemus and Cornelius Trotwood are poisoned is quite unfounded. Their present indisposition is only due to the fact that they happened to be present in Study L while Fatty Little was manufacturing some home-made toffee. We can't help wondering why Fatty is still alive. He ate the stuff!



HOW I SHOULD RUN ST. FRANK'S

EDITOR'S NOTE.—In a recent issue of a daily newspaper a learned professor had quite a lot to say regarding the general handling of boys in our great public schools—of which St. Frank's is, of course, the foremost. This brainy gentleman suggests all manner of improvements and alterations, according to his own ideas.

It struck me that some of our own fellows might have suggestions to make, and I requested a certain number to send in their views. I give a selection of them below, but it must be quite understood that I do not necessarily agree with the opinions of my contributors.—NIPPER.

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH :

If I were in sole control of St. Frank's I should at once make sweeping changes. The present regulations are old-fashioned and out of date, as everybody with a grain of sense fully understands. The infliction of punishment for punching a chap's nose is preposterous, and I should at once abolish this. My plan would be to let every fellow stand up for himself, without any interference from masters. I should allow free conversation during lessons, and would have a special class for teaching detective work and criminology in general. The present system of punishing boys for arguing with masters is obsolete, and I should improve upon this by allowing all the fellows to argue to their heart's content. And, in place of the ordinary habit of using a cane, I should inflict punishment by the more simple method of handing out thick ears and black eyes. Everybody knows that this is far more effective in practice, and it would ultimately lead to good behaviour all round.

FATTY LITTLE :

The first change I should make, if I were placed in charge of St. Frank's, would be a considerable lengthening of meal times. At present they are absurdly short, and nobody has any time to enjoy his grub. I should further increase the supply of food by at least four times, for I believe in the principal of feeding a chap well to make him work well. Under the existing conditions the whole school is half starved. I should plan out the day in this fashion: Nine to eleven, breakfast; eleven-thirty to twelve-thirty, morning lessons; one to three, dinner; three-thirty to four-thirty, afternoon lessons; five till seven, tea. No prep. in the evening. Eight till ten, supper. This system would, I am sure, lead to general contentment.

All tuck at Mrs. Hake's shop should be supplied free, and in as large a quantity as desired—for everybody is liable to feel peckish between meals. I should institute a half-hour respite during morning and afternoon lessons, for the purpose of obtaining a snack. And, most important of all, I should make it allowable for every fellow to have a bite of something in bed before lights-out. A school run on these lines would—(go bankrupt in a week.—ED.).

TIMOTHY TUCKER :

Schools under the present regime are palpably absurd. If I were placed in a position of authority I should wipe out the system of slavery in one blow. Under my control there would be no masters and no prefects. The school, in fact, would be run entirely by the boys, and would, in fact, be a kind of semi-communist colony, self-supporting and entirely free from the existing state of bondage. I should, of course, make myself sole dictator, and every boy in the school would bow to my will. Equality in everything—that would be my principle. The subjects taught under the present slavery system are utterly valueless. I should at once inaugurate classes to instil the fundamental basis of the scientific beginning of man into the youthful minds. It is most important that all children should learn the elementary rudiments of ancient history before proceeding to deeper matters. The evenings at St. Frank's would be devoted to lectures, which I should personally give, and—(Yards and yards like this, but I think we've had enough!—ED.)

SIR MONTIE TREGELLIS-WEST :

In my opinion St. Frank's is run in a highly satisfactory manner, and I should see no reason to make any drastic alterations. I should, however, enforce certain

HOW I SHOULD RUN ST. FRANK'S (continued)

rules regarding dress. For example, I should make it compulsory for all boys to wear clean collars every day, to have their suits pressed at least three times a week, and it would be a punishable offence for

any fellow to appear without a correct crease in his trousers. And I should inflict nothing less than a flogging for the crime of venturing out with dirty boots. Spats and fancy vest would be absolutely compulsory, and toppers general. And instant expulsion would be the only fitting punishment for any fellow who bowled another over into the mud. Except for these regulations regarding personal attire, I should leave things exactly as they are.

THE VALIANT TEDDY

By
JACK GREY

"SO I told him what I thought of him!" said Teddy Long importantly.

I had just strolled into the common room with Reggie Pitt, and we found Long talking with one or two of the fellows. The sneak of the Remove was looking very pleased with himself, and was quite glad of an audience.

"I gave him a piece of my mind!" he added boastfully.

"Who—a kid in the Second?" asked Reggie.

"I'm talking about a man—a big chap with a gruff voice," explained Teddy Long. "I was talking to him this evening, you know. He had the nerve to call me cheeky, and so I answered him back."

"And got a thick ear, I suppose?"

"Rather not!" said Teddy. "He told me to go and fetch a chap in the Sixth, and I refused. Then he got slanging me, and so I told him that he was a hulking bully, and that he had a voice like a megaphone!"

"Rats!" I exclaimed. "You haven't got the nerve to speak to a man like that, you little worm!"

"Haven't got the nerve?" repeated Long, with a snort. "I told him a lot more than that. I called him a lop-sided fathead, and an ignorant rotter, and told him that he wasn't good enough to clean up the streets!"



"You don't think we believe this, do you?" asked Pitt. "Who was the man, anyway?"

"Oh, somebody who wanted Frinton, of the Sixth," replied Long. "Said it was important, and that he couldn't wait. He had the sauce to order me to fetch Frinton at once. I didn't know who the man was, of course, but that was none of my business. He ordered me about, and I put him in his place."

"And do you mean to say he didn't slaughter you for calling him those names?"

"No fear!" said Teddy. "And that's not all, either. He raved at me awful, and I simply grinned. Then, while he was getting his breath back I told him that I wouldn't fetch Frinton, and that he could go and boil his face in oil! I told him that his voice would do well to call for old rags and bones! You needn't think I was standing any of his rot."

"And this was a man?" asked Reggie.

"Yes!"

"And he didn't even touch you?"

"No, and after I had told him that bit about his voice I thought I heard somebody coming along the passage, and reckoned I'd better skip!" exclaimed Teddy Long. "I didn't want to be caught by one of the prefects."

"Prefects!" said one of the others. "But I thought this was outside?"

"Of course not. I was in the prefects' room, and I didn't want to be collared there," replied Teddy. "So while the man was still raving, I hung up the receiver——"

"What!" yelled Pitt.

"You don't think I'd say all those things to the man's face, do you?" asked Long, as he edged towards the door. "I was talking to him over the telephone—I thought you knew that all the time!"

Reggie collapsed weakly into my arms.

THE MYSTERY of MOOR COTTAGE

By DICK GOODWIN.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST INSTALMENT.

Reginald Pitt (who told the first portion), Dick Goodwin, Solomon Levi, and Sir Montie Tregellis-West, are on Bannington Moor. They are cycling home amid snow and wind. A convict confronts them, but before he can spring, three figures seize him from the rear. They are not warders, but mysterious strangers, who stun the convict with a life preserver, and carry him off. The boys hurry forward, when they see Nipper. He decides to investigate, and they follow the footprints in the snow. They arrive at a stone cottage and upon the blind see the shadow of a skeleton—and the shadow is moving!

(Now continue.)

SECOND INSTALMENT.

WE all stared fixedly at that horrifying spectacle. By gum, it was enough to chill the marrow in our bones. And the wind howled and the snow whirled down in myriads of flakes.

"See thee, lads, this is a gradely case!" shouted Nipper, quivering with the joy of the chase. "Come; we must investigate! Keep quiet, and follow me. We're going into this cottage, lads!"

We shivered, and the wind howled, and the snow whirled down.

"Hold!" cried Pitt loudly. "How can we get in?"

"There is a door!" was Levi's remark.

"Begad! But it'll be locked!" came from Sir Montie. "By gum, lads, we can't get in by the door, tha' knows!"

Nipper swept us all with his piercing eyes. We could see him standing there, bold, resolute, and determined. And the darkness was so intense that it was impossible to see one's hand before one's face. And the wind howled and the snow whirled down.

"The door!" thundered Nipper. "Ay, lads, we sha'n't get in by the door! Yonder is a water butt, and we can climb on to the roof, and then drop down through the skylight."

"Ay, but there may not be one!" said Solomon Levi. "Believe me, lads, this is some case! By my life!"

Nipper again swept us with those piercing eyes of his, and did not attempt to answer. He knew, probably, that a skylight was in the roof. In one bound he was on the top of the water butt, which stood five feet high. Fortunately, the ice on top was thick enough to hold him. And the wind whirled down, and the snow howled fiercely through the moonlit night.

We followed Nipper closely, until we were all on the roof. But there was no skylight, after all. Then, as we clung there, with the snow sweeping all around us, there came a rending crash.

"By gum!" I shouted, in terror, and dumb with horror. "We're falling!"

To tell the truth, we had fallen, and were now lying in a tangled heap within the cottage. The door slammed, and when we looked round we found that the three men had vanished. And, lying upon a couch, clear to us all, was the convict.

"Get a light!" shouted Nipper. "We can't see anything!"

Pitt struck a match, destroying the inky darkness, and the snowflakes whirled down upon our bare heads. The wind whistled and roared. Pitt lit a candle, which burnt steadily in the calm air.

"Look!" I cried, pointing. "Ay, lads, look!"

There, in one corner, was an imitation skeleton, tied together with pieces of string. And the convict, who was quite conscious, raised himself on his elbow, and pointed with a quivering finger.

"The scoundrels!" he whispered. "They tried to frighten me—but never! I am Lord Clinkerstone!"

"Lord Clinkerstone!" cried Nipper. "By gum! But you're a convict——"

"Ay, lad, you're wrong, tha' knows," said Lord Clinkerstone. "I was dragged from my car on the moor by the real convict, who made me change clothes with him."

And then, at that moment, the paraffin lamp exploded with a terrific roar. The cottage burst into flame, and Lord Clinkerstone seemed doomed to die a ghastly death amid the flames.

(To be continued.)



THE MODERN SLAVE

By TIMOTHY TUCKER



Speech delivered by Timothy Tucker in the Lecture Hall. No Chairman could be obtained, and the audience consisted of a few fellows who had nothing better to do.

The speech is set down verbatim by our Special Reporter. (Note—The Editor does not necessarily share the views given below.)

The Slave of To-day.

FRRIENDS, fellow workers, and comrades (began the speaker)—I am here to-night to address you upon a most important and vital subject. Dear, dear, dear! I'm afraid there is an extraordinary amount of noise going on! Please remember who is addressing you; please understand that I require absolute quiet. Quite so. H'm—h'm! Thank you, comrades, that is better. My address will concern the modern slave of to-day—in other words, the honest, toiling, working man. (Hear, hear!) He is, as you all know, the mainstay of our great nation. (Cheers.) Without him, we should have been swallowed up in the mire countless years ago. The working man, comrades, is the most important individual in the country to-day. (Loud applause, and several catcalls.)

Who is He?

This is most distressing. Quite so, quite so! I am pained to find that there should be so many interruptions, and I would remind you that I am a most important individual. Do you know who I am? (Yes; he of the big head!) Dear, dear! I fear that you are all in need of severe disciplinary treatment. (Loud and ribald laughter.) I trust that you will permit me to continue, so that my voice can be heard above the din. To return to the working man. (Good old slave!) Without him where should we be? Where should we live, comrades and friends? Who built these walls? Who laid these floors? Who manufactured everything within this school? The working man! Yes, I repeat it, the working man! (Who took the wages? The working man!) H'm! H'm! That is quite immaterial. (Sundry yells.)

Sweated Labour and the Bloated Rich!

The fact remains that the walls within which we live were built by the modern slave. (About two hundred years ago.) Dear, dear! This laughter is most unseemly and greatly to be regretted. But what can one expect under the modern system of education? I must suffer in silence, and proceed in the best way I can. I cannot heed such details as the noisy gentlemen in the audience have raised. Whether these walls were built two hundred years ago or to-day, it makes no difference. No, my friends, it makes no difference! These walls were built by sweated labour, and without that labour we should have no roof over our heads. (Who designed the building?) That is quite beside the question—exactly. I will admit—freely, and without prejudice—that under the present system buildings are designed by members of the intellectual class—the bloated rich. But, in an ideal community, the working man would design his own dwelling. (Hear, hear!) Everything would be organised to perfection.

The Working Man!

I regret to perceive that several members of my audience are sucking oranges—a most disgusting proceeding—Dear, dear! How dare you? How dare you throw a pip into my face? If such a thing occurs again, I shall at once descend from the platform. (Loud and prolonged cheers.) I am afraid, comrades and friends, that you do not understand the serious import of this speech. Let me say a few more words concerning the working man—the modern slave. Is he not a willing toiler? Does he not labour with all his might and main? (Yes, when he's on piece work!) H'm! H'm! These interruptions are distracting. The working man of to-day labours hard from morn till night—particularly if he is his own master, and has a big contract on hand. Otherwise, he is inclined to be somewhat slack. A man who is giving his labour to a big capitalist firm is merely a unit—a number. And you will find fifty men performing the work of— (Ten!) No, no! You are quite wrong, my friends. You will find fifty men doing the work of one hundred!

(Continued on next page)

The College Sleuth-Hound

By CECIL DE VALERIE

Within the walls of Study D,
The mighty Handforth stands;
The sleuth, a hefty chap is he,
With large and grimy hands;
And the roaring of his fog-horn voice,
Is worse than jazzy bands!

His nose is big and broad and snub;
His mouth is like a van;
His ears stand out, his eyes are keen,
He hits what nose he can—
And makes a mess of any face
When once he has began!

Day in, day out, from term to term,
He's always on the track;
At all events, he thinks he is,
Until he wanders back,
Like a worn and weary bloodhound,
To face the grinning pack!

Toiling—bellowing—perspiring,
Searching for clues he goes,
But when he'll really find one—
Well, goodness only knows;
Something attempted, nothing done,
'Cept rents in all his clothes!

But thanks to the mighty Handy
For making bright the days;
We couldn't get on without him,
With all his funny ways.
One of the best, we all agree—
Our hats to him we raise!

Things We Should Like To Know

What became of Fullwood & Co. one night last week after lights-out?

Whether they were exceedingly pleased when they met Morrow in the upper corridor while they were trying to steal into the dormitory?

What happened to him in the Head's study the next morning?

And whether it was easy for *them* to sit down afterwards?

What Nicodemus Trotwood thought at teatime the other day, after he had laid in a stock of tuck in the cupboard?

Whether he found the cupboard bare?

And whether he found Fatty Little, like the last 'bus, full up?

What Nicodemus said?

And what he did?

When Somerton is going to buy a new necktie?

Why can't Tregellis-West lend him one?

Whether Somerton is aware that he has two rents in the back of his trousers?

What Mrs. Poulter will say when she sees them?

Whether she'll present the said garments to the first tramp who calls?

Whether the tramp would accept them?

What became of four ancient kippers which were left by somebody in the cloak-room?

Whether a queer odour coming from the Third Form Room the same evening had anything to do with their disappearance?

THE MODERN SLAVE

(Continued from preceding page)

The Speaker Protests!

They are enslaved—driven to work by the hateful necessity of providing for themselves. Is that right? Is it just? Is it not more fitting that the State should provide for all and sundry? Why should the working man toil and moil while other men lounge in motor cars and attend race meetings? Why should these things be? (He's asking riddles now!) Why should such men as these idlers exist? I ask you, comrades and friends, why should they live at all? (It's only by a bloomer that you're alive!) Good gracious! How insulting—how appallingly personal! I

protest strongly. (Further ribald laughter and unseemly pip throwing.) Under the circumstances, I feel that it is impossible to make you understand the true and tremendous importance of my words. I wish to impress upon you deeply the fact that civilisation is on the down grade. (Cheers.) And I tell you, here and now, that you are doomed to oblivion and destruction within the near future. You are ignorant, befooled, and pitiful specimens of—Gug-gug-groooh!

(At this point the speaker was unable to proceed further, a sucked orange, of a somewhat over-ripe nature, having spread itself over his features. And the meeting, amid much yelling, and still further ribald laughter, broke up. Exactly what happened to the speaker nobody knew—and certainly nobody cared.)

(Continued from page 20.)

The fat junior groaned.

"Alive!" he echoed. "You—you torturer! All you can do is to keep reminding me of grub! By gravy! I shall be stark dead before nine. Look, I'm caving in already! I'm feeling like a bladder that's been pricked!"

And Fatty Little, in order to illustrate his meaning, flapped the lower part of his waistcoat, fondly imagining that this indicated a void beneath. But Fatty was as large as ever, and, as a matter of fact, he was the only fellow in the Remove who had had a square meal since breakfast.

All the rest of us had gone without dinner, and were now fairly ravenous with hunger, and when one knows that food is beyond reach, it makes one feel even hungrier. Fatty, of course, had laid in a supply during the brief interval when the Remove had broken detention.

"Blessed if I know what we're going to do about it!" said De Valerie. "It's a cert we won't stand much of this kind of thing, though! The Head ought to be kicked out of his job for——"

"Not so loud, you ass!" muttered Jack Grey.

But Mr. Crowell, seated at his desk, took no notice of the things that the juniors were saying. In fact, he allowed the Remove to do practically as it liked. He only insisted upon comparative quietness. The boys moved about and chatted in groups, and quite a crowd had collected round the fire. Work was not thought of.

All sorts of whispers of revolt were going about. But they were idle enough—the juniors had already had a taste of what would happen if they pitted themselves against the Headmaster.

Church and McClure were probably the most miserable pair in the Formroom. They missed Handforth more than they cared to say. Their redoubtable leader was in the punishment-room, awaiting a flogging and expulsion.

"It's—it's too awful for words!" muttered Church. "When we come out of here old Handy will be gone!"

"Oh, my goodness!" exclaimed McClure, startled. "I hadn't thought of that, you know. He'll be gone, and we sha'n't see him any more. He won't even be able to say good-bye to us!"

"Poor old Handy!" said Church brokenly. "He had his faults, but he was one of the best, all the same. To—to think that we sha'n't see his chivvy at St. Frank's any more! I—I can hardly believe it!"

And just then, before the juniors could continue the conversation, the door quietly opened and Nelson Lee appeared. There was a buzz at once—a subdued, excited whisper of voices. Some of the fellows hurried towards the guv'nor with eager eyes and flushed faces.

"Anything fresh, sir?" asked Pitt eagerly.

"Has Handforth been sacked yet, sir?"

"Really, boys, I cannot answer you all at once!" exclaimed Nelson Lee, smiling. "You will be delighted to learn that Dr. Stafford has thought better of his earlier decision. Your punishment is cancelled."

"Oh!"

"Can—can we go out, sir?"

"Can we have some grub?" yelled Fatty excitedly.

"Yes, boys. You are at liberty to leave the Formroom just as soon as you like," said Nelson Lee. "But wait—wait! Dear me! There is not such a rush, surely? I would like to say a few words to you."

Some of the fellows, who had darted to the door, came to a halt. I was by the guv'nor's side, and I could see a little twinkle in his eye. I felt convinced that this happy state of affairs was his doing.

"I'll bet we've got to thank you, sir!" I said heartily.

"Yes, rather!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Lee!"

"Hurrah!"

"Boys, boys!" protested Mr. Crowell. "Do please try and control yourselves! Well, Mr. Lee, I am delighted to hear that Dr. Stafford has cancelled this most unjust punishment——"

"Which reminds me, Mr. Crowell, that Dr. Stafford would like to see you as soon as possible in his own study. I rather fancy he wishes to apologise for what has happened to-day," added Lee, in a low voice.

Mr. Crowell brightened up visibly.

"Boys, please let me say a few words before you depart!" exclaimed Lee, addressing the juniors. "I have



Bringing into operation the powerful magnifying lens, Lee found the marks were perfect finger-prints.

already told you that your punishment is cancelled. Dr. Stafford further desires me to say that in consequence of your lost leisure time, there will be no prep. this evening, and you will be allowed to remain downstairs an hour later than usual."

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, ripping!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Lee!"

"No, no!" shouted Lee. "Make no mistake, boys. These are not my orders. I am merely carrying them out on behalf of Dr. Stafford. It may interest you to know that a special meal has been prepared in the dining-hall—a kind of high tea, where there will be all manner of good food, dainties, and so

forth. The Head, as you will realise, is doing his utmost to compensate you for what you have already suffered. Those boys who care to partake of high tea in the hall will please go there at once."

The juniors, shouting and laughing, rushed away. And when they arrived in the dining-hall they found the Fifth already in possession. Good humour was restored, and there were no further ugly things being said about the Head.

"Oh, he's not such a bad old boy, after all!" exclaimed Owen major. "He was in one of his giddy tantrums this morning, and he thought better of it. My hat! What a ripping spread!"

"And no prep. to-night, and an extra hour!" said Singleton. "Dash it all, we ain't doing so bad! I'm satisfied, for one."

And when the juniors had finished their meal, they were feeling comfortable and quite at ease. A little stir of excitement had been caused at the commencement of the high tea by the arrival of Edward Oswald Handforth.

Handforth, it seemed, had received a full pardon, and was as much at liberty as any of the other juniors. Church and McClure were apparently more relieved than Handforth himself, and good humour in the Remove and the Fifth was fully restored.

The Head had undoubtedly done his very utmost to atone for his harshness, for he fully realised that the punishments he had inflicted had been utterly uncalled for. The fellows—creatures of the moment, for the most part—soon forgot their trials in the Formroom.

There was no prep. to be done, and an extra hour of liberty to be enjoyed. However, when bedtime actually came, all the members of the Remove were only too glad to go up to the dormitory.

And there was not the usual amount of chatter that night. The extra hour had caused general sleepiness, and, as a result, the Remove dropped off to sleep at once. The Fifth did likewise.

By eleven o'clock the school was quiet and still.

Dr. Stafford had retired early, feeling worried, troubled, and not quite himself. He had a headache, and he was constantly concerned by the thought that he might soon go off into another of his unaccountable fits. He could not prevent them—he had no idea

when they were coming; but when they did come it was absolutely beyond his control to ward them off. It was hardly surprising that the worthy Head was filled with worry and concern.

Nelson Lee, in the privacy of his own bedroom, did not immediately go to sleep. He sat until well after midnight in the armchair before the fire, lazily attired in pyjamas, dressing-gown, and slippers. And there he sat, with only the flickering of the fire to illuminate the room, pulling steadily at his pipe.

The famous detective had no desire to sleep.

He was thinking—he was turning over theories in his mind. These lapses on the part of the Head were natural. There was something behind them—something sinister and terrible, and Nelson Lee was using all his wits to get at the truth.

Dr. Stafford's own idea that his brain was affected did not commend itself to Nelson Lee. He was something of a specialist in his own way, and he was fully convinced in his own mind that the Head was perfectly normal. His extraordinary outbreaks were not connected with insanity.

However, Lee was rather glad that Sir Howard Tukesdale was coming down, for this celebrated brain physician would be able to satisfy Dr. Stafford, once and for all, that his brain was in no way diseased.

Nelson Lee had certain suspicions. He had observed many peculiar things of late—little trifles which no ordinary person would think worthy of attention. But Lee was on the alert; he was certain that some grim power was at work with the object of driving Dr. Stafford from the school.

And this mysterious power would undoubtedly succeed unless measures were taken, promptly and decisively, to counteract the peril. Nelson Lee's great difficulty lay in the fact that he had no positive starting point for any real investigation.

However, the detective was convinced of one thing—this unknown power was humanly controlled. And thus it stood to reason that someone associated with the Headmaster himself was secretly at work. Who could this someone be? Nelson Lee had his own ideas, and he was keeping his eyes wide open.

And yet, at the same time, Lee knew

that there were others—outside the school—who were concerned in this plot. He remembered the incident of the quaintly designed silver disc. Only a day or so earlier, during a heavy mist, a stranger had lurked within the Triangle. Chased by some juniors, he had accidentally plunged into a thick bush, and he had inadvertently left behind a curious silver disc, attached to a silken cord.

"Yes, that little emblem has a place somewhere in this queer puzzle," Nelson Lee told himself. "I rather fancy I can fit it in where it belongs."

He remembered that Mr. Trenton, the science master, had seemed taken aback when that disc had been shown to him. What did Mr. Trenton know about it? Was Mr. Trenton connected in any way with this mystery?

Lee had been very anxious to see that disc, but it had been stolen from Handforth's study by a mysterious individual, who broke through the window and snatched it away. What was the meaning of all these strange happenings?

So engrossed was Nelson Lee with his thoughts that he had allowed his pipe to go out, and the fire to die down. And the bedroom was dim and gloomy, only the faintest glow from the dying coals being visible.

And then, just as Lee was about to rouse himself, he became rigid.

A sound, faint and indistinct, had come to his quick ear. He didn't move; he remained seated in his chair as motionless as a statue. But, although he could not see, he knew that the door of his bedroom had opened.

And now, with every nerve on the stretch, he continued to wait.

The back of his chair was towards the door, and it was one of those high backs—Lee was sunk right into the depths of the soft cushions. But he knew, almost as certainly as possible, that the door of the bedroom was opening inch by inch.

Nelson Lee had had experiences of this kind before. He "sensed" the presence of the stranger within the room rather than saw or heard him. And another certain indication was the faint glow from the embers in the fireplace.

The opening of the door had caused a slight draught—and this draught, in turn, caused the dying coals to glow afresh. And still Nelson Lee did not

move. He remained in his chair waiting.

His brain worked quickly. Who could this marauder be? Who was it that came stealing into his bedroom at dead of night—clearly under the impression that the detective was snugly between the blankets and fast asleep? Nelson Lee did not form any rash guesses—he was waiting to find out for certain.

On the other side of the bedroom there was a big wardrobe with its central door containing one massive mirror. This, as it happened, was slightly open, and Nelson Lee's attention was attracted towards it by a slight movement.

The mirror was at such an angle that he could see the figure of the intruder moving forward between the doorway and the bed. This was fortunate—and quite unexpected. Lee stared at the mirror intently.

The coals in the fireplace glowed rather more brightly.

The detective saw a figure—dim and indistinct, but it was the figure of a lithe, active man. It was, of course, impossible to recognise the features, or even the general shape of the visitor. Lee could only be certain that he was tall and active. He moved like a shadow, with stealth and care.

And then, just when he got near the bed, the stranger suddenly flung himself forward, careless of further secrecy. Nelson Lee whipped out of the chair and swung round. He saw a knife gleam in the faint glow. It swept down, thudded heavily upon the bed, and a low gasping grunt came from the intruder.

"Good gracious!" muttered Nelson Lee.

He was surprised—he had not anticipated anything of this sort. This intruder had tried to murder him! Believing Lee to be in the bed, the man had struck swiftly and terribly.

"Hands up!"

Nelson Lee rapped out the words, and drew a revolver from his pocket. The figure swung round, making a curious snarling noise at the same time. And before Nelson Lee could press the switch of his electric torch—which he had taken from another pocket—the unknown was upon him.

He came across the room in one leaping swoop.

"No you don't!" shouted Lee. "By Jove! What's this game?"

He found himself compelled to fight for his life. The stranger was as strong and agile as Lee himself, and that deadly knife in his hand was a source of awful peril. Lee struggled fiercely—desperately.

For this, as he knew, was a battle for his life.

In the intense gloom he could see nothing distinctly—he could not even tell who this man was. He uttered no word—the only sounds were the heavy breathing of the two men as they struggled for the mastery.

Just for one flash Lee had an opening.

Crash!

His fist swung round and thudded into the jaw of his attacker. The man gave a grunting cry and the next second he staggered, and Lee seized his right wrist. A sharp twist, a gasping howl of pain, and the knife went clattering to the floor.

"Now we are on more even terms!" panted Lee curtly.

They fought on. At one time it seemed as though Lee would be the loser, for this stranger was possessed of a kind of maniacal strength. But Nelson Lee's superior skill told.

And at last the unknown gave a grunt and sagged to the floor. All the strength seemed to go out of him, and he lay still. Nelson Lee pulled himself up, breathing hard, and took his electric torch from his pocket.

He switched on the light; his heart gave a leap as the white beam shone fully upon the stranger's face. But it was only for one fleeting second that Lee was able to see. The man lifted a foot and kicked at the detective's arm with vicious violence. The force was so great that the torch was jerked high into the air, and it fell with a thud to the floor. Lee's arm caused him agony.

Then there was a scuffle. The intruder leapt to his feet like a monkey, dashed to the door, and passed out. Lee, arriving at the door, caught a glimpse of the figure as it dashed along and shot round the bend.

The detective did not follow—it was not necessary.

In his mind there came a vision—a kind of photographic plate of the face he had seen. That one tiny glimpse had been enough—Lee had seen, and he was not likely to forget.

His nerves were of steel, but he was conscious that his face was slightly pale. For the memory of that face filled him with nausea and horror. A livid face with bared teeth, twisted, distorted lips, and eyes that glowed with beast-like ferocity and savage hatred.

It was hardly a human face—it was like nothing that Nelson Lee had ever seen before. And yet, in spite of its awful unhuman-like features, there was something vaguely familiar about that dreadful countenance.

"Upon my soul!" muttered Nelson Lee. "Is it possible? Is it possible? This is far more appalling than I ever imagined!"

His escape had been a narrow one, and he knew this quite well. Light sleeper as he was, he would never have heard the faint sounds caused by the mysterious intruder as he entered the room. And that knife would have descended—

Lee did not care to ponder over the matter. It was only by luck that he had been sitting in that chair. And even so, it had been touch and go for a while, for the unknown had possessed the strength of three ordinary men. The detective had little fear that the intruder would return.

He switched on the electric light, locked the door, and then surveyed the scene. The knife was lying just at the foot of the bed. Lee picked it up and carefully examined it. It was quite an ordinary dagger, with a bright steel blade of considerable strength. There was no mark on it which would lead to any identification of its owner. Lee handled it very carefully.

He placed it gingerly on a side table, and then searched about for further signs. But except for a ruck or two in the carpet, and a disarranged mat, there was nothing of any significance.

At least, not until Lee glanced at the foot of the bed. It was rather a handsome piece of furniture made of polished walnut. The lower rail was wide, and perfectly smooth. As Lee glanced at it he remembered that the intruder had laid his right hand firmly upon the polished surface during the course of the struggle.

"That may be very helpful," murmured Lee grimly.

He went to a cupboard and removed a

(Continued on page 26.)

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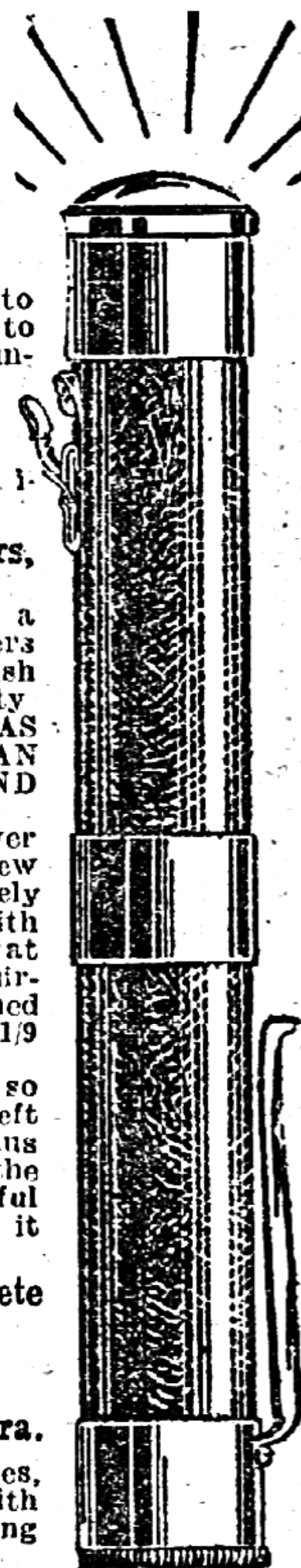
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(Continued from page 25.)

small leather travelling case. From this he produced a little metal box. When he had removed the top there was another lid, but this one was finely perforated.

Very carefully Lee dusted the top of the bed rail with fine grey powder. When this was done to his satisfaction he gave a few gentle puffs. The powder disappeared as though by magic from the polished walnut surface. But there were four small smudges left!

"Excellent!" muttered Nelson Lee. "Excellent!"

He gazed at those smudges intently, even bringing into operation a powerful magnifying lens. The marks were finger-prints—perfect examples, clear-cut and with every line visible.

Although the unknown's grip had only been momentary, it had evidently been a firm grip. And those finger-prints were likely to be useful. Nelson Lee had an idea that he might be able to do without them—but it was not the famous detective's way to leave anything to chance.

Then and there he prepared his camera and a charge of magnesium. With the camera at close range, the flashlight hissed, flooding the bedroom with blinding light for a second. The shutter clicked—and those finger-prints were preserved perfectly for future reference.

Lee was not satisfied until the film was developed and a print taken. It was not a quick process, but Nelson Lee did not mind. He considered that his reward was well worth the trouble. The print was a great success, for the photograph seemed almost clearer than the original.

And the detective went quietly to bed.

He did not search the school, or make any attempt to get on the track of the hideous object that had paid such a murderous visit to his room. Why? Perhaps Nelson Lee thought it unnecessary to search.

He certainly knew a great deal more than he would have been willing to tell—and a grim suspicion which had been lurking in his mind for days was becoming a terrible certainty!

Nelson Lee, in fact, was getting on the scent!

CHAPTER VII.

THE SPECIALIST'S VERDICT.



"SEEN it?" asked Owen major excitedly.

"Seen what?" I said. "What's the sensation?"

I had just come down, and Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West were with me. It was morning, and the Remove was feeling more like itself. The juniors had already forgotten the trials of the previous day.

"Begad!" remarked Sir Montie. "There is evidently somethin' the matter, dear old boys. The fellows are shoutin' frightfully—they are, really!"

Hussi Ranjit Lal Kahn, the Indian junior, came up.

"The excitement is preposterous and of the extraordinary intensity!" he said, smiling and showing all his pearly teeth. "It appears, my honourable chums, that our worthy and disgraceful Headmaster has pinned an absurd notice to the august board. It is a beautiful and inglorious notice——"

"Oh, dry up, Chocolate!" broke in Jack Grey. "You'll take half an hour to say what I could put into six words!"

"Really, my supremely polite chum, I use the perfect English of our wonderful language," said Hussi Kahn softly. "It is important that a subject should be described dutifully and inaccurately."

"You can do that all right!" grinned Watson.

"I thank you for the esteemed complimentary insult," said the Indian junior. "I am always of the most sincere confused lucidity. As I remarked henceforth, our unworthy Headmaster has pinned a sheet of ludicrous paper upon the——"

"Come and have a look at it," yelled Owen major. "If it wasn't in the Head's writing I'd say it was a jape of some kind. But there's no doubt about it at all—and I reckon the Head's true blue!"

"Hear, hear!"

I turned to my chums.

"This seems interesting," I said. "We'll look into it."

And I walked briskly to the notice board, very delighted to hear the fellows using words of praise for Dr. Stafford. For although I had suffered with the

rest on the previous day the idea had constantly been with me that the Head was not to blame for his extraordinary actions. I was convinced—as Nelson Lee was convinced—that Dr. Stafford had been under some mysterious influence.

Pushing my way through the crowd I came opposite the notice board. And there, fastened in a prominent position, was a large sheet of paper. It was covered with the Head's well-known handwriting, and had his signature at the bottom. As Owen major had said, there was no spoof about it.

And I was certainly rather astonished as I read the following:

"To the Scholars of St. Frank's!

"It is not necessary for me to refer to the unfortunate incidents of yesterday, for all of you know the full story. I feel, however, that it is my duty to give an explanation of my seemingly harsh conduct. I am revealing no secret when I state that although I am apparently in a perfect state of health, I am, nevertheless, suffering from some peculiar and mysterious malady which temporarily deprives me of my normal temperament. I can offer no explanation, since I am far more mystified and worried than anyone else within these walls.

"If on any future occasion I behave contrary to my general custom, I urge you to be patient. It is possible that I may administer undeserved punishments. If this is the case, such punishments will be cancelled later. This notice is, as I am aware, a somewhat extraordinary one, but since all the circumstances are extraordinary, it is necessary.

"I want every boy to know that I have his welfare at heart, and that the honour of this splendid old school is my dearest treasure. In my capacity as Headmaster, I shall continue to guide you, and I am hoping that from now onwards everything will go along smoothly and comfortably.

"MALCOLM STAFFORD, (Headmaster.)"

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Tommy Watson.

"A complete climb-down!" grinned Gulliver. "That's what it is! The Headmaster of a big public school like this snivellin' an' excusin' himself for actin' the bally bully! I reckon it's

about the limit!"

"Hear, hear!" said Fullwood sneeringly. "It's enough to make a chap feel sick!"

"If you had felt any other way I should have been surprised," I said, with contempt. "The Head required a great deal of courage to write that notice, and I reckon we ought to admire him for being man enough to publicly state his regret."

"Rather!"

"And we shall know next time," said Reginald Pitt. "If he sacks anybody when he's in one of his tantrums it won't matter—the chap will know that everything will be all serene when the Head cools down."

De Valerie looked thoughtful.

"Yes, it'll work all right in a case like that," he remarked, "but what when the Head gets on to his other games?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, he was in one of his fits for hours and hours yesterday," said De Valerie. "And during that time he can do some damage."

"Believe me, he can!" said Solomon Levi, nodding.

"He can birch the whole lot of us, make us go without grub, and goodness knows what else," added De Valerie. "You see what I mean? He can punish us and we can suffer while he's off the deep end, so to speak. So long as he gives heavy imposition and expulsions it won't matter, but we shall have a dashed lot to complain about if he repeats his merry old games of yesterday."

"Rather!" said Hubbard. "De Valerie's right."

"Of course."

"Well, the Head hasn't started any of his merry old games yet, as you call them," I said, "so you needn't get shouting. Everything's all serene, so far, and it's quite likely that the Head will be himself in future."

"Let's hope so, anyway."

Mr. Crowell came along shortly afterwards, and he was looking particularly pleased and serene. As a general rule, Mr. Crowell was of a somewhat tart disposition, and this new attitude of his proved that he was in high good humour.

As a matter of fact, Dr. Stafford had apologised handsomely to Mr. Crowell—much to the latter's embarrassment—

for the unfortunate trials of the previous day. Mr. Crowell suddenly felt himself to be a person of some importance, and he was duly impressed by a new realisation of his own greatness. For the Headmaster to apologise to a mere Form-master was quite out of the common.

But, after all, Dr. Stafford was doing the right thing. Nobody knew better than himself that he had been absolutely in the wrong. And by having the courage to admit this, he commanded the respect of all, except a mere handful like Fullwood and Co., who had not the sense to appreciate the position.

There was just a little confusion in the Form-room that morning owing to the fact that the Remove had done no prep. the previous evening, but nobody minded; even Mr. Crowell was jokey and genial and tolerant.

And while the Remove was at lessons a powerful limousine glided noiselessly into the Triangle, and came to a halt in front of the Head's doorway. From this luxurious car stepped a tall gentleman with iron-grey hair, a firm, clean-shaven face, and a brisk manner. He was Sir Howard Tukesdale the celebrated brain specialist.

In the Head's study, Nelson Lee and Dr. Stafford had witnessed the arrival of the expected visitor. Lee had said nothing regarding his adventure during the night; he had kept that quite to himself.

"I want you to remain, Mr. Lee, while Sir Howard makes his examination," said the Head, with a slight show of nervousness. "I don't mind admitting that I am somewhat agitated. I have a terrible fear that Sir Howard's verdict may be unfavourable, and it is more than possible that he will not tell me the truth."

"I should not alarm yourself unduly, Dr. Stafford," said Nelson Lee gently. "It is most important that you should keep your mind as calm as possible."

The Head nodded.

"There is just one point, Mr. Lee," he said. "After the examination, I should like you to have a few words with Sir Howard in private. He will doubtless tell you the truth; he will give you his frank, honest opinion of my condition. I want you to tell me

exactly what he reports, whether it is liable to worry me or not."

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Very well," he said readily. "I will do as you request."

"That is a promise, Mr. Lee?"

"I have given my word."

Further conversation was impossible, for at that moment Sir Howard Tukesdale was announced. Tubbs, the page-boy, felt and looked extremely important as he ushered the distinguished visitor in.

"I am very pleased to meet you, Dr. Stafford," said Sir Howard, as he came forward with outstretched hand. "Your summons was an urgent one, and I came down at the earliest possible moment."

"I am greatly obliged, Sir Howard," said the Head. "Please let me introduce you to Mr. Nelson Lee."

"Why, good gracious!" ejaculated the specialist, turning to Lee and adjusting his pince-nez. "My dear Lee, I am delighted to meet you again! I had completely overlooked the fact that you were here. Of course—of course! This is quite an unexpected pleasure!"

Nelson Lee smiled as he shook hands. He had met the brain specialist on two or three occasions in the past—not particularly in a professional capacity, but at social functions.

After a few formal remarks, Sir Howard turned and looked at Dr. Stafford with a critical eye.

"Well, Dr. Stafford, I have an idea that you are a busy man," he said crisply. "I don't wish to waste more of your time than is necessary. So it would be as well, perhaps, to get this little examination over and done with."

"I can assure you I am most anxious to hear your verdict, Sir Howard," said the Head concernedly.

And so, without any further delay, the brain specialist commenced his careful and delicate examination. Nelson Lee, meanwhile, remained perfectly silent, and looked on. It was perhaps twenty minutes before Sir Howard had finished, and then he regarded Dr. Stafford with a twinkle in his eye.

"A rather delicate matter," he remarked. "You sent for me, Dr. Stafford, because you had a vague suspicion that your mental condition was questionable—eh? You had a fear that your brain was overworked?"

"Yes, I have been greatly worried—"

"Then, my dear sir, you need not worry any longer," interrupted the specialist crisply. "I have seldom examined a more healthy patient than yourself. Bless my soul! So far as all my knowledge goes, your brain is normal and perfectly healthy. There is not the slightest reason for you to worry yourself. And the mere suggestion of insanity is too preposterous for serious consideration. To be quite candid, Dr. Stafford, you are robust and healthy in body and mind."

A great look of relief swept over the Head's face.

"I am indeed thankful to hear those words, Sir Howard," he said. "But I had feared that your verdict would be quite different. At the moment I certainly feel quite myself, but yesterday matters were different. As I fully explained to you in my letters. I have had periods of extraordinary temper."

"Tell me about these peculiar attacks."

The Head did so, and he made no attempt to spare himself. He told the blunt truth—describing his own sensations and his feeling of helplessness when he knew that he was doing wrong.

"Strange—very strange!" said Sir Howard thoughtfully. "I don't quite remember coming across an exactly similar case. And, to be frank, I must confess that I am somewhat sceptical. Please do not misunderstand me, Dr. Stafford. I am not doubting your word, but perhaps these tempers of yours are not as bad as you seem to think. They may be merely the result of excessive irritation upon a highly strung nature. I can safely assure you, however, that your fear regarding your brain is quite unfounded."

The specialist was more puzzled than he was really ready to admit regarding the Headmaster's strange symptoms. Indeed, Sir Howard was reluctant to believe the truth. His examination had revealed to him a virile, active brain, with no trace of disease. The Head, in fact, was in perfect health.

What, therefore, was the meaning of these strange attacks of temper? Sir Howard could find no explanation, and, finding none, found it difficult to credit what was told him.

Later on, he accompanied Nelson Lee to the latter's own study. Dr. Stafford was feeling much better, and there was an expression of relief and thankfulness in his eyes. He was very pleasant to Mr. Trenton, who had presented himself in the study at the moment of Sir Howard's departure.

"Now, Sir Howard, I should very much like a few words with you in private," said Nelson Lee, as he closed his own door. "I realise, of course, that mental cases are very delicate, and it is not always wise for the physician to be perfectly candid with his patient—"

"In this case, my dear Lee, there was no reason why I should be otherwise," interrupted the specialist. "Dr. Stafford's fears are quite unfounded. They are, in fact, preposterous! He is in a perfect state of health."

"You are quite satisfied as to that point?"

"Quite."

"You found no sign of any local disturbance—"

"None whatever," interrupted Sir Howard. "I can only repeat to you, Mr. Lee, that the worthy gentleman has been worrying himself needlessly. A fit of temper—what is it? Not insanity, surely? Everybody is liable to develop temper at certain times; it really depends upon the general conditions."

"Would you consider Dr. Stafford a type of man to go off into a cold, calculating rage without any apparent cause?"

"No, I should not."

"Yet that has happened several times," said Lee quietly. "Without the slightest atom of reason, Dr. Stafford has frequently dropped his own personality entirely. He has become, in fact, a different being—a cruel, heartless tyrant! And yet, by nature, he is quite kindly and tolerant."

"H'm! Peculiar—most peculiar!" said Sir Howard, stroking his chin. "I certainly cannot account for this, Mr. Lee. But perhaps you are exaggerating somewhat?"

"On the contrary, I have not told you the worst."

"Well, well, there is no accounting for temper," said the specialist, brushing the matter aside. "And, believe

me, Mr. Lee that is all this amounts to—just the vagaries of temper.”

Sir Howard glanced at his watch.

“Dear me,” he added, “I must be on the move!”

“Need you go so quickly?” interrupted Lee. “If possible, I should like you to remain for an hour or so, Sir Howard. I do not know for certain, of course, but I have an idea that Dr. Stafford will go off into another of his strange attacks before the morning is out.”

The specialist lifted his eyebrows.

“What reason have you for anticipating such a thing?” he inquired.

“My reason would sound somewhat preposterous to you, so I prefer to keep it to myself,” replied Nelson Lee smoothly. “But I should very much like you to make this examination a thorough one while you are here, and you will agree that it would be far more satisfactory if you could see Dr. Stafford while in one of these—bouts, shall we call them?”

“Certainly, I agree that it would be helpful,” said Sir Howard. “But, really, Mr. Lee, I cannot wait indefinitely—”

“That will not be necessary,” broke in Nelson Lee. “I wish you to favour me further, Sir Howard. It may seem strange to you, but I want you to take your leave at once, apparently for good. But you will, however, return shortly after luncheon. And I shall be surprised if you find Dr. Stafford in the same position as he is now. Please do this for me, and I am sure your time will not be wasted.”

Sir Howard shrugged his shoulders.

“Very well,” he exclaimed. “I know you too well, Mr. Lee, to think that you would purposely waste my time. You have some scheme at the back of your head—eh? Well, well, I won’t inquire into it at the moment! I can wait. I will return after luncheon.”

And almost immediately afterwards Sir Howard Tukesdale’s big car glided

smoothly out of the Triangle. Nelson Lee was the only soul in the whole school who knew that the specialist would be returning after a brief interval.

The Remove came out of its Form-room soon afterwards, and there was a good deal of curious talk regarding the Head’s visitor. Everybody knew, of course, that a distinguished individual had arrived by car, had stayed for about an hour, and had then left.

“I wonder who the dickens it could have been?” said Owen major. “One of the governors, I’ll bet.”

“That’s it,” said Armstrong, nodding. “I suppose the governors heard about the Head’s little tricks, and one of them came down here to put him in his giddy place. I’ll bet there won’t be any more trouble!”

“Well, it’s got nothing to do with us,” remarked De Valerie. “We don’t know for certain that the visitor was one of the governors.”

“Who else could it have been?” demanded Griffith. “I expect the Head’s been told that if he doesn’t behave himself in future, he’ll get kicked out. That notice has been taken off the board, and it’s pretty certain that the Head feels a bit of an ass. If he doesn’t, he ought to!”

“Shush!” said Pitt. “It’s not respectable to talk about the Head like that, my sons. Somebody told me that the visitor wasn’t one of the governors at all, but a giddy brain specialist.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Seems a bit queer, but you never know,” said Pitt. “In any case, it’s got nothing to do with us. Leave the Head alone; he’s all right now, and —”

Reginald Pitt paused abruptly.

He was standing just at the bottom of the Ancient House steps, and, happening to glance up, he found himself gazing into the face of Dr. Stafford, who had approached noiselessly.

And there was something about the expression of the Head’s face which told Pitt distinctly and definitely that he was certainly not “all right.” The Head’s eyes gleamed with a cold, malicious light which could not be mistaken.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE BRUTE!



DR. STAFFORD strode forward to the top of the Ancient House steps, and gazed down upon the knot of juniors. Owen major and Griffith were edging away, but they froze in their tracks, as it were, as they found the Head's eagle eye upon them.

"Pitt, Armstrong, Owen, De Valerie, Griffiths!" exclaimed the Head harshly. "Line up at once—here, just in front of me! Yes, you also, Grey! Come along; make haste! Line up, and stand at attention!"

The six juniors, rather startled, obeyed the command, and formed up in a neat line. Some little distance off a number of other fellows watched, but they took care to remain in partial cover, ready to flee at a second's notice if such a course should be necessary.

"My only hat!" muttered Handforth. "The Head's off again!"

"Yes, and we can thank our lucky stars we weren't with those other chaps!" whispered Church. "The best thing we can do is to scoot!"

"Rather!" agreed McClure uneasily.

The three juniors of Study D were safely in cover behind two of the old chestnut-trees. Handforth sniffed at his chums' remarks.

"Rats!" he said lightly. "We're safe enough here. Even if the Head spots us, we can nip off before he knows who we are. Shut up, you fatheads, and listen! There's going to be trouble!"

"Looks like it!" muttered Church.

The three juniors were rather staggered. After that public notice of the Head's everybody had believed that there would be no recurrence of the unfortunate happenings. It had been taken for granted that Dr. Stafford would keep himself well in hand, and would make no further exhibition of his terrible and newly acquired temper.

But now, only a few hours after that notice had been first pinned up, the Head was going off again in just the same way.

"Is anything the matter, sir?" asked Pitt boldly.

"Don't dare to ask me questions, boy!" replied Dr. Stafford, coming

closer, and casting his eye up and down the line. "H'm! Dirty, untidy and altogether slovenly! Your collar, Griffith, is positively disgraceful! There are two buttons missing from your waistcoat, Armstrong——"

"I—I caught myself on a fence, sir!" gasped Armstrong.

"That is no excuse!" rapped out the Head. "You will all take five hundred lines for general untidiness of appearance. And now I have something else to say. When I approached a moment ago you were talking about me—you were discussing me as though I were one of yourselves!"

"We didn't know you were near by, sir," said De Valerie. "And we weren't saying anything insulting——"

"Silence!" thundered the Head, furiously.

The word was shouted out with such violence that the six juniors were considerably startled. Up to that moment the Head had been speaking harshly, but calmly. And, then, all in a flash, his temper broke loose like a summer thunderstorm. His voice bellowed out, and his face flushed red. His very features changed, giving him the appearance of a savage bully. The boys would never have believed that a human face could undergo such a horrifying transformation.

"Oh, my goodness!" muttered Owen major shakily.

"I will have you understand, once and for all, that I am not to be discussed!" roared Dr. Stafford. "Furthermore, I mean to impose restrictions upon the Remove which will effectually break your wilful spirit! But, to begin with, I will deal with you—I will punish you as you deserve!"

"But—but we've done nothing, sir," said Pitt.

The Head turned upon him like a tiger.

"For that interruption, Pitt, you will stand forward at once," he snarled. "Come—at once! Hold out your hand!"

Reginald Pitt hesitated for a second, and then obeyed.

Slash!

"Ow—ow!" gasped Pitt involuntarily.

The stroke was a fearful one, and Pitt's hand felt as though a red hot iron had seared it. The Head positively grinned

—an animal-like, malicious curl disfiguring his mouth, and almost baring his teeth.

"Perhaps that will teach you to keep your tongue still!" he said thickly. "Has anybody else got anything to say? Come—I am waiting!"

The juniors were silent. The sneering tone of the Headmaster's voice was something they had never heard before. And the look in his eyes positively frightened them. They all wanted to flee—to run for their lives. But they could not move an inch. The Head's gaze was upon them, and they felt numb and helpless.

"You will stand forward one at a time," snapped the Head curtly. "I intend giving you four cuts each, and I hope this will be a lesson to you all—and in future you will possibly refrain from discussing me!"

De Valerie was the first in the line, and he stood forward. To think of defying the Head was impossible—single-handed, at all events. The whole school might defy him—or even a whole Form. But for a handful of juniors to attempt such a thing would be madness itself.

"Stand still—and if you make the slightest outcry I shall double the punishment!" exclaimed the Head, with vicious malevolence in his voice. "Now—stand quite still!"

Slash—slash!

The cuts were brutal, and although De Valerie made no outcry, he winced and turned pale as the cane swished down upon his palm. He took his punishment bravely, and then stood aside, trembling in every limb.

The others were not so stoical, with the exception of Pitt and Grey. They made no outcry, but Armstrong, Griffith and Owen major were not made of such stern stuff. They fairly howled—and received double rations. By the time the Head had finished with them, they were blubbing like Second Form kids—and, really, they couldn't actually be blamed. The agony they were bearing was appalling. Their hands were puffy, swollen and raw.

"Now, you may go!" panted the Head. "I intend quelling— Ah!"

He paused as Mr. Crowell appeared round an angle of the Ancient House. The Remove Form-master had been

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across to see somebody in the College House, and he was returning in an excellent humour.

"Mr. Crowell!" shouted the Head harshly.

Mr. Crowell started, came to a halt, and adjusted his glasses.

"Dear me!" he said mildly.

"Don't stand there!" stormed Dr. Stafford. "Come here, sir—come here at once! I wish to have a word with you regarding your boys."

Mr. Crowell approached, flustered.

"Yes, sir?" he said. "I—"

"I will do the talking, thank you," cut in the Head sourly. "I have noticed, Mr. Crowell, that your boys are slovenly, untidy, and their manners are atrocious. What is the meaning of this?"

Mr. Crowell was completely at a loss.

"Really, sir?" he said confusedly.

"Slovenly? I—I was not aware of it—"

"Not aware of it?" thundered the Head. "Have you no eyes?"

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

"For some little time the Remove boys have been getting from bad to worse," went on Dr. Stafford. "I hold you to blame, Mr. Crowell. You are too lax, too careless. This must alter. You understand? From now onwards you will deal more severely with the boys—or the post as Form-master will be no longer open to you."

Poor Mr. Crowell looked round helplessly.

"But—but I was not aware that I had been lax, sir," he exclaimed. "I have always governed my boys firmly but kindly—"

"Kindly!" sneered the Head. "Kindness is a waste of time with junior school-boys. You must be harsh—you must be absolutely strict. I have decided that the Remove and the Third shall continue lessons every afternoon until six o'clock—"

"Oh!" said a dozen juniors in dismay. The Head whirled round.

"Another word, and I shall punish the whole school!" he raved wildly. "You hear, Mr. Crowell? In the evening the boys will also attend lessons—from seven o'clock until nine. I mean to put an end to this appalling state of slackness. It has gone on quite long enough."

The Head glared round. In various

parts of the Triangle fellows were standing in little groups—the majority of them behind cover. Pitt, De Vaerie, and the other four unfortunate juniors who had been caned, were still close by, and an evil smile came upon the Head's face as he surveyed them.

"Perhaps you will now understand that I am not to be trifled with," he said grimly. "I have by no means finished, and—"

He paused suddenly, for at that second Bryant of the Fifth came shooting out of the Ancient House, yelling. Close in his rear was Chambers. Bryant was not yelling with pain, but with laughter, and Chambers was looking somewhat wrathful. Evidently a joke had been played upon that highly important person.

"Wait until I catch you!" roared Chambers. "I'll—I'll—"

Bryant's laughter terminated as he caught sight of Dr. Stafford. The Fifth Former, in fact, nearly collided with the Head, and he only just brought up in the nick of time. Dr. Stafford grasped his arm fiercely.

"Ow—yaroooh!" howled Bryant. "Oh, my hat! You're hurting me, sir!"

"Indeed!" snarled the Head. "Perhaps this will hurt you more!"

Crash!

The Head brought his fist round like lightning, and it thudded into Bryant's face before the senior could dodge. He gave a wild howl, staggered and fell headlong. It had been a brutal blow.

"Oh!"

Chambers pulled himself up so abruptly that he almost fell down. And he was about to dart back into the Ancient House when the Head pulled him up.

"Come here, Chambers!" he demanded harshly.

"Why, what—what's the matter, sir?" asked Chambers huskily.

"I will tell you what is the matter after you have obeyed my orders!" said the Headmaster. "Ah, that is better. How dare you rush about the school premises as though you had suddenly become bereft of your senses? I want you to understand at once, and for all time, that I will have no wild behaviour. As a punishment, Chambers, you will submit to a flogging."

"A—a flogging, sir!" gasped Chambers amazedly.

"Yes."

"But—but—"

Swipe! Swipe!

Chambers roared with agony as the Head's cane descended upon his shoulders. The Fifth Former dodged and ducked at the same time. It was unfortunate that he did so, for the Head's third blow was just descending, and the cane caught Chambers on the back of the head.

He uttered no sound, but rolled over on the ground. As a matter of fact, he was partially knocked out—but the Head evidently did not think so. He gazed down at Chambers fiercely.

"Get up!" he commanded. "Confound you! Get up, I say!"

Chambers stirred, and groaned.

"You—you infernal young hound!" raved the Head.

He kicked at Chambers viciously, acting as only a bully and a brute could act. Bryant, who was just getting to his feet, flung himself forward, reckless with pain and excitement. He pushed the Head out of the way roughly.

"You're killing him, sir!" he panted. "It's rotten—it's unfair—it's brutal——"

"How—how dare you?" screamed the Head, livid with rage. "Bryant, you will leave the school at once—do you hear? At once! You are expelled! Furthermore, I intend to flog you——"

"Oh, do you?" shouted Bryant recklessly. "If I'm sacked, I don't care! But I'll bet you won't touch me, you—you brute! You cowardly cad! You ought to be sent to prison."

The Head seemed to go mad, and he rushed at Bryant like a bull. But Bryant knew what would happen to him if he was caught, and he fled. He was appalled at what he had said, but in the excitement of the moment he could not have prevented himself. He charged full tilt into the Ancient House.

Whizzing down the passages he dodged into a study, slammed the door and locked it. Then he slipped out of the window into the Triangle. The Head, entering the passage a second too late, did not know what had happened to his quarry.

And the exertion and the excitement seemed to calm him somewhat. He came to a halt in the passage, breathing hard and huskily.

Then, after waiting a few minutes, he went straight to his own study.

Nelson Lee was pacing up and down in his own room. He had seen most of what had taken place, but he had decided

not to interfere. He knew well enough that his interception would not have improved matters.

His lips were pursed, and there was a frown upon his brow. But he was right—he had told Sir Howard Tukesdale that the Head would probably go off again before dinner-time. And Nelson Lee's guess had been correct. But was it merely a guess?

The attention of the juniors was diverted just then by the arrival of a big limousine, which glided noiselessly into the Triangle. Sir Howard Tukesdale, true to his word, had returned. Within three minutes he was in close conversation with Nelson Lee, and, immediately afterwards, the pair went to Dr. Stafford's study.

They found the Head pacing up and down. There was a wild look in his eyes, his hair was ruffled, and he swung round with something like a snarl as the pair entered.

"Get out of here!" he said thickly. "Who in the name of mischief told you to bother me? Do you hear, Lee? Go—and take that man with you!"

"Bless my soul!" said Sir Howard amazedly.

The transformation was absolute and complete. In spite of what Nelson Lee had told him, he had never believed that such a change could be possible. The Head seemed to be another man altogether. His very expression was different—the set of his features seemed to be coarser. Every refined line had vanished.

Nelson Lee took no notice of the command, but advanced.

"Go!" shouted the Head. "Shall I tell you again——"

"Calm yourself, Dr. Stafford!" interrupted Nelson Lee sternly. "No, don't attempt to bully me! Sit down! Try, if possible, to control yourself. Sit—down!"

Lee spoke grimly and deliberately. Just for an instant the Head seemed to have a battle with himself. But his will was not equal to the strain of fighting against Nelson Lee's superior brain force. There was something rather terrible about the famous detective as he stood in front of Dr. Stafford.

The Head crumpled up quite suddenly, and sat down in an easy chair.

"Now, Dr. Stafford, Sir Howard will examine you," said Lee curtly. "Make no attempt to hinder him. You will

submit quietly. Is it not your own wish that this examination should be a thorough one?"

"You shall pay for this!" muttered the Head, his eyes burning fiercely. "By Heaven, Lee, I will not be treated——"

But the words seemed to fail him, and he sank back. And while he had the opportunity, Sir Howard Tukesdale made a further examination of his patient. Dr. Stafford was sullen and glowering. But he did not resist.

"Thank you, Dr. Stafford," said Sir Howard, at length. "I am quite satisfied. I wish you good-day!"

"Get out before I kick you out!" snarled the Head.

Sir Howard and Nelson Lee retired, and when they reached the latter's study, the brain specialist shook his head.

"An evil nature, Mr. Lee—nothing else," he declared. "There is not the slightest trace of insanity—no indication that Dr. Stafford's brain is weak, or his intellect crumbling. He is in full possession of all his wits, and perfectly healthy."

"So I imagine," said Nelson Lee quietly. "Your own opinion is exactly the same as mine, Sir Howard. I was convinced from the start that Dr. Stafford was not troubled by any mental disease. But does the case strike you as in any way peculiar?"

The specialist shrugged his shoulders. "Peculiar!" he echoed. "My dear sir, it is unique! In all my experience I have never known a man who could have two such separate and distinct natures. But the simple truth is obvious. Dr. Stafford is subject to these sudden fits of violent savagery and temper. They are not due to insanity or any form of brain trouble. The man is simply a brute—but has so far managed to veneer his real nature successfully. I am amazed that he should be in such a responsible position!"

"You are quite settled as to this opinion?"

"Quite!" said Sir Howard firmly. "These outbursts of Dr. Stafford's are merely an indication that his wild nature—his true nature—is asserting itself. I must admit, however, that it is rather strange that this side of the man's character should have remained a secret until recently."

"Very strange indeed," agreed Nelson Lee. "And it will be quite interesting to watch the developments."

Sir Howard took his departure almost at once, and when Nelson Lee was alone once more there was a peculiarly grim smile upon his lips.

"You may be famous, Sir Howard, and you may be clever," he murmured, gazing out into the Triangle. "But for once you are wrong. I agree with you that there is no sign of insanity, but you are quite off the mark when you declare that Dr. Stafford's real nature is a vile one. It is not his at all—it is merely forced upon him against his own will. Yes, this case is quite unique."

And Nelson Lee sat down, lit a cigarette, and thought deeply.

CHAPTER IX.

CHANGING OPINIONS.



THE Remove was in a ferment.

Dinner was just over, and there had been no further sign of Dr. Stafford. He had retired to his own study after chasing Bryant, and had not been seen since. Bryant was still about—he had made no attempt to prepare himself for departure.

"I'm not going!" he declared stoutly. "What did the Head say in that notice of his this morning? He told us to be patient and wait. Well, I'm waiting. When he's got over this spell he'll be all right."

"Yes, but we're not going to stand much more of his brutality," said Simms of the Fifth. "And what about the Remove? Didn't you see the way he swiped those six kids? He ought to be boiled for it!"

The Remove had the same opinion—only more so.

"The Head's only got to do it once more!" said Owen major grimly. "Just once more, and the whole Remove will revolt! He's a bully and a tyrant, and we don't stand that sort at St. Frank's!"

"No fear!"

"Either the Head goes—or we revolt!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's start a barring-out!" said Griffith eagerly. "We've done it before, and we can organise——"

"Ah, my dear comrades, you are beginning to receive glimmerings of sense!" exclaimed Timothy Tucker, blinking round. "Good! Organise! That is the word! Yes, my dear sirs, we must

organise! It is within your power to become members of the Brotherhood of the Free——"

"Shut up, lunatic!"

"Really, my dear Pitt——"

"We don't want to hear any of your fatheaded ideas," said Reginald Pitt. "I'll admit that the Brotherhood of the Free sounds attractive, but you haven't got enough sense to run a secret society. One day I might give you a hand—if things get bad enough."

"Oh, they'll get bad enough all right!" said Armstrong. "They're getting worse and worse every day. We sha'n't be able to stand much more of it."

"Hist! Go easy!" murmured Grey. "Trenton's coming."

The science master strolled up. The juniors were gathered in a clump just inside the gymnasium, where they considered themselves to be safe from the Head. Mr. Trenton walked in smiling and nodding.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, looking round. "Why these serious faces? Come, boys, there's no need to look so glum, surely? What's wrong? Tell your troubles to me, and I'll dispense free advice."

There was an uncomfortable silence.

"Lost your tongues?" asked Mr. Trenton curiously.

"H'm! The position is this, my dear sir," said Tucker, blinking. "Quite so—quite so! The position is this. I have been urging my comrades to join the ranks of the Brotherhood of the Free—to breathe the pure air of liberty. But they ignore me. In their little-minded ignorance they ignore me! Exactly! That is so! They prefer to breathe the polluted air of tyranny and slavery——"

"Don't take any notice of him, sir," interrupted Pitt. "He can't help it, you know—he generally goes off like this at intervals. He's a kind of human gramophone, and I think his needle's a bit rusty!"

"How dare you?" said T. T. severely. "Do you realise who you are talking to? Do you realise——"

"After all, there's something in what you've been saying, my lad," interrupted Mr. Trenton pleasantly. "There's something rather taking in that term—the Brotherhood of the Free. We all like to be at liberty—we all like to inhale the

fresh air of freedom and individual thought."

"Good—good!" said Tucker. "Then you support me, sir?"

"Good gracious, no!" smiled Mr. Trenton. "It wouldn't do for me to support any of your precious notions, Tucker. At the same time, there's no harm in my expressing an opinion. And I must say that you poor boys have been going through a pretty rough time just recently."

The juniors crowded round eagerly. It so happened that I had strolled up with Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson just then, and we stood watching and listening. I was particularly interested.

"Rough time, sir," said Armstrong feelingly. "I should jolly well think we have! I suppose you know what happened just before dinner?"

Mr. Trenton nodded.

"Yes," he said. "How do your hands feel now?"

"Terrible, sir," replied Armstrong. "I've never had it laid on so awful before."

"I am afraid the Head let himself go just a little too far," remarked Mr. Trenton gravely. "That was very unfortunate, for Dr. Stafford has the reputation of being a just and kindly man."

"He's a tyrant, sir!" said Owen major hotly.

"Come, come!" exclaimed the science master, in a sharp voice. "You mustn't say that, young man! 'Tyrant' is a hard word, and to use it in reference to your Headmaster is scandalous!"

"Didn't you see what the Head did, sir?" growled Owen major.

"Yes, and I must agree that his treatment of you was extremely harsh," replied Mr. Trenton quietly. "But it is fairly obvious that Dr. Stafford was in an uncontrollable temper, and a man will forget himself at such moments. But it is hardly right for me to discuss the Headmaster with you, my boys. I sympathise with you heartily, and I trust that the Head will not forget himself again."

"Decent chap, Trenton," whispered Tommy Watson.

"Yes—perhaps!" I replied grimly.

"If ever you are in trouble just come to me and I'll do all I can to help you," went on Mr. Trenton, smiling round.

"Remember, boys, that I am your friend. I don't want you to look upon me as a master—as a man to be shunned. I'd rather you regard me as a kind of uncle, who you can run to with your little woes."

"Thank you, sir."

"If the Head treats you badly again, just come to my study, and you'll find sympathy," smiled the science master. Remember, boys, I am with you all the time. If I can help you at all it'll be a great pleasure to me to do anything."

Mr. Trenton strolled out.

"Now, that's what I call a decent sort," declared Armstrong. "One of the best, if you like."

"Rather!"

"Trenton's a brick!"

I led my chums out into the open away from the others.

"Well, what's your idea?" I asked.

"About Trenton?" said Watson.

"Why, he's a regular top-holer!"

"So you've been spoofed, too?" I said grimly. "You dense fathead!"

"Spoofed?" repeated Tommy. "What do you mean?"

"Dear old boy, Nipper is a frightfully cute fellow," observed Sir Montie, with a wise nod of his head. He's so frightfully deep, begad, that I can't fathom him—I can't, really! But there's something in what he says. Mr. Trenton is an awfully good sort—but, somehow, I can't take to him properly."

"Montie, old son, you've got hoss-sense!" I declared.

"Really, dear old fellow——"

"On the face of things, Mr. Trenton is an awfully good sort, as you say," I went on. "But can't you see through him, Tommy! Didn't you notice that he was sympathising with the chaps and supporting the Head and running the Head down—all at the same time?"

"No; was he?" exclaimed Watson blankly.

"Yes, he was!" I replied. "It's a particularly tricky kind of game—he wants to make himself popular—and he's doing it, too. Most of the chaps in the Remove regard him as the finest master at St. Frank's. I've got nothing actually against him, but I'll tell you frankly I don't like him. He's too smooth-tongued—too silky—too greasy for me to hanker after, and, what's more, I don't trust him!"

(Continued on page 38.)

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"Oh, that's rot!" said Watson bluntly. I shrugged my shoulders.

"All right—have your own opinion," I said. "But time will prove. I don't think you'll have to wait long before we see a sign of Mr. Hugh Trenton in his real colours. He's sailing under a false flag just now."

"It's no good talking," said Armstrong. "The Head's developed into a tyrant, and if this sort of thing goes on much longer we'll jib against it."

"Rather!" agreed Owen major. "Why shouldn't we jib at once? I'm blessed if I'm going to stick in the Formroom until six o'clock! The Head's a bully!"

"A rotten brute!" said Griffith. "I don't care who hears me saying so, either! It's the truth—Oh! I—I—"

Griffith went as red as a beetroot, for Nelson Lee was coming down the stairs at that moment.

"It is not my habit to take notice of comments that I hear by accident," exclaimed Lee grimly, "but this occasion is an exception. Griffith, I will not cane you, for you have been punished sufficiently in that way to-day—but I must insist on your writing me five hundred lines."

"What for, sir?" asked Griffith blankly.

"You used a term with regard to the Headmaster which I cannot possibly overlook," replied Nelson Lee. "Under ordinary circumstances I would thrash you with the utmost severity for making such a remark!"

"But the Head—"

"No, Griffith, you won't improve

matters," interrupted Lee curtly. "Armstrong, Owen major, you will each write me five hundred lines also. And you will please understand, finally, that you must not discuss the Headmaster in such a manner. I will not allow it!"

"Didn't the Head treat Chambers brutally, sir?" demanded Owen major.

"Instead of writing me five hundred lines, Owen major, you will write me one thousand!" retorted Nelson Lee sharply. "Not another word! Go to your Formroom at once. Any boy who talks disrespectfully of Dr. Stafford will receive drastic punishment if I obtain any knowledge of it. That is enough—go!"

The juniors went, sullen and sulky.

"The beast!" muttered Owen major. "He's getting as bad as the Head!"

And, as a matter of fact, Owen major was not the only junior who expressed such views. Nelson Lee, as Housemaster of the Ancient House, felt it his duty to be strict with all boys who talked against the Head. And because Lee took up this attitude, he was criticised freely and bitterly.

I was disconcerted to find that opinion in the Remove was changing. Nelson Lee's popularity was on the wane—he was no longer regarded as the best master of St. Frank's.

Mr. Hugh Trenton was now filling that position, for the science master was becoming more popular every day. The favour he won was the favour that Nelson Lee lost. This was a strange state of affairs—and it would lead to strange results.

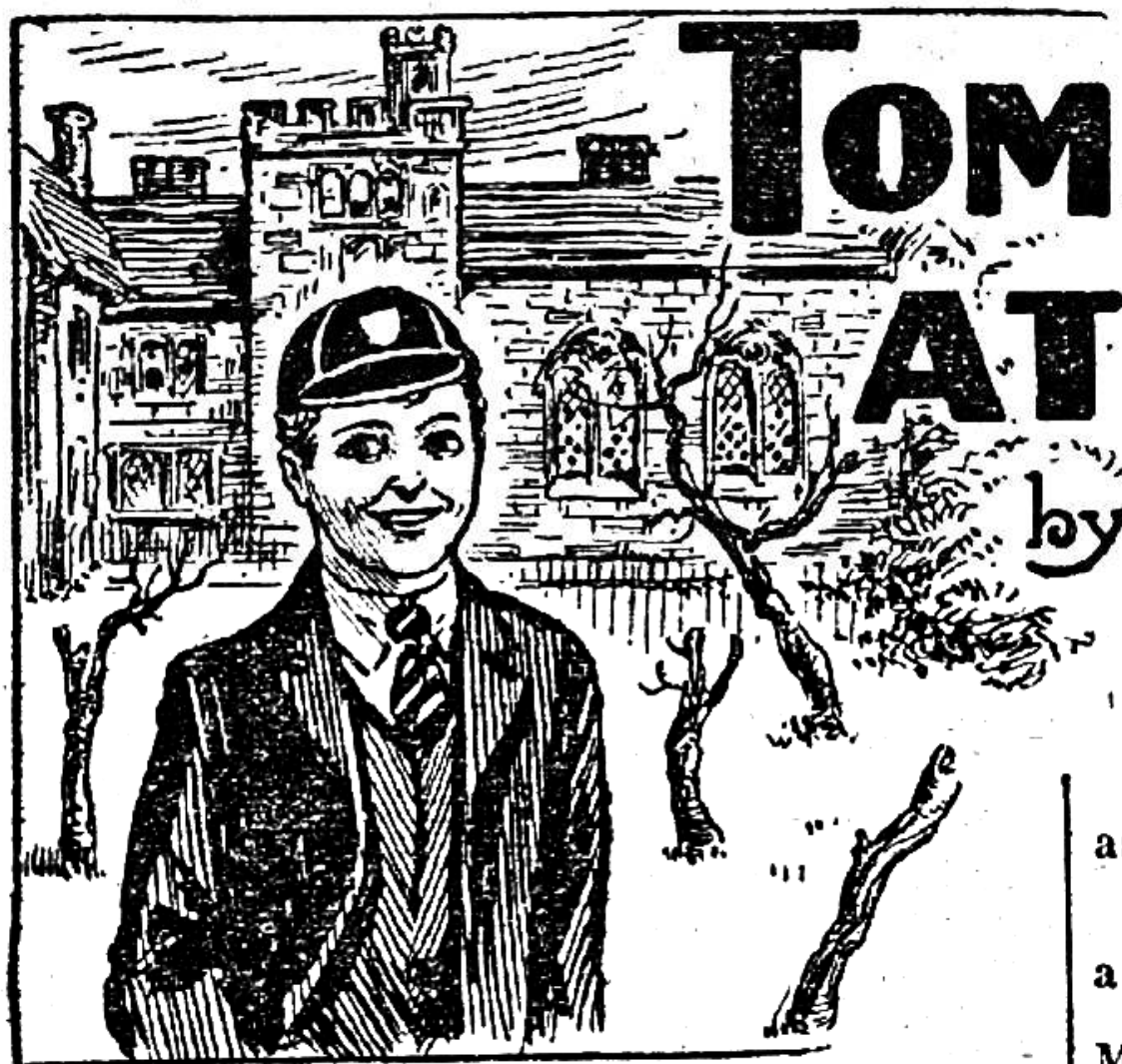
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School Story).

INTRODUCTION.

Tom Tartar arrives at Mr. Wrasper's school, and on the way makes an enemy of Jonah Worrey, the school bully. Tom learns that Mr. Wrasper punishes by moral force only.

(Now read on.)

CHAPTER II.—(Continued).

The Wrasper "System."

ON entering a small hall, Tom saw his boxes undergoing inspection by two men, in whom he instinctively recognised the master and the usher of the school.

One was a dapper, wiry little man; the other a veritable giant, being fully six feet three inches high, and proportionately broad.

Both looked up quickly at sound of the boy's footsteps, and the small, wiry man advanced towards Tom.

"Ah! You are Thomas Tartar, eh?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Tom.

"I am Mr. Wrasper. This is Mr. Foster Moore, my assistant."

The big man turned and looked at Tom, disclosing an ugly, malevolent countenance.

Neither master nor assistant offered to shake hands with the new arrival.

"Tartar," said Mr. Wrasper, "I sent a conveyance to the railway-station. Why did you not come by it?"

"Because it didn't turn up," answered Tom calmly.

"'Turn up' is an extremely vulgar expression! You ought to have waited for the conveyance. Understand once and for all that we do not encourage independent action here. Our rules must be obeyed and instructions followed."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I haven't seen the rules," said Tom.

"Is that meant for an impertinence?" asked Foster Moore, with a frown.

"Certainly not, sir," answered Tom.

"Sounded like it," grunted the usher, with a glance at his superior.

"Show Tartar to the study, Gray," said Mr. Wrasper. "You need not wait there with him, however."

Gray led the way through a series of passages, until he came to a large hall at the front of the house.

"I'm awfully sorry," remarked Gray, as they walked thither; "but you seem to have got into hot water already."

"How?" asked Tom.

"Old Wrasper doesn't like your cool manner. Neither does Moore."

"Can't help it! I can look after myself. Don't you bother about me."

"But you bothered about me."

"That was quite another thing. By the way, why were you going to fight that big chap?"

"Well, you sec, I— But not now—another time! They're coming! Go in there, quick!"

Sounds of footsteps were heard in the passage, and Tom rightly judged that the master and his usher were approaching.

He opened the door of the study, and Gray glided away.

The study was a large and dreary apartment. No pictures were on the walls, and the only relief to the latter's bareness was a faded, fly-blown map of the world. A table, an easy chair, and two hard wooden ones comprised all the furniture.

Mr. Wrasper and Mr. Foster Moore entered and seated themselves, leaving Tom to stand.

"Tartar," began Wrasper, "it is my practice to let a new pupil know at once what is expected of him."

"And to take care that he does understand it!" put in the big, ugly usher, meaningly.

Tom regarded them serenely, but said nothing.

"In this school," proceeded Mr. Wrasper, "I am absolute master, and I expect to be implicitly obeyed. What I say is not

to be done, is not done; and what I say is to be done, must be done!"

"And if it isn't done, we want to know the reason why!" chimed in the usher. "Is that clear?"

"Perfectly clear, sir!" answered Tom quietly.

Mr. Wrasper looked at him with a puzzled frown for a moment, then resumed.

"In this establishment moral force is used to enforce obedience and discipline. The system is of my own invention, and I am proud of it. Now, you have not begun your career here at all well, Tartar."

"Indeed, sir? What have I done?" asked Tom.

"I am about to tell you, Tartar. I pass over the offence of not waiting at the railway-station for the—er—carriage sent to convey you hither. The other matter, however, is far more serious. You met one of your fellow pupils by the riverside, I am given to understand?"

"I met several," said Tom.

"Yes, yes! But you met one in particular—Jonah Worrey, a most obedient and well-behaved lad. Without his even so much as addressing you, I am told that you challenged him to fight!"

"That's one way of putting it, sir," said Tom. "I certainly spoke to him first."

"And offered to fight him?"

"I don't deny it, sir, but—"

"I wish to hear no excuses, Tartar! You admit sufficient to verify what I have heard. Now, understand me! Physical force is not permitted here. Everything in this school is conducted on moral lines."

"Highly moral!" chipped in Foster Moore, who had a way of playing chorus to his principal.

"Well," said Tom, "all I can say is that somebody—Jonah Worrey, I expect—has come to you with only one side of the story. At the school where I was before, sneaking was looked on as—"

"Silence!" interrupted Mr. Wrasper, smiting the table with his open palm. "I have nothing to do with the methods of other scholastic establishments. My school is not as other schools, I flatter myself. However, it is not for me to sound my own praises unduly. What I wish you to understand clearly, and once and for all, is, that physical punishment is not permitted here. That is all I will say to you for the present. Now you may go."

"And don't forget what you have been told," put in the usher. "If you do, you may regret it! Be off to your tea! Go along the passage, open the second door on the right, and you will find yourself in the dining-room."

Tom was not at all sorry to get away from that dreary study. He was beginning to find the atmosphere and the unfriendly attitude of Mr. Wrasper and his usher a trifle oppressive, and a longing to blurt out

something he might be sorry for was rising in his breast.

He had almost reached the dining-room when he accidentally collided with a tall, shambling youth, who was coming along the passage.

"Clumsy ass!" exclaimed the youth, a scowl on his heavy, unwholesome face.

"Same to you!" returned Tom, with a polite bow. "May I ask who you are?"

"I am Pubsey Wrasper!" was the haughty reply.

"Any relation to the head-master?" asked Tom, looking the youth up and down with great deliberation.

"Yes, you cheeky young beast! I am Mr. Wrasper's son."

"Well, he ought to be jolly proud of you! You're a real chip of the old block! Different build, of course, but the same cheery, amiable manner, and—"

"What! You dare cheek me!" spluttered the youth. "I'll—I'll—"

"Tell me some other day!" interrupted Tom. "I haven't time for a friendly jaw just now. I want my tea. So-long, Puggy—or whatever your sweet name is! See you again soon!"

And, pushing past the flabbergasted youth, Tom reached the dining-room door, opened it, and entered.

Like the study, it was a dreary place, with bare walls and very little furniture. A long table ran down the centre of the room, on either side of which was seated a row of boys.

At the upper end of the table a woman, angular of form and vinegary of aspect, was drawing tea from an urn; while a shock-headed, heavy-footed man was handing round the filled mugs.

The angular lady was Mrs. Wrasper. The shock-headed man, as Tom rightly guessed, was Wooden Jerry.

Never in his life had Tom beheld a more awkward-looking individual than Jerry. He seemed to be all odds and ends—arms, legs, body, head, and even eyes had the look of having belonged to somebody else before him.

The faded suit of livery he wore had certainly not been made for him, nor were the various garments which composed it at all a match for each other.

The expression of his face, however, matched the name he bore. It was absolutely wooden!

Mrs. Wrasper's greeting to Tom was of the same welcoming, cordial tone as her husband's had been.

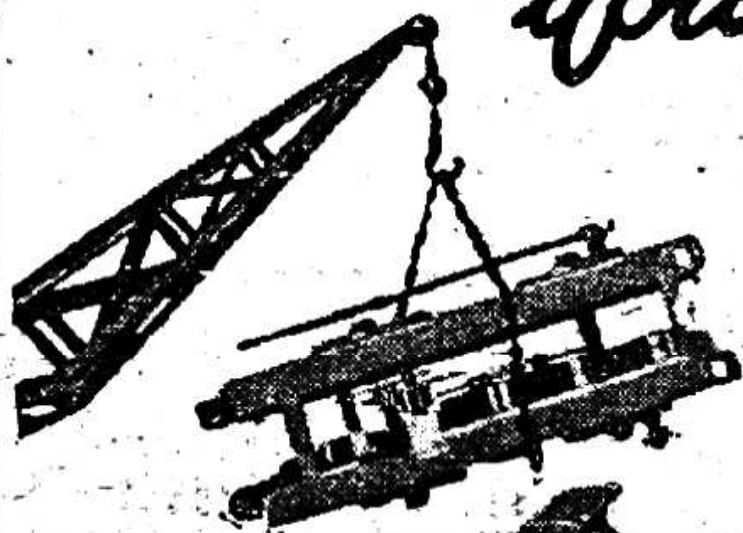
"New boy!" she snapped, pointing a long, bony finger at a vacant chair, "that is your place! Sit down in it!"

"Queer sort of school this!" mused Tom, as he subsided into the chair. "What a nice, homely, warm-hearted family the Wrasper's are, to be sure!"

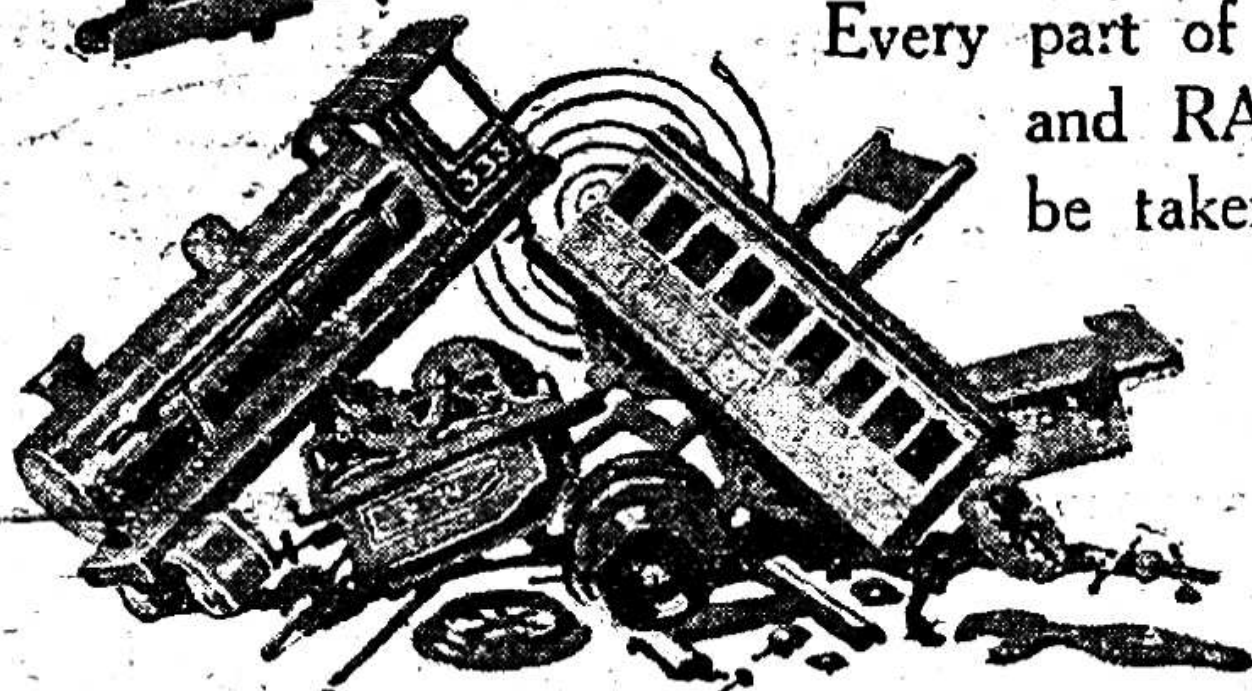
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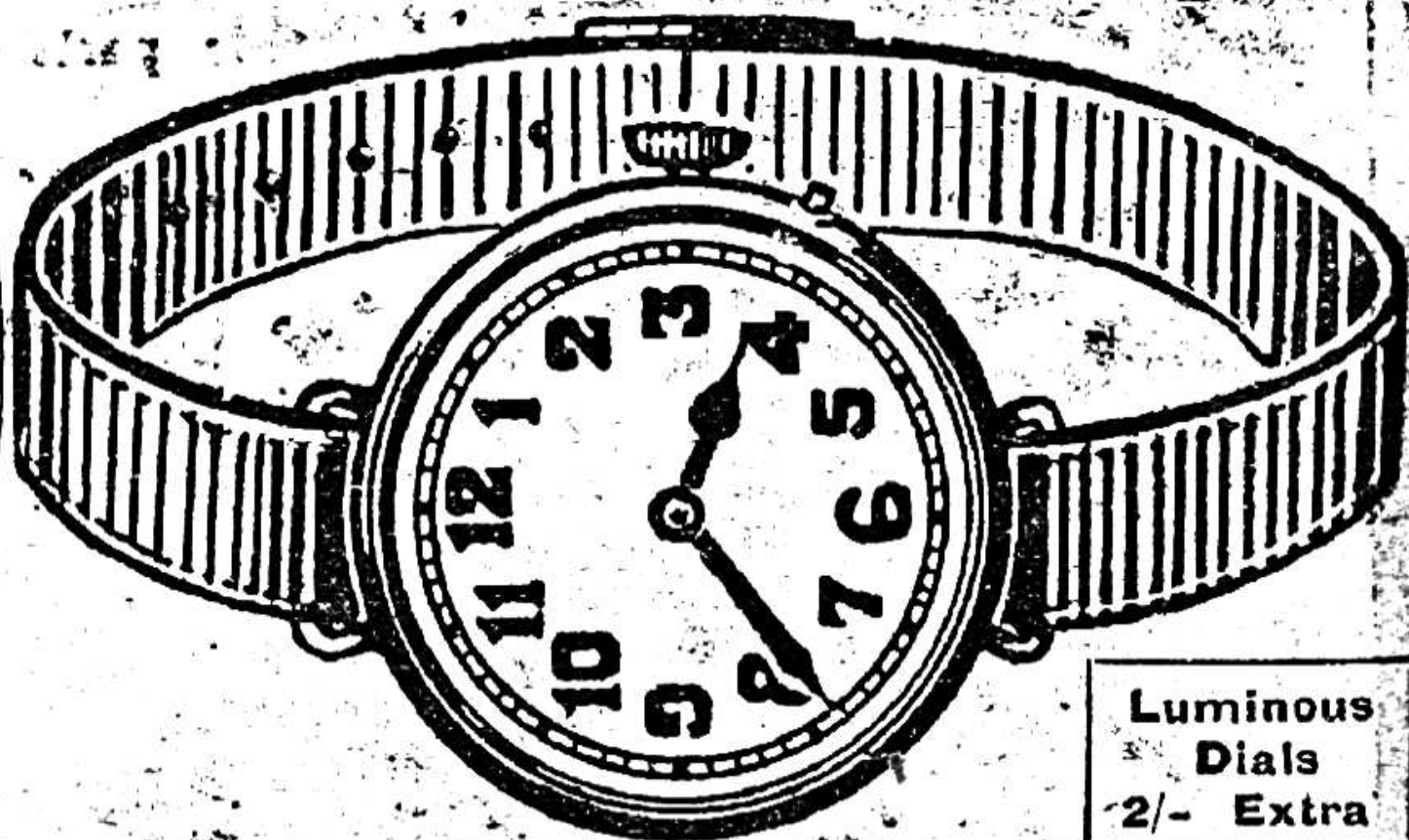
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