

GRAND LONG COMPLETE STORY OF ST. FRANK'S COLLEGE!

THE

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SPLENDID PHOTO-PLATE OF
FAMOUS FOOTBALLER, and
No. 4 "NIPPER'S MAGAZINE."



THE
SCHOOLBOYS' UNION.



I tapped on the gov'nor's door, and was about to enter, when a strange sound came from within.

Behind the door Nelson Lee crouched, waiting—waiting for me to enter.

THE SCHOOLBOYS' UNION.



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 Head's Other Self," "Shunned By His Schoolboys," "Loyalists and Rebels," and many other Stirring Tales.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER I.

LOYALISTS AND REBELS!

ARMSTRONG flourished his hands vigorously. "The whole question is one of principle," he declared. "As self-respecting members of the Remove, we can't allow ourselves to be treated as slaves. Therefore, we've risen up against this tyranny, and at the slightest provocation we shall break out into open revolt!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Why not break out at once?"

"What's the sense of waiting?"

"The time hasn't arrived yet," said Armstrong. "St. Frank's is in a queer state to-day, and I'm all in favour of a rebellion. Every time I'm for a big revolt against Dr. Stafford and Mr. Lee, and the changed order of things. But what's the good of revolting now?"

"Haven't we had enough tyranny?" demanded Griffith.

"Yes, rather!"

"Too much!"



"We oughtn't to wait another day!" "That's just where you're wrong!" shouted Armstrong. "What's the good of starting warfare now? In a few days' time we shall all be going home for the Christmas holidays—early next week, in fact. So what's the good of starting a rebellion? The best thing we can do is to stick it until next week."

"And what then?" demanded Griffith.

"Why, we shall only enjoy ourselves at home, and we shall return to St. Frank's for the new term," replied the Rebel leader. "If things are just the same then—well, we'll show our hand without waiting a day. That's my idea."

"Good!"

"I don't see why we can't revolt now!" objected Hubbard. "Supposing we all joined together and defied the Head? It's ten-to-one he'd pack the whole school straight off home. Like that, we should get nearly a week's extra holiday."

"By George, yes!"

"So we should!"

"It's not worth it!" declared Armstrong. "Once this revolt starts, there's no telling when it'll end; and don't forget that we're a party to ourselves—the Remove isn't solid. Nipper and his crowd are on the other side. They call themselves Loyalists, but, in my opinion, they're nothing more nor less than a set of giddy blacklegs!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We must go pretty cautiously, though," said Doyle, shaking his head. "We've got a stiff job on hand, and if this revolt isn't handled in the right way, the leaders will find themselves sacked from the school. We had a rebellion once before; but Nipper was leading us then, and every fellow in the Remove was with us. Now we're only half a party."

"But we're quite strong enough," said Armstrong. "And what's the matter with me as a leader? I pride myself that I'm as smart as Nipper any day. If he can lead a rebellion successfully, so can I. I'll show him that he's not the only leader the Remove can produce."

Applause followed, for Timothy Armstrong's supporters were an enthusiastic lot. From morning till night they talked of nothing but revolt; they gloated over the fact that they were Rebels; they were full of huge ideas,

and they had pluck enough for anything.

But, after all, it was talk—just talk. So far there had been no action; and, as I had often pointed out, there is nothing cheaper than talk. It was all very well for these self-styled Rebels to go gassing about the school, boasting of what they could do, and what they would do. It would be quite another thing when it came to the point, when action was required.

It was ridiculous, on the face of things, for Armstrong and Co. to call themselves Rebels at all. They hadn't even rebelled. But they were all in favour of an upheaval, and so they thought it quite right and proper to style themselves in that way. I was practically convinced that no revolt would take place at all. Armstrong did not possess sufficient authority over his followers.

Not only this, but he was totally lacking in ideas. There was nothing easier than to do what he was doing now—stand on a stone in the corner of the Triangle, and address a crowd of thoughtless, inconsequential boys. Armstrong had not yet propounded anything in the nature of a practical plan.

Given such a plan, and with the full help of all his Rebels, he was capable, no doubt, of taking the lead, and keeping it. But until he had somebody to supply him with brains, he wasn't much good. Armstrong was a biggish fellow, with a loud voice and an aggressive manner. He certainly had the bearing of a leader.

Things had been rather upside down in the Remove for the past week or so—ever since the Head had changed from a kindly gentleman into a harsh tyrant. There was something very peculiar about this change which had affected Dr. Malcolm Stafford.

Without warning he would go off into a strange attack, and would become violent, cruel, and tyrannical. Nelson Lee was convinced that the Head was not responsible for these attacks, but was sure in his own mind that they were produced by some outside influence. And Nelson Lee, in his position as senior Housemaster, was compelled to back up the Head on every occasion.

The gov'nor did not approve of Dr. Stafford's new methods, but he could not alter his attitude. And he was

working hard to get at the secret of this mystery. Of one thing he was certain, and that was that Mr. Hugh Trenton, the new science-master, was in some way responsible for the whole trouble.

To begin with, the Head had only had these attacks of harshness at infrequent intervals. But they had become almost continuous of late—so continuous that the Head was now very seldom himself. And he seemed to take a particular pleasure in venting his spite upon the lower school. Acts of this nature were totally foreign to Dr. Stafford's real character.

For me to turn against the gov'nor was impossible; and if I had expressed open defiance at the Head, it would have been open defiance against Nelson Lee. And so I had pledged myself to stand up for Dr. Stafford right through, and nearly all the best fellows in the Remove were behind me.

We had, in fact, formed ourselves into a Loyalist party. A split had come about in the Remove, and the juniors were now in a state of semi-warfare—one section against the other.

And it was a different kind of warfare to the usual House rows. Christine and Co., of the College House, had, in fact, agreed to bury the hatchet for the time being. Christine and his immediate followers were, to tell the truth, on my side. They were Loyalists, too. They had pledged themselves to stand up for the Head. They were willing to overlook his present misdeeds, and they judged him by his earlier reputation for fairness, generosity, and kindness. In other words, the Loyalist party was composed of fellows who could see a few inches beyond their own noses. The Rebels were hasty youths, who judged only by what was taking place at the moment.

And these two sections of the Remove were becoming more and more antagonistic. It was not the antagonism of the old House warfare—the free-and-easy, light-hearted spirit which led up to House rows with a joke in every squabble.

These partisan quarrels were of a totally different nature.

A feeling of bitter hostility had infected the juniors. And when a clash of Loyalists and Rebels came about, it

was a real clash, not merely a laughable bust-up which ended in the best of spirits. So great had become the hostility that fraternising between the two sections had altogether ceased. A Loyalist would have nothing to do with a Rebel, and vice-versa. And it was becoming quite unsafe for any juniors to go about alone.

An unwary Loyalist would, for example, be suddenly seized by a party of Rebels, and woe betide him if some members of his own party were not near at hand to rescue him. There would be no trace of good-natured rivalry about these affairs.

Of late the fellows had got into the habit of moving about in threes and fours, for only in this way could they be immune from sudden, ill-natured attacks. The Remove was, in short, something like a keg of gunpowder—ready to blow up by the application of the faintest spark.

"I reckon we ought to revolt at once, without any further delay!" exclaimed Simmons. "Hubbard's right. If we show our hand at once we shall probably be sent home, and get nearly a week's extra holiday."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the idea!"

"Who's the leader of this party?" demanded Armstrong, glaring round. "I say the time isn't ripe, and I'm not having anything to do with a hurried rebellion. Before we can defy the Head with success, we've got to make careful plans. It's no good doing anything in a rush, and the only way is to wait until the holidays are over."

"Supposing the Head's all right when the new term starts?"

"In that case, we sha'n't have anything to rebel against," said Armstrong. "But he won't be all right, that's certain. He's changed his character now, and he won't go back; he'll probably be a lot worse. Up till now he's banned football, and given us extra lessons, and he's always flogging the chaps for doing nothing wrong, and distributing lines broadcast. And although Mr. Lee doesn't actually inflict any of these punishments, he's just as bad as the Head, because he supports him. We're out for one object, and that object is to rid the school of two undesirable characters. I needn't mention who these characters are."

"You mean the Head and Nelson Lee?" said Doyle.

"Yes, I do."

"You—you treacherous cad!"

The voice was not the voice of a Rebel, but that of Edward Oswald Handforth. The celebrated leader of Study D had strolled up, quite alone, to find out what the enemy was saying. It was just like Handforth to ask for trouble in this way; no matter what the circumstances, he never considered the odds.

It would shortly be time for dinner, and Handforth had strolled out into the Triangle, without any particular thought in mind. As a matter of fact, he had just had a squabble with his study chums, Church and McClure, and he had come out into the cold air to cool off.

"You—you insulting rotters!" he shouted, standing on the outskirts of the Rebel crowd, and shaking his fist at Armstrong. "You ought to be jolly well kicked for saying a thing like that!"

"Who told you to interfere, you blessed Loyalist?" growled Armstrong.

"I'm not going to stand here and listen to your insulting talk!" roared Handforth. "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves for referring to the Head and Mr. Lee as undesirable characters!"

"Nobody asked you to stand there and listen!" snapped Armstrong. "You can clear off!"

"Why, you dirty Rebel——"

"Grab him!" ordered Armstrong curtly.

Handforth was seized before he could even raise a fist. He struggled violently, but his captors were too numerous. He was raised aloft, and brought down upon the hard ground with a bone-jarring crash.

Bump!

"Yow—yaroooh!" howled Handforth. "You—you cads——"

Bump!

"A third time!" said Armstrong. "We'll teach him to come where he ain't wanted!"

Bump!

At last Handforth was released, exceedingly sore in a certain portion of his anatomy—for the ground was covered with hard pebbles—and hot and red with fury and indignation. But

even Handforth had sense enough to dodge into safety. It would have been sheer idiocy to ask for more.

"All right—you wait!" snorted Handforth breathlessly. "I'll show you what's what! There's going to be some trouble over this!"

The Rebels made a suggestive movement towards Handforth. He didn't wait to see what would become of it, but raced into the Ancient House at full speed. A moment later he charged into Study D. Church and McClure were there, both of them looking somewhat out of sorts. McClure's nose was swollen, and Church was suffering from a puffed lip. They regarded their leader with hostile glares.

"Thought you'd cleared out of Study D for good?" growled Church gruffly.

"Never mind that—I want your help!" said Handforth. "You've got to come along and help me to wipe up the Rebels!"

"Rats!" said McClure. "We're not budging! After the way you went for us ten minutes ago——"

"Oh, don't make a song about that!" interrupted Handforth. "We only had a good-humoured squabble, and it's over now—forgotten!"

"How do you think I can forget it with a nose like this?" demanded McClure. "We've had enough scrapping for to-day. You can go and collect some other chaps together. Churchy and I are used up!"

"Absolutely!" said Church.

Handforth pushed up his sleeves.

"Are you coming quietly, or shall I smash you into pulp first?" he asked politely. "You've only got to say the word. Buck up!"

Church and McClure exchanged helpless glances. Handforth had a way with him which could hardly be ignored. And, since it meant a scrap in any case, Church and McClure preferred to take the easier course.

"Oh, all right—we'll come!" said Church gruffly. "But it's all rot!"

They went out into the passage, and met Pitt and Grey, who had just emerged from Study E. De Valerie and Somerton and several others were approaching from the lobby. Handforth explained the situation in a few chosen words—rather violent words, perhaps, but expressive.

"You're not going to allow this sort

of thing to happen, I suppose?" he demanded, in conclusion. "We're going along now to wipe up these rotters, and to show them that they're nothing better than worms."

"Oh, anything you like," said Reginald Pitt. "I'm game."

"Same here!"

"And it's certainly a bit thick for these cads to insult the Head and Mr. Lee openly in the Triangle," said De Valerie. "A few days ago I was against the Head myself; but since Nipper pointed out a few things, I've changed."

"Well, come along and prove that you're in earnest!" said Handforth. "We'll teach these Rebels a lesson they won't forget for a month!"

Most of the others treated the whole affair rather lightly. However, they agreed to support Handforth, and they all bustled out into the Triangle. A few others joined them here, scenting that something special was afoot.

And the crowd of Loyalists which descended upon the Rebel party was of just about equal strength. It descended with a rush; it swept across the Triangle, and charged full tilt into Armstrong's meeting.

"Look out!" yelled Griffith. "Loyalist cads! I say, we——"

"Don't run, you fatheads!" bawled Armstrong. "We're stronger than they are; we can wipe up the Triangle with them!"

Further conversation was impossible at the moment, for Armstrong was yanked down from his elevated position, and a terrific battle commenced. Backwards and forwards swayed the combatants.

There were no shouts of laughter, no grins. This was a serious affair. The juniors were fighting fiercely, with angry hostility.

And the fight raged with grim earnestness.

CHAPTER II.

THE PEACEMAKER!



"BEGAD!"

Sir Montie Tregellis - West adjusted his pince-nez, and stared in astonishment from the Triangle to the Ancient House doorway. He had just emerged, and Tommy Watson and



There were no shouts of laughter, no grins. This was a serious affair. The juniors were fighting fiercely, with angry hostility.

I were with him. We had, as a matter of fact, been attracted by the shouts and yells which were disturbing the peaceful air.

"My hat!" said Tommy Watson. "That seems to be a pretty lively scrap!"

I frowned.

"Yes, the silly asses ought to have more sense than to break out like this in the Triangle!"

"Dear old boys, what shall we do?" asked Sir Montie.

"We've got to join in—that's the only course," I replied. "We can't possibly stand here and ignore it. The Loyalists need assistance, and we're three pretty useful chaps. Come on."

We hurried across to the scene of battle, and were in plenty of time to join in. Handforth and his followers were fighting hard, and in the general excitement I noticed that some of the Rebels were fighting other Rebels, and Handforth himself was making a fearful hash of Church.

"Buck up, the Rebels!"

"Loyalists—Loyalists!"

"Yah, rotters!"

The shouts were simply tremendous, and the only wonder to me was that half-a-dozen masters had not already appeared on the scene. By this time the Triangle ought to have been swarming with prefects.

But, being nearly dinner-time, most of the seniors were indoors, and this scrap outside was only just really beginning.

It attracted the juniors by scores, of course. Third Formers were swarming round, cheering madly—but at a safe distance. They were quite impartial as to whom they cheered. They simply regarded the fight as a spectacle, and were evidently finding it an excellent entertainment.

But the battle itself spread rapidly. More Rebels appeared, and they rushed unhesitatingly into the fray.

And for a moment it seemed that we should go under. We fought desperately, punching out with all our strength. Then a swarm of Loyalists came rushing across, and turned the tide of battle.

This part of the Triangle was now a mass of juniors. Some were punching out wildly at one another; some were swaying to and fro, locked together; others were engaged in a kind of free fight, all mixed up together. And the shouts which arose were terrific.

In the midst of it all a figure attired in cap and gown came striding across from the Ancient House. It was the figure of Mr. Hugh Trenton, the science master. He was frowning, and he ran straight into the centre of hostilities.

"Boys—boys!" he shouted. "Good gracious! This sort of thing won't do! Calm yourselves at once! Stop this disgraceful scene!"

The sound of his voice brought the fellows to their senses. Hot, breathless and dishevelled, they ceased. And Mr. Trenton looked round severely.

"I should think so!" he exclaimed angrily. "What on earth is the matter with you? Don't you know better than to create such a disturbance in the Triangle? There must be no more fighting!"

"These beastly Rebels——"

"These caddish Loyalists——"

"They started first, sir!"

"Rot! We didn't do anything——"

"Come, come!" interrupted Mr. Trenton. "Don't all speak at once! Nipper! You are the captain of the Remove, I believe? I can see that you have been fighting. What have you got to say?"

"Nothing, sir!" I replied promptly.

"Oh, indeed!"

"I didn't start the row, sir," I went on. "I came out and saw that our chaps were being attacked, and so I joined in the fray. I knew from the first that it was ridiculous to start a fight out here!"

"Well, since you are the Form captain, I must punish you more severely than the others," said Mr. Trenton. "What is all this nonsense? Why are some of you so antagonistic towards the others?"

"We're not having anything to do with these chaps, sir," said Armstrong boldly. "They support the Head, and we don't!"

"Really, boys, you mustn't take this thing so seriously," exclaimed the science master. "What good does it do to fight in this silly manner? Let there be no more of it. You must all write fifty lines—and you, Nipper, will write two-hundred."

I looked at Mr. Trenton rather grimly.

"I'm answerable either to my Form-master, or my Housemaster, sir," I replied deliberately. "If you care to report me to Mr. Crowell I shall be quite content to take any punishment that he cares to inflict."

"Good man!" murmured Pitt. "That's the stuff to give him!"

Mr. Trenton frowned.

"You are impertinent, Nipper!" he exclaimed curtly. "You will kindly understand that I do not require any lectures from you. Your punishment is increased to three hundred lines."

"Pardon me, sir, but you are not my Formmaster, and you have no authority over me," I said sweetly. "You have only one course—and that is to report me. And I had no intention of being impertinent; I was merely reminding you that a science master at St. Frank's has no power to inflict punishment."

I strolled away before Mr. Trenton could reply. It had been like a refreshing tonic to me to be able to tell the science master "off." I detested him, and I knew that he detested me.

But the other fellows—the Rebels—were all on Mr. Trenton's side, and they glared after me ferociously. In their eyes, Mr. Trenton was the ideal master. They worshipped him as a hero.

"Awful nerve!" said Armstrong hotly.

"Never mind, boys," smiled Mr. Trenton. "We will put it down to his

breeding, eh? Nipper's manners, I regret to say, are atrocious. The little punishment I inflicted just now is cancelled."

The science master could see that he was surrounded only by Rebels. The Loyalists had followed me away, and had now scattered into little groups. They were adjusting collars, straightening ties, wiping streaks of blood away, and so forth. Mr. Trenton had only his own supporters as an audience.

He knew well enough that these juniors were madly in his favour. By his soft words, and oily manner he had got on their right side. Inexperienced, unused to the wiles of humanity, Armstrong and his fellow Rebels could not detect that Mr. Trenton was hollow and insincere. They had no suspicion that he had been toadying for popularity ever since he had been at St. Frank's. In fact, there were not many fellows in the school who knew Mr. Trenton at his real worth. They judged him by his words, and by his smooth, silky manner.

"We're sorry about the scrap, sir," said Armstrong. "But, you see, those other chaps attacked us, and we had to defend ourselves."

"We couldn't do anything else, sir," said Griffith.

"Of course not," agreed Mr. Trenton lightly. "I quite understand, boys. So you are all members of this so-called Rebel section, eh?"

"Yes, sir," chorused the juniors.

"Shocking—really shocking!" said Mr. Trenton, with mock severity. "It isn't right to become Rebels, my lads. I'll admit that you've had plenty of cause to bring about a certain amount of discontent. But, at the same time, I can't countenance any movement of this kind."

This was Mr. Trenton's way of agreeing with the policy of his supporters. He couldn't do so openly—that was out of the question. At all times he had expressed loyalty to the Head, and disapproval to those fellows who spoke disrespectfully of Dr. Stafford. No junior could come forward and say that Mr. Trenton had ever talked against the Head. Yet, actually, the science master showed the fellows quite plainly that his sympathies were with them.

"After all, sir, we only call ourselves Rebels," said Griffith. "We don't believe in the Head—and I don't care who hears me say so. He's been a bully and

a tyrant, and we don't mean to stand it much longer. If things don't soon improve we shall take matters into our own hands."

"Hear, hear!"

"Boys, you mustn't speak like that!" said Mr. Trenton reprovingly. "Good gracious! I mustn't even listen to this talk."

"We like you too immensely, sir, and it would be great if you could become our Housemaster," said Merrell.

"Oh, rather!" piped Teddy Long. "Or—or even the Head! St. Frank's would be a fine place with you as the Head, sir!"

Mr. Trenton smiled.

"Naturally, such a state of affairs would be entirely agreeable to myself," he observed lightly. "But it may never come to pass, my boys—so it is idle to speak about it. Now, remember—be careful in future. Don't start your fights in the Triangle any more, or you will get yourselves into trouble."

Mr. Trenton walked away, and Armstrong and Co. looked after him with approving glances. They blindly believed all he said, and were deceived completely. They would have been surprised if they had known that Mr. Trenton was only using them for his own purposes. If his plans ever materialised—then they would see a difference!

Merrell and Marriott grinned to themselves, and one of them waved a derisive hand at a group of Loyalists, in which Handforth was included.

"Yah!" yelled Merrell. "Trenton's our man! Rotten cads!"

This was more than sufficient for Handforth.

"Are we going to stand that?" he roared. "Come on, you chaps! Buck up, Loyalists! Down with the Rebels!"

Handforth rushed to the attack.

"Hold on, Handy!" I shouted. "There's been enough scrapping this morning, and it's nearly dinner-time. Leave the fatheads alone—"

But I might just as well have addressed the empty air, for Handforth took absolutely no notice, and continued his rush. He made straight for Marriott and Merrell, who vainly attempted to dodge behind some of their companions.

Handforth hurled Teddy Long out of the way, seized Griffith by the neck, and flung him aside, and then came face to face with Merrell and Marriott. Handforth was enjoying himself immensely.

Biff! Crash!

"Yow-ow!" howled Merrell wildly.

"Yaroooh!" hooted Marriott.

Handforth's punches had been lightning-like and powerful, and the two Rebels went over like nine-pins. In a second, the whole conflagration had burst out once more—Merrell having applied the spark by that shout of his.

The Rebels threw themselves at Handforth from all sides.

"Rescue, you chaps!" shouted Church urgently. "Rescue, Loyalists!"

The call was answered nobly. Forgetting all caution in their excitement, the Loyalists rushed to Handforth's rescue, Church and McClure being prominent. Tregellis-West and Watson and I joined in. We couldn't do anything else. Much as I disapproved of this Triangle scrapping, I couldn't ignore an affair of this kind.

The fight this time was of even shorter duration. The two rival factions had only just come into contact—to the accompaniment of unearthly yells—when Morrow of the Sixth appeared, with a cane in his hand.

"Great Scott!" he shouted angrily. "What on earth—— Stop this at once, you young sweeps! Do you think you can——"

Morrow ceased, for he realised that his words were not heeded. Action was obviously required. He was just about to rush down the Ancient House steps when a hand touched his arm. He turned and found Nelson Lee there.

"All right, Morrow," said Lee quietly. "I will deal with this."

"Oh, good, sir!" said the prefect, with relief.

Nelson Lee strode forward briskly, his brow black, and his lips compressed. It was evident that he looked upon this whole affair with strong disapproval. He was right in amongst the fighters before they realised his presence.

"Stop!" thundered Nelson Lee. "Stop this at once!"

The juniors ceased as though turned into stone. The scared Rebels were longing to dash to safety, but under Nel-

son Lee's stern eye they did not move. The Loyalists felt more comfortable.

"Who is responsible for this disgraceful disturbance?" demanded Nelson Lee curtly. "I am amazed that you boys should so far forget yourselves as to indulge in this type of hooliganism in the Triangle!"

"Hooliganism, sir!" gasped Pitt.

"The term is somewhat strong, but under the circumstances I am justified in using it," retorted Nelson Lee. "I am astonished, boys, that you should behave in such an ungentlemanly manner. Form up into a double line, and stand before me. Make no attempt to edge away. That's right—and act smartly!"

The juniors, sullen and somewhat alarmed, formed into a double line as they had been instructed. The Loyalists were more easy in mind than the others.

Nelson Lee looked up and down the line keenly.

"I shall remember you all," he said. "Please understand, once and for all, that I will not countenance this public brawling. Every boy will write me five hundred lines!"

"Five hundred, sir!" shouted Armstrong rebelliously.

"Yes, Armstrong, that is what I said."

"But—but we were only sticking up for you, sir!" shouted De Valerie. "These beastly Rebels got cheeking us, and we thought it was our duty to punish them."

"You should not take matters into your own hands, boys," replied Nelson Lee grimly. "I quite realise that some of you are loyal and true to Dr. Stafford and the school. However, you must surely realise that it would be impossible for me to punish some of you and allow others to go scot-free. You were all engaged in this fight together—and you must all share the punishment equally. If there is any further disturbance I shall be very angry indeed."

Nelson Lee said no more, but walked quietly back to the Ancient House. Several Rebels booed, and this was immediately followed by a number of hisses. I clenched my fists, and held myself in check with difficulty. It was the very first time I had heard a hostile demonstration against the gov'nor, and it made me go all hot and cold.

"No more scrapping!" I said grimly. "Come on, you chaps."

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Even Handforth had no further desire to fight. He joined Church and McClure, and we all walked away together.

"Well, that's a bit rough," remarked Pitt. "Five hundred giddy lines from Mr. Lee—and we were sticking up for him!"

"Rotten!" said Church bluntly.

"Oh, don't make a song about it!" I growled. "What else could the guv'nor do? We were all scrapping, and you know well enough that fighting in the Triangle is against all regulations. The guv'nor couldn't punish the Rebels and let us go scot-free, I suppose?"

Pitt nodded.

"Nipper's right, you chaps," he said cheerfully. "Mr. Lee couldn't do anything else; and, after all, five hundred lines is a light punishment. Some masters would have gated us for a week!"

And the Loyalists, being sensible fellows, philosophically agreed. They could see that Nelson Lee had had no alternative.

But the Rebels were not so broad-minded.

"The beast—the rotter!" said Armstrong sourly. "Five hundred lines each! Just compare him with Trenton! What a difference!"

"Trenton's a brick—and Lee's a bully!" said Merrell. "That's the difference. We can't expect anything else from a tyrant, and a supporter of the Head! It's just about time that Lee was sent about his own business. He's only fit to guard burglars, and murderers, and other criminals!"

"After all, he's only a glorified policeman!" said Gulliver sneeringly. "I reckon it was a come-down for St. Frank's to have him here at all! The sooner he gets the bullet the better!"

"Trenton only gave us fifty lines, and then cancelled it as soon as he learned what the dust-up was about," went on Armstrong. "Trenton's got sense, and he's fair, too. He's the man for us!"

And, until the dinner-bell rang, the Rebels amused themselves by reviling Nelson Lee in the strongest of strong terms, and in placing Mr. Trenton upon a pedestal which he certainly had no right to occupy.

CHAPTER III.

THE ORDER OF THE BOOT!



TIMOTHY TUCKER shook his head sadly.

"It pains me greatly, my dear sir," he observed. "It pains me more deeply than I can express. H'm! H'm! That is so. The position is this——"

"Oh, turn off the gas!" exclaimed Reginald Pitt wearily. "We know the position, my cheerful ass, and we don't need you to go into yards of unnecessary talk. Dry up while you're still safe!"

T. T. looked hurt.

"Really, my dear Pitt, you are absurdly ridiculous!" he said mildly. "It is merely my wish to point out that you are labouring under a lamentable misapprehension. The whole position is totally the opposite to what you think. Quite so. Let me briefly explain the fundamental basis of this entire situation. Apparently you believe that you are on the side of right and justice. Dear, dear! What appalling ignorance! What an infinitesimal atom of brain the modern schoolboy possesses! I repeat, my dear sir, it is lamentable!"

Pitt looked across at Jack Grey.

"What shall it be—head first or feet first?" he asked suggestively. "Personally, I favour the former."

"Same here," said Jack. "But perhaps we'd better give him a chance to go quietly. It's a pity we haven't got a padded cell at St. Frank's!"

Tucker eyed his study mates with sudden alarm. He had heard this kind of thing before, and, as a general rule, it ended up in his making an extremely rapid exit. The floor of the Remove passage and Timothy Tucker were very closely acquainted.

"My dear sirs, pray be calm—pray keep your tempers under control!" said T. T. hurriedly. "I urge you to be sensible. Quite so. Allow me to point out that violence is the sign of prehistoric savagery—it is a survival of an almost forgotten era. In these days of enlightenment, violence is quite deplorable; therefore, let me beg of you to keep calm. Comrades, I have a great scheme to lay before you—a scheme which is destined to alter the

whole course of life at St. Frank's. Give me your attention, my lads, and the secret will be yours also."

Pitt sighed.

"You can take the secret and bury it!" he observed. "It wouldn't be a bad idea to bury yourself with it! And the deeper you get down the better!"

"Really, my dear sir, you are insulting—"

"It's the only way to move you, T. T., and you've got such a thick hide that insults are powerless to carve through it," said Pitt. "I don't like speaking bluntly, but I've got to. If you don't dry up, we'll kick you out!"

"Head first!" said Jack Grey.

Tucker shook his head, and backed slightly away across the study. He had sense enough to realise that the apartment was not exactly healthy for him. At the same time, he was hugely anxious to get Pitt and Grey interested in his masterly scheme; and Tucker honestly thought that he had got hold of a real brain wave this time.

"Patience, my dear sirs, is more than a virtue," he declared. "Patience is a sign that you are sensible and clever. I have always been greatly struck by the patience which you lads possess. Quite so. H'm! H'm! Now, let me see. The position is this—we are face to face with an upheaval—"

"Well, you are!" said Pitt pleasantly.

"We are sitting on a volcano—a volcano which might burst into activity at any moment!" went on Tucker.

"Do you realise that, my dear sirs?"

Pitt nodded.

"Your dear sirs do," he replied. "The volcano, in fact, is liable to burst into eruption in just about ten seconds from now; and I've got an idea that you'll be the chap who'll blow up! You'll go through that door with such speed that—"

"Tut—tut! This is childish—quite childish!" interrupted Tucker. "I perceive, my dear sirs, that you are making a paltry attempt to perpetrate a joke. This is greatly to be regretted, since I am deadly serious, and most anxious to warn you of what will probably come to pass. This scheme of mine is a magnificent one—so magnificent that mere words cannot possibly do justice to it."

"What a fine thing modesty is!" remarked Grey pleasantly.

T. T. smiled.

"Modesty, my dear sir, is a mark of incompetence," he observed. "A man who is really clever has no hesitation in announcing that fact to the world. Why should he hide his cleverness from his fellow men? There is no reason; and I have no hesitation in telling you at once that my own cleverness is of such a nature that weaker minds like yours cannot perceive it!"

"Well, of course, that's one way of looking at it," said Pitt. "You're so jolly clever, old son, that nobody on earth can see it. As for this idea of yours, you can boil it in oil!"

Tucker bent forward.

"Listen!" he said impressively.

"Listen, my dear sirs! I am bestowing upon you a privilege which you do not seem to appreciate at its true worth. This scheme of mine is closely connected with the present state of affairs in the school. It is connected with the Headmaster and his recent doings. My greatest desire is to win you over to my way of thinking, and I am convinced that a little chat will clear the air. Quite so. Just a little chat will clear the air!"

Pitt looked at Grey, and made an expressive grimace. Grey nodded. They had agreed, in fact, to listen to Tucker for a few minutes. They would find out what this precious scheme of his was. Perhaps it would be just as well to do so, for it might be highly dangerous. T. T.'s ideas were generally of an extremely advanced nature.

"We'll give you just three minutes," said Pitt briskly. "Go ahead!"

Dinner had been over some twenty minutes, and before long it would be time for afternoon lessons. Pitt and Grey had come to the study because it was warm and cheerful. Outside the afternoon had turned bitterly cold, with thick, lowering clouds scudding across the sky, and with a north-easterly wind humming through the tree branches.

"Excellent!" said Tucker eagerly. "Comrades and fellow sufferers, I am delighted by your exhibition of sound common sense. You will aid me in my scheme. I am assured. Quite so. You will aid me immensely, for you are lads of action; and this great undertaking requires muscle and brawn!"

"Seems to be something pretty violent, then," said Pitt. "Why not

apply to Handforth? He's always got plenty of brawn on the premises!"

T. T. blinked mildly.

"Really, my dear Pitt, we are not talking about food! I am aware that some of the fellows frequently indulge in brawn for tea; but the delicacy is not to my liking, an——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really——"

"I was talking about brawn, you ass—not brawn," said Pitt lucidly. "Muscle and brawn—strength! Handforth's got plenty of it!"

"Ah, I perceive your meaning!" said Tucker, holding his head on one side. "But you must allow me to point out, my dear sir, that Handforth is hardly the fellow to support my scheme. He's altogether too violent and narrow-minded. He has sworn to support the tyrants who are in power at St. Frank's. He is entirely in favour of Dr. Stafford and Mr. Nelson Lee."

"Well, so are we!" said Grey.

"Ahem! Quite so—quite so!" murmured Tucker. "But you will not be in favour for long, since I shall convince you that such a policy is entirely mistaken. You have heard me speak, no doubt, of the Brotherhood of the Free——"

"We're fed up with it!" said Pitt.

"Dear, dear! How lamentably crude!" sighed T. T. "You are fed up with it only because you have never given me the opportunity of explaining what this Brotherhood is. Allow me to tell you, my dear Pitt, that the Brotherhood of the Free will be an all-powerful body, once it is formed. It will set a standard; it will be recognised throughout the world as the schoolboys' trade union!"

"My only hat!"

"You are surprised—you express astonishment!" exclaimed Tucker. "But why should not schoolboys have a society? Why should they not possess the power which every body of working men possesses? Why should schoolboys be compelled to sit still, helpless, under any form of tyranny which may be inflicted upon them?"

"I wasn't aware that schoolboys were compelled to sit still under any system of tyranny," replied Pitt. "There's no tyranny at St. Frank's now. The Head's not quite himself, but otherwise everything is all right. And if a real tyranny

ever does crop up—well, we can settle it without any giddy union!"

Tucker shook his head.

"My dear sir, you are mistaken!" he exclaimed. "Let us unite, for unity is strength. Let us form this union, which, as I have said, shall be called the Brotherhood of the Free. Once we are banded together we shall have strength—power—force! We shall be in a position to dictate our own terms, for there will be no schoolmaster strong enough to refuse our demands. Furthermore, the first task of the Brotherhood will be to seize the school——"

"Do what?"

"Seize the school!"

"You hopeless duffer!" said Pitt bluntly.

"Not at all!" said Tucker. "I am serious, my dear sir. We shall seize the school, and immediately form the equivalent of workmen's councils. In other words, we shall appoint shop stewards in the school, and these will be termed class-room stewards. Masters will only be permitted to teach us our lessons under the strict understanding that the control of the school remains in our hands. I tell you, comrades, that this scheme is all-powerful; it is the greatest step towards the emancipation of the modern schoolboy which has ever been formulated!"

"And you want us to join this Brotherhood?"

"Precisely!" said Tucker eagerly. "Naturally, I shall be the president."

"Oh, of course!" said Pitt. "What shall I be—the managing director?"

"There will be no such appointment," declared Tucker, "since a president is, in effect, a managing director. You, my dear sir, will be the Brotherhood's secretary. I shall appoint Grey to the position of chief class-room steward."

"How nice!" said Jack Grey, grinning.

"And we, I suppose, shall be obliged to pledge ourselves to this cause, and work hand-in-glove with the Rebels?" asked Pitt. "We shall have to become turncoats, and leave Mr. Lee in the lurch, to say nothing of Nipper, and Handforth, and all the other loyal fellows?"

"Naturally it will be impossible for you to belong to two parties at one and the same time," replied Tucker. "Having convinced you of the glorious nature

of my plan, you will naturally not hesitate to embrace it with open arms. After all, what good will you do yourselves by remaining slaves to Dr. Stafford, and to the enfeebling rules and regulations of a modern public school? By adopting my principles you will become free—you will breathe the pure air of liberty!”

“And you really think this scheme could be worked?”

“My dear sir, it only requires organisation—nothing else!” said T. T. “For a considerable period I have watched you, and I have come to the conclusion that you are possessed of great brain power and ability of a high quality.”

“Go away, you boys!” said Pitt haughtily.

“Pray be serious, my dear sir,” went on Tucker. “I have a very high opinion of your ability, as I have just said. Indeed, I have come to the decision that you are even cleverer than Nipper himself. Your sterling ability will enable you to organise this Brotherhood so that we can strike our blow at the right moment—so that we can become an all-powerful body—a machine, perfected in every detail, which will sweep aside every barrier and set up new standards!”

“I am overwhelmed with conceit!” exclaimed Pitt. “Go away—I don’t speak to dirt! A clever chap like me oughtn’t to consort with such brainless fatheads! I’m almost too clever to live!”

Jack Grey chuckled, and Timothy Tucker frowned.

“I’m afraid you are exhibiting a sense of levity!” he exclaimed. “Yes, my dear sir, a sense of levity! That is so! Pray give me your attention——”

“Have we had enough?” asked Pitt, rising to his feet.

“Too much!” replied Grey. “Open the door!”

“Wait a minute, I want to speak to this ass seriously,” said Pitt. “Now, Tucker, let me tell you straight out at once that I wouldn’t have anything to do with this rotten scheme of yours if you begged of me on your knees. You ought to be horse-whipped for having such ideas!”

“Dear, dear, dear!”

“You’re a dangerous agitator!”

“My dear sir——”

“You’re not merely a Bolshevik and a Communist—you’re ten times more extreme!” went on Pitt scathingly. “I

always thought you were fairly harmless, but you’ve just opened my eyes. You’ve shown me that you’re a menace to the whole school. Grey and I remain loyal to Nipper and to Mr. Lee!”

“But, my dear sir, I beg of you to consider——”

“We’ve considered enough!” snapped Pitt. “We wouldn’t touch your rotten anarchist scheme with a barge pole!”

“And, what’s more, you’ll clear out of this study!” declared Grey.

“But, my dear Grey,” protested Tucker, blinking. “You are labouring under a terrible misapprehension. My scheme is an excellent one——”

“Don’t breathe another word about it!” roared Pitt. “You’re a Rebel—and in this study you’re like a square peg in a round hole. You don’t fit! The best thing you can do is to find other quarters!”

“We bar Bolsheviks in Study E!” said Grey bluntly.

“Dear, dear! I urge you to——”

“You’ll get out—and stay out!” said Pitt, pointing to the door. “We’ve put up with you for too long, but to-day we’ve reached the limit. A fellow with your views isn’t fit to be within these walls. I’ll admit that every chap is entitled to his own opinion—within certain limits. If I thought you were perfectly harmless, I wouldn’t mind—but you’re not harmless. And Grey and I have extreme pleasure in presenting you with the order of the boot!”

T. T. looked at them dazedly.

“But I thought you were agreeing——” he began.

“Your thinking box is out of order,” interrupted Pitt. “We’re going to kick you out, and if you ever come back we’ll kick you out all over again. If you like to complain to Mr. Crowell you can do so—but the consequences won’t be pleasant. You can find a home where you’ll be appreciated.”

Tucker pulled off his spectacles and polished them.

“I am shocked—I am sadly shocked,” he said stiffly. “Needless to say, I utterly refuse to take any notice of your absurd remarks. I have no intention of departing from this study—where, except for your companionship, I am quite comfortable. I shall remain——”

“Grab him!” said Pitt bluntly.

The next second Tucker was seized, and he was propelled towards the door.

Grey flung the door open, and the next second T. T. slithered out, sat down violently, and rolled over.

"Good gracious!" he gasped. "I—I—"

Biff!

A book came whirling out through the doorway, and Tucker caught it on the side of his head. Before he could get to his feet other books came shooting out. All T. T.'s worldly possessions, in fact, were being hurled after him into the passage.

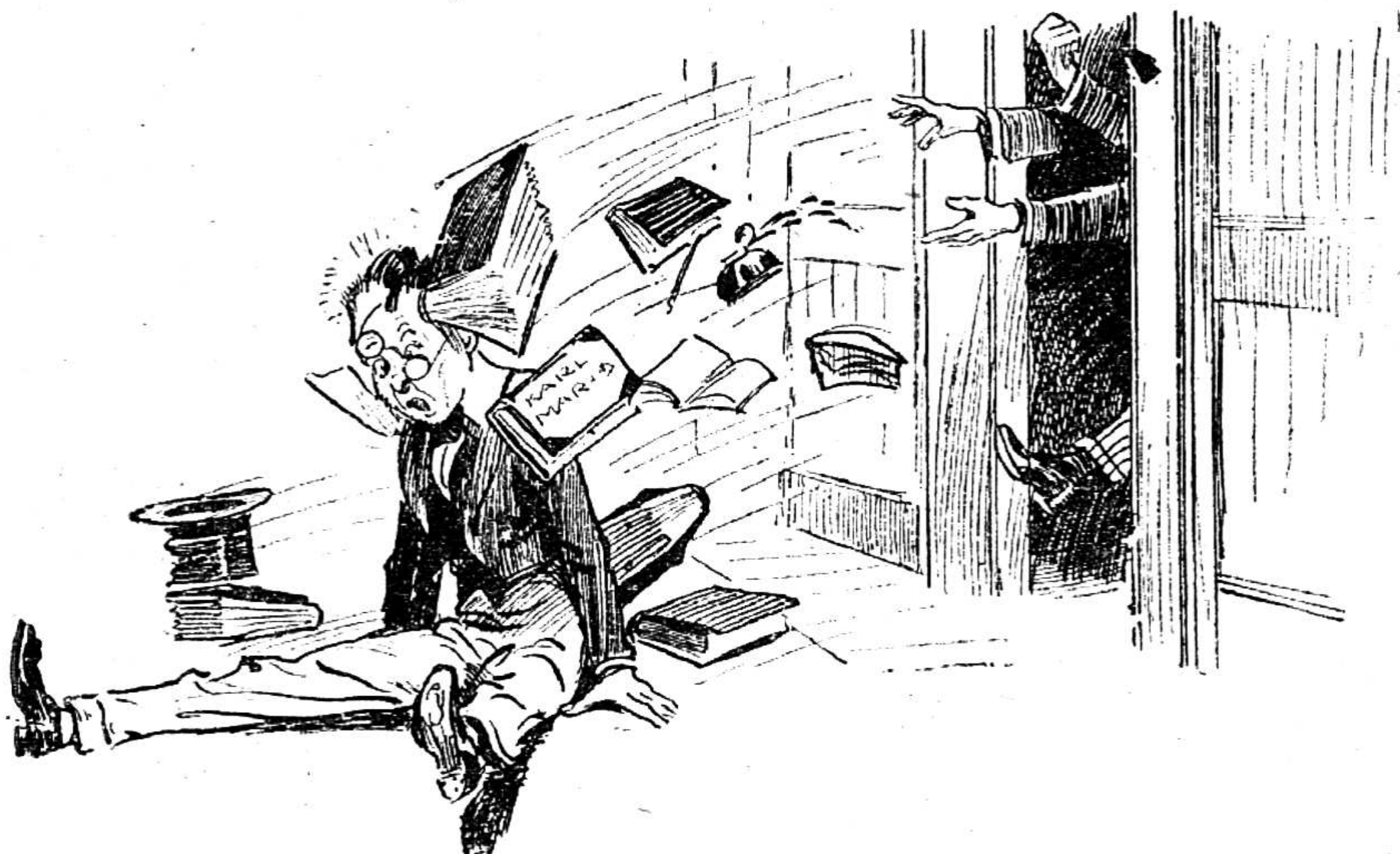
"That's the lot!" said Pitt at last.

shall have some little difficulty in finding a study."

The idea of returning to Pitt and Grey did not occur to him. In all probability they would have suffered him to come back after the heat of the moment had died down.

T. T. piled his books up against the wall, and then ambled along the passage undecidedly. Finally, just as he arrived opposite Study J, Doyle and Armstrong came along.

"Hallo, what do you want?" asked Armstrong, coming to a halt.



T. T. sat down violently, and before he could get to his feet all his books were being hurled after him.

"Now, my merry merchant, you can go and find another home. We've finished with you here. Take my advice, go straight across Bannington Moor, and go into a big building on the other side. It's the lunatic asylum—and they'll welcome you with open arms!"

"My dear sir—"

But Tucker was unable to say any more, for the door of Study E slammed in his face, and he was left blinking at the panels. He sighed, blinked round at the debris, and sighed again.

"Dear, dear!" he muttered. "How awkward! How extremely awkward! This is preposterous! It is certainly most embarrassing, too! I'm afraid I

"I regret to say, my dear sir, that I have been forcibly expelled from my own apartment," said Tucker sadly. "Unbelievable as it may sound, Pitt and Grey have been ungentlemanly enough to turn me out."

Armstrong grinned.

"Well, I don't exactly blame them, although they are Loyalists," he observed. "How they stood you for so long is a mystery. Come on, Doyle!"

They entered Study J, and were about to close the door when Tucker diffidently walked in.

"Who told you to come in here?" said Doyle briskly.

"I—I— Really, my dear sir, I trust

that you will be patient for a few moments," said Tucker. "Kindly let me explain the situation. Pitt and Grey turned me out——"

"Because you're an ass!" interrupted Armstrong.

"Not at all," said Tucker quickly. "I was expelled, my dear sir, because I expressed certain forcible views concerning the Headmaster and Mr. Nelson Lee."

"The cads!" said Armstrong. "But, of course, you're a Rebel—you're one of us, ain't you?"

"Most decidedly I am," declared Tucker. "My dear Armstrong, I am whole-heartedly in favour of drastic changes at St. Frank's. If you will just listen to me for a short period I will outline my scheme for organising our party into an all-powerful machine—a machine which will permit us to seize the school, and to dictate our own terms to those who are in command!"

Armstrong and Doyle looked at one another.

"He's dotty, of course, but there may be something in his ideas!" said Doyle. "And he's one of us all right. Might as well hear what he's got to say."

Tucker needed no further urging. He came closer to the leader of the Rebels, and then he commenced talking rapidly. At first Armstrong and Doyle were rather impatient, but as T. T. proceeded they gave him more and more attention.

And, at last, with flushed faces and gleaming eyes, Armstrong and Doyle fell to discussing Tucker's precious plan.

"There's something in it," said Armstrong at last. "By George! I believe we could work the thing!"

"All it needs is proper organisation," said Doyle. "Why shouldn't we do it? Other chaps have led rebellions, and all that kind of thing. Why shouldn't we come to the fore and show what we can do? And if this giddy Brotherhood only pans out as Tucker says, we're absolutely on velvet!"

Armstrong's eyes were glittering.

"You're right!" he said tensely. "We'll go at it secretly—we'll do everything on the quiet. And before the next term begins the Brotherhood of the Free will be a real society—and not merely a name! By George! We'll make the Loyalists sit up! We'll show them what we can do!"

"And the Head and Nelson Lee will

be kicked out, and we shall be in power!" exclaimed Doyle breathlessly. "It's the idea of the century! Tucker, you can stay in this study for good now!"

"Rather!" agreed Armstrong. "He's a valuable man!"

T. T. beamed. At last he was being appreciated—at last his ideas were receiving the attention they deserved. And the plotters put their heads closer together—and they plotted!

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEAD'S LATEST.



"THICK as thieves!" murmured Jack Grey.

"Blessed if I can understand it," whispered Pitt. "He couldn't have been with them long—and yet they've taken him to their bosom like life-long pals. I don't like the look of it, Jack."

"Neither do I," said Grey softly.

They were in the classroom, and afternoon lessons had actually commenced. Strictly speaking, they ought not to have been talking at all, but Mr. Crowell happened to have his back turned while he was searching for a book in the cupboard.

Pitt and Grey were referring to the remarkable new friendship which had sprung up between Armstrong, Doyle, and Griffith, of Study J, and Timothy Tucker. These three juniors had not only taken T. T. in as a study-mate, but had been observed in earnest conversation with him on several occasions.

"I reckon we made a mistake to kick the ass out of our study," said Pitt. "While he was there we had him under our own eyes, and he couldn't do any damage. But he's fallen into a bad crowd."

"Yes, and I'll bet he's been talking about his Schoolboy Union—his Brotherhood of the Free," whispered Grey. "That's about the size of it, Reggie. He's managed to get their ears, and they've listened to him. There'll be some trouble over this later on."

"Well, it's quite likely," agreed Pitt. "At the same time, I'm not afraid of Armstrong doing much. He's not brainy enough. If the Rebels do really attempt

a revolt they'll soon be squashed. It might be as well to——"

"Pitt!" came Mr. Crowell's voice tartly.

"Yes, sir!"

"You were talking to Grey!" exclaimed Mr. Crowell. "Please remember, Pitt, that the Formroom is not the place for social conversation. If I catch you at it again I shall give you a hundred lines!"

Pitt humbly went on with his work; but forgot his manners to such an extent that he made an expressive grimace as Mr. Crowell turned his head. And the lesson went on quietly and evenly.

Outside the wind was increasing in power. It buffeted violently against the window-panes. The afternoon was very dull, and the clouds were thick and threatening. Some bad weather was evidently blowing up.

Before the Remove could proceed much further with its work the door suddenly opened. I looked up and frowned slightly as I saw who the newcomer was. Dr. Malcolm Stafford strode into the Formroom.

"My hat!" breathed Tommy Watson. "The Head!"

"No—not the Head!" I said quietly. "He's in one of his queer moods, Tommy, and he's not the same man. Unless I'm very much mistaken, this means trouble. The Rebels will get worse than ever after this."

Mr. Crowell rose to his feet—and, of course, every junior in the room did the same. They remained standing as the Head closed the door, and advanced towards Mr. Crowell's desk.

"The boys will cease work at once," said Dr. Stafford harshly.

"I trust nothing is wrong, sir?" asked Mr. Crowell, showing visible signs of nervousness. "The boys are just settling down for the afternoon, and——"

"You need not go into any lengthy details of the obvious, Mr. Crowell," interrupted the Head. "I am well aware that the boys are settling down—and I am also aware that they are to be disturbed. I have come here for the express purpose of disturbing them. I have work for them to do—outside!"

"Outside!" repeated Mr. Crowell, in surprise.

"Yes, sir—outside!" snapped the Head. "Do not irritate me, Mr. Crowell! You hear me quite distinctly,

and yet you repeat my words like a parrot! I detest any such absurdity!"

The Formmaster compressed his lips.

Dr. Stafford looked at the Form from beneath lowering brows. These "moods" of his had changed lately—changed in a subtle kind of way. He was no longer violent and wild; but icily cold, relentless, and cruel. Every atom of kindness was thrust out of his character, and only his harsher self remained.

"I have a few words to say to you, boys," he exclaimed. "You already know my views with regard to sports and games. I look upon them as a sheer waste of time. You are sent to this school in order to be educated—not to squander your time in running about muddy fields, or gallivanting on the river. I have therefore forbidden football and every other kind of sport. This you are aware of. In future there will be no games—no outdoor games permitted."

The Remove sat silent and inwardly boiling. Even the Loyalists found it very hard to retain any feeling of staunchness to the Head when he acted in this way. But they had pledged their word to me—and I knew they would be faithful.

"Exercise, however, is a totally different thing," continued the Head, a note of cunning maliciousness coming into his voice. "Exercise is essential to health—and digging is a most excellent pastime for developing muscles. This afternoon you will all be set to the task of digging."

"Oh!"

"Well, I'm blessed!"

"Digging!"

"Digging what?"

"Silence!" rapped out the Head.

"How dare you interrupt me in this fashion? You will all be set to the task of digging—the playing-fields! Since these will be no longer required for games, it would be a sheer waste of good ground to let them lie idle. It is my intention to turn the ground over until it is thoroughly fertile. In the spring it will be useful for vegetable growing."

The Remove was filled with utter dismay.

"It's—it's impossible!" muttered Church. "Dig up the playing-fields! I've never heard of anything like it in all my life! It—it can't be! Even the Head would never go to such lengths as that!"

"He'd better try it on!" breathed Handforth grimly.

"We'll never stand it!"

"Rather not!"

Even Mr. Crowell was staggered.

"Really, Dr. Stafford, I—I fail to understand!" he exclaimed, his nervousness forsaking him in his amazement. "Are you seriously suggesting that the boys should destroy the playing-fields?"

"No, sir!" snapped the Head. "The playing-fields will not be destroyed—they will merely be converted into fertile grounds!"

"But—but this is extraordinary!" protested Mr. Crowell. "I am astounded, sir! You surely cannot mean to turn over the turf on Little Side—turf which has taken many years to reach its present state of perfection!"

"When I require criticism from you, Mr. Crowell, I will ask for it!" snapped the Head curtly. "Whether you are astounded or not is of no interest to me whatever. I have come to this decision, and my orders shall be obeyed."

The Remove was rather stunned, and Mr. Crowell stood staring at the Head, and his cheeks were pale. This thing had come as a bombshell to all of us. It was so startling that we could hardly believe our ears.

The Head was determined to dig up the playing-fields.

It was too awful for contemplation. When he recovered from this peculiar disease of his, he would be himself. He would return to his former personality. It was comparatively easy for us to sit still and submit to his ravings.

But this was quite different.

Once the playing-fields were dug up they would be ruined. For years they would be practically hopeless. Of course, it would be possible to returf them at great expense—but even then they would not be the same. I found the Loyalists in the Remove casting their gaze in my direction anxiously and inquiringly. They wanted a cue from me—they wanted to know what to do. For, like myself, they felt it was impossible to submit to such an outrage. Their loyalty was hardly strong enough for that.

But I was unable to give them any sign as to what course we should adopt. For, as a matter of fact, I was totally at a loss. This shock had come upon us so suddenly that I had had no time to consider the position.

But the Head obviously noticed the signs of rebellion in the juniors' faces.

"You will all follow me out into the Triangle, and fall into a double column!" exclaimed the Head harshly. "Mr. Crowell, you will see that the boys remain orderly and silent. I may as well say at once that the first boy who attempts to break away will be flogged on the spot."

Dr. Stafford turned, and walked out of the Form-room—evidently leaving Mr. Crowell to bring the Remove out. The very instant the Head's back was turned, a perfect babble of voices broke out.

"We won't do it!"

"Never!"

"We ain't labourers!"

"Besides, we're not going to ruin Little Side!"

"No fear!"

"Boys, you really must be quiet!" interrupted Mr. Crowell worriedly. "Dear me! What strange ideas Dr. Stafford gets into his head! I am amazed that you should receive such instructions, my boys—but I have no alternative but to march you into the Triangle as the Headmaster directed. Come—you will follow me in an orderly fashion. I ask you, boys, to refrain from any rebellious conduct—I ask you this for my own sake as well as your own."

The Remove did not fail to respond to the request.

"Right, sir—we'll keep order!"

"We'll go like little lambs, sir!"

The fellows knew well enough that if there was any disturbance, Mr. Crowell would be blamed. And so the whole Remove trooped out into the Triangle, only pausing in the lobby to file into the cloak-room in order to get their caps and overcoats. Out-of-doors, it was bitterly cold, with the north-easterly wind driving down relentlessly.

Fullwood had taken care to be the last fellow in the line. And he remained in the cloak-room, slinking away in cover. As he had boldly said to Gulliver and Bell, he wasn't going to stand any of the Head's rot.

He did stand it—severely.

Dr. Stafford was already waiting, and his eagle eye at once detected that Fullwood was absent. He said no word, but marched fiercely into the Ancient House—and returned three minutes later, dragging Fullwood by the collar.

"Now, you insolent young blackguard, I intend to teach you a lesson!" said the

Head curtly. "I warned you in advance that any sign of insubordination would be rewarded by drastic punishment!"

"I—I couldn't find my cap, sir!" gasped Fullwood desperately.

"For that falsehood you shall receive two extra cuts!" exclaimed the Head. "Hold out your hand!"

Fullwood went through it properly. He was caned mercilessly—until he was sobbing and howling with pain. The Remove looked on without much sympathy—most of the fellows feeling that a good hitting would be beneficial to the Remove's biggest cad. But it made the rest think.

If the Head had threatened expulsion, the fellows would not have cared. For they knew that such a threat would never be carried out. A flogging, delivered on the instant, however, was a different matter. There were not many juniors who were plucky enough to rebel after having witnessed Fullwood's punishment.

"Perhaps that will show you that I am in earnest!" snarled the Head. "And let me tell you this—it will not aid you to defy me in a body. If you all refuse to do my bidding, I shall immediately birch you—one after the other. While I am the Headmaster of this school there will be no rebellion against my authority!"

The Remove, somewhat subdued and sullen, followed the Head with black expressions towards the playing-fields. In all probability a revolt would have occurred, regardless of the consequences.

But the Head decided to start operations on Big Side.

And that made a great difference. It was the seniors' section of the playing-fields, and the Remove did not feel particularly upset. So long as their own football ground was not interfered with, they were inclined to accept the situation philosophically. It was just an example of human selfishness—perfectly natural under the circumstances.

If the Head had ordered them to dig up Little Side they might have refused. But they started work with their spades on Big Side almost cheerfully. This was the seniors' funeral—not their's.

The Head had evidently prepared for this well beforehand, for we found stacks of spades waiting—all of them brand new. Mr. Cuttle, the school porter, was in the offing, looking rather pleasant. He had probably been busy, getting the

spades ready for their use. And the prospect of seeing the playing-fields dug up filled the bandy-legged Mr. Josh Cuttle with huge delight. Anything in the nature of a disaster always affected the porter in this way.

The work was hard, for the ground was harder. And the progress of the Remove was extremely slow. With the Head marching backwards and forward, the juniors were distributed right across Big Side.

Fortunately, work was commenced at the far end, so not much damage was done—indeed, the damage amounted to a mere trifle. Hardly a single row had been dug up before old Mother Nature stepped in.

Her intervention came as a great relief to the juniors, for out here it was bitterly cold and miserable. And this digging work was not at all to the liking of the fellows.

"We've got to stick it, you chaps—it's the only course," I said, to the fellows who were near me. "Pretend to be working hard—but do it as slowly as you can. When the Head comes to himself he'll be sorry."

"And so he ought to be!" growled Pitt. "Grrrr! What a biting wind!"

"Yes, and there's snow coming, too!" said Handforth. "It's here!" he added, as a flake settled on his hand.

And Handforth was right. The snow came down in a sudden flurry—a whirlwind of flakes which took us all by surprise. It was not merely just the starting of a snow shower, but a sudden violent storm accompanied by a howling gale.

Even the Head realised the impossibility of carrying on.

For five minutes he raved up and down shouting to the fellows to get on with their work. But he was in a more exposed position than we were, for we were all somewhat protected by the high hedge behind us. The Head received the full fury of the storm, and he was smothered with snow from head to foot. And the icy wind probably had the effect of cooling him down.

"Cease work!" he roared abruptly. "Every boy will throw down his tools and follow me indoors! This work will be resumed to-morrow! You will go at once to your class-room, and continue lessons under Mr. Crowell's orders."

"Hurrah!"

"Thank goodness!"

"Hurry up, you chaps!"

The juniors simply raced through the snow towards the Ancient House. The elements had beaten Dr. Stafford's evil design—and the playing-fields were saved!

CHAPTER V.

AN APPALLING ORDEAL.



NELSON LEE looked at me thoughtfully.

"Yes, Nipper, it is certainly high time that something was done," he exclaimed. "The Headmaster is getting worse every day—although, at the same time, his fits of violence are decreasing."

"In a kind of way," I admitted. "He's not so tornado-like as he was at first. But at that time these fits only came to him occasionally. And now he's almost in a continual state of badness. It's only at infrequent intervals that he becomes himself."

"You are right, Nipper," agreed Nelson Lee, frowning. "And I can tell you that the strain is having a grave effect upon Dr. Stafford's health. He is growing thinner—haggard. If this sort of thing continues his constitution will be completely undermined. So far, the effect is not alarming, and Dr. Stafford would become himself again if these horrible seizures were brought to a stop. And you may have noticed that the Head has become cruel and harsh without being violent. Every atom of his bad self has come to the fore."

"I should think I have noticed it, sir," I said. "What about this afternoon—wasn't that the limit? Ordering us to dig up the playing-fields! Whoever heard of such a mad idea!"

"It was the conception of an evil brain, Nipper," said Nelson Lee quietly. "We all have evil in our composition—even the best of us. And when every trace of good nature has been sapped away by the exercise of an insidious drug, that evil remains—and it accordingly holds full sway."

I stared.

"Drug, gov'nor?" I repeated. "What drug?"

"The drug that has been administered to Dr. Stafford at intervals during the last few weeks," replied Lee grimly.

"I have come to the conclusion, Nipper—and this is not merely a theory—that the Head has been the victim of a dastardly plot. A mysterious, deadly, potent drug has been introduced into his system. It is this drug which has been the cause of all the grave trouble."

I felt a thrill run through me. This was the first time I had heard the gov'nor speaking in really definite terms, and it meant one thing to me—it meant that he had got fairly and squarely on the track.

"My only hat!" I exclaimed. "So that's the scheme, is it? A mysterious drug is the cause of the Head's nightmare behaviour! But how is it administered, sir? How is it introduced into his system?"

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"I haven't the faintest idea," he replied.

"But you must have some sort of inkling, sir——"

"No, Nipper, I have not even an inkling," interrupted Nelson Lee. "I simply know that the facts are as I have stated, but, in spite of all my efforts, I cannot detect the method which is being employed. I have tested samples of the food which Dr. Stafford partakes of. I have analysed specimens of his breakfast, luncheon, tea, and dinner, but in every case I have only found wholesome food. It is the same with the Head's wine and other beverages. I am quite mystified; but I can assure you that I shall not be mystified for long."

"I suppose you're certain on one point, sir?" I asked. "You're certain about the identity of the man who's responsible?"

"I am!"

"He's Mr. Trenton?"

"I am divulging no secret when I agree with you on that point," said Nelson Lee. "Yes, Nipper, Mr. Trenton is the culprit—a clever man, a cunning, smooth-tongued rogue. He works in the dark, and never allows his real nature to be revealed. He is popular with the boys—popular because he only shows them his false self. But I think I shall prove to be his master."

"Think!" I repeated. "I jolly well know it, sir. The awful rotter! What's his game in trying to drive the Head dotty?"

"No, Nipper, Mr. Trenton is not

attempting any such thing as that," said Nelson Lee. "He has a motive, I am sure; and I have more than a suspicion that Mr. Trenton's real object is to bring about the dismissal of both Dr. Stafford and myself."

"Phew!" I whistled. "So that he can become the Head?"

"I would not exactly say that," replied the guv'nor. "But I am fighting, Nipper, and I intend to get the better of this snake-like enemy. Before so very long Mr. Hugh Trenton will be exposed in his true colours."

"Is he working absolutely alone, sir?"

"No."

"You—you mean that there are others behind him?"

"Well, obviously my meaning must be that," said Lee. "There are other people in this plot, Nipper—secret people, who do not expose themselves. I am not merely working against Mr. Trenton, but against an organised band. I cannot go into further details now, for I have not yet gathered all my facts together. Just continue your good work, and all will be well. I am delighted with the way you have gained the support of so many boys. Keep it up, Nipper. If the whole school turns against Dr. Stafford, my work will have been for nothing."

I was very thoughtful when I left the guv'nor's study shortly afterwards. It was fairly late in the evening, and it would soon be bedtime. I had come to Nelson Lee to ask him how things were going on, and his information had given me much satisfaction.

For I knew that he was gaining the measure of his enemies. Who these enemies were I couldn't tell. Trenton was the only one I actually knew of. And it was rather startling to learn that the Head's "fits" were caused by a drug.

I said nothing to my chums when I returned to Study C. Outside, snow was still falling, and the wind was howling with the fury of a gale. It was a cold, bitter night, and the fireside was a cheery place to be near.

Most of the fellows had been talking all the evening about the Head's latest stunt, the seniors being particularly indignant. There had been a protest meeting of the Fifth and Sixth in the Lecture Hall, and the prefects had put

all their heads together in their own sanctum.

Nothing, of course, had been done. The whole matter had been thoroughly aired, and talk had been very cheap; but, when it was all boiled down into hard facts, neither the seniors nor the juniors could think of any way in which the Head could be stopped. The seniors, naturally, were more alarmed than the Remove.

For Big Side had already been commenced upon, and, according to the Head, the work of digging it up was to continue on the morrow. But, as it happened, the upper school need not have been very alarmed.

Nelson Lee would not allow the playing fields to be mutilated any further. He had been unaware of the Head's extraordinary escapade until tea-time. And the guv'nor had assured me that both Big Side and Little Side were in no danger.

Some little time after I had left Nelson Lee's study, he rose to his feet, poked the fire up a bit, and then lit a cigarette. He soon threw this into the flames, however, as the smoke rather troubled his throat.

Nelson Lee had had a touch of a cold for a day or two, and it had finally resolved itself into a rather severe sore throat. Not that the guv'nor took much notice of trifles like this. A cold with him was of no consequence; he did not believe in the principle of nursing one up. He glanced at his watch, and found that the time was just after nine.

"Yes, I think it will be advisable," he murmured.

He switched out the electric light, passed outside, and made his way with brisk footsteps to Dr. Stafford's study. During this brief walk he was thinking of Mr. Trenton.

Several times during the present week he had attempted to discover the science-master's terrible secret—the secret which enabled him to cause such an appalling change in the Head's personality.

But all of Nelson Lee's efforts had been unsuccessful. He had watched his opportunities; he had even taken the liberty of searching Mr. Trenton's study. But the science-master would never know anything of this.

Arriving at his destination, Lee tapped upon the door, and entered. Ho

found the Head's study cheerful and glowing. A bright fire was crackling in the grate, and a reading-lamp with a warm red shade cast a cheerful circle of light upon the desk.

The Head himself was beyond, deep in the cushions of an easy-chair. He roused himself as Lee entered.

"Who is that?" he asked wearily.

"I—Lee," replied the detective. "I thought perhaps—"

"Oh, I am glad, Mr. Lee; I am very thankful that you have come," exclaimed Dr. Stafford quietly. "I was hoping that you would be good enough to come this evening. I need your advice and your sympathy."

"How are you feeling?" asked Nelson Lee, as he took a seat opposite to the Head.

"It would not be right to say that I feel unwell; yet, at the same time, I am certainly not myself," replied Dr. Stafford. "Mr. Lee, the strain is telling upon me. I am weary—I am worn out."

"You do not look well," said Nelson Lee. "You need a complete rest, and I'm afraid you cannot have one just yet. It is most essential that you should remain here—"

"But how can I remain?" asked the Head desperately. "Good heavens, Mr. Lee, you must know what has been happening to-day? Once again I have had one of those dreadful attacks—indeed, it is very seldom that I am myself these days. The attacks are becoming more continuous. I am not so violent, but there is a desire within me to perform every harsh action that the mind can conceive of. And if I am thwarted, my chief inclination is to do bodily harm to someone. It is all so foreign to my real nature—so terribly foreign! In Heaven's name, what can it mean?"

Lee was silent for a moment.

"I will tell you frankly, Dr. Stafford, that you have enemies," he said at length. "You are the victim of a plot. These strange attacks of yours are not natural; they are not the outcome of any change in yourself. They are artificially produced."

"Artificially produced?" repeated the Head, sitting forward. "Good gracious! How do you mean, Mr. Lee? In what way are they produced?"

"I cannot tell you," replied Nelson Lee quietly. "I only know that such

is the case, and I am telling you this now so that you may feel easier in mind. But it must be kept quite to ourselves."

"I cannot credit what you say, Mr. Lee," exclaimed the Head wearily. "You are telling me this in order to comfort me. It is very thoughtful of you, and very kindly; but it can really do no good. Just think of my actions this afternoon, Mr. Lee! What dreadful seed of insanity caused me to take the Remove boys out of their Form-room and set them to the task of digging up the playing fields? It is so appalling that I am staggered. My brain is cracking, Mr. Lee—it is crumbling—"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Lee sharply. "Your brain is perfectly sound, Dr. Stafford. I repeat, these attacks of yours are produced by artificial methods, and I am determined to get to the source of them."

"I pray that you may meet with swift success!" exclaimed the Head, with fervour. "As it is, I am living in a nightmare-like state, which is a terror to myself and every boy in the school. I am feared, Mr. Lee; I am shunned by my own boys. They regard me as a kind of an ogre, to slink away from whenever I approach."

Nelson Lee gently shook his head.

"You are exaggerating it, Dr. Stafford," he said. "I will admit that the boys are getting somewhat afraid of you; but that is only natural, under the circumstances. But it is quite wrong for you to say that they regard you as an ogre."

"I feel that I shall go out of my mind if this thing keeps on much longer," muttered the Head. "How do I know when an attack is coming? How can I be certain that I may not be assailed even within an hour from now? It is so mysterious—so horribly menacing! To-morrow I may order the boys out again, to dig up the playing fields—"

"I do not think that will happen," smiled Lee. "In any case, I shall be keeping a strict watch on you, and if anything of that nature occurs, you may be sure that I shall step in and put a stop to it."

The Head looked up eagerly.

"Ah, that is a good suggestion, Mr. Lee!" he exclaimed. "Do that. If I

(Continued on page 21)

SPECIAL ARTICLE! By Cuthbert Chambers,
ENTITLED:— “LEAVES FROM MY DIARY!”

NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

No. 4

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

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1921



(NIPPER'S MAGAZINE)

THE EDITOR'S DEN

ENTRANCE

EXIT

EDITOR

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

Dear Readers,—

Of course, a good many of you are cheap readers, but I don't want to be unduly personal. The cheap readers are the kind who borrow the "Mag." from the next-door study instead of buying a copy for themselves. Our circulation will never increase if you keep on like this.

It's nearly Christmas-time, and we shall all be leaving for the holidays soon after this appears. Accordingly, the entire Editorial Staff has been up to its eyes in work, preparing the Christmas Number. It will be on sale throughout the civilised world—that is, within the precincts of St. Frank's—much earlier than our usual number.

This week, as I promised, we have No. 1 of Handforth's new series. It's not very long, but I think you'll like it. The joke of it is, Handy thinks these articles are serious. Wait until you read the second— But wait a minute. There won't be any second next week.

Our Magnificent Super-Special Priceless Christmas Number will be a novel kind of affair. It won't be a bit like an ordinary issue. That's the secret I hinted at last week.

The bulk of our usual features will be conspicuous by their absence. The serial, for example, finishes in this number. Did I hear somebody say "Thank goodness"? Well, anyway, there won't be a serial. Neither will there be one of Handforth's articles. Neither will there be a short story. Neither will there be a piece of alleged poetry.

Then, you ask, what the dickens will there be?

Ah, that's what I'm going to tell you! Gather round, sweet ones, and lend me your shell-like ears. I would fain whisper feathery nothings into them. In other words, I'm going to let the cat out of the bag.

At enormous expense, I have secured from a celebrated author and playwright, Reginald Pitt, R.A.D.S. (No, that's not a misprint. It doesn't stand for "Rats." It means Member of Remove Amateur Dramatic Society.) I have secured, I say, a one-act comedy which can be staged by anybody who likes, free of all charge. There are only six characters, and there is no special scenery to get.

This little play can be acted at home, and ought to provide quite a lot of amusement and fun. As a matter of fact, some of our fellows are going to stage it at Lord Dorrimore's place during the holidays, and you'll read all about it in my usual yarn.

With regard to our plans for the future, I shall have something to say next week.

Yours to a cinder,
NIPPER (Editor).



Are Handforth and McClure very religious? We wouldn't like to make any definite statement on this question, but it is an undoubted fact that they invariably go to Church several times a day!



During a practice match last week Simmons was given a chance in the team. He played outside left. Judging by the form he displayed we suggest that in future he should be left outside.

Borrowing is a bad habit. Last week, when Owen major was hard up, he borrowed some cash from Canham. And now Owen major finds that he's Owen Canham more than he can pay. Well, nobody major do it, Owen.

We understand that a serious strike of soap factory workers is in progress, and a widespread shortage of soap is predicted. The extravagant expressions of joy heard in the Second and Third are now fully explained!

Nine diminutive fags had invaded the gardens, and were being hotly pursued across a patch of thyme by the gardener, when the man got a stitch in his side, and had to stop. Verily, a stitch in thyme saved nine!



Joey Heath (better known as "Chubby") of the Third, having failed with the banjo, is trying his hand with the violin. If he's as vile in this as he was with the banjo, we shall have to ban Joe altogether!

Seasonable joke (alleged): Why does the apple-turnover? Because it sees the mince-pie-ing when the jam-rolls.

Mr. Trenton, nosing about the kitchen quarters, bumped into a laden coalman, and received the man's shoulder somewhere in the vicinity of his ear. He also got a gentle shower of coals upon the top of his head. From the remarks he passed, one would gather that he didn't like to receive the coaled shoulder!

Dr. Stafford will find his staff 'ard to deal with if he keeps on as he is at present!

A new geyser has just been installed in one of the bathrooms. The old one had been taken out and left in the doorway. "Hallo!" said Edward Oswald Handforth, as he passed the door. "Here's the old geyser!" Hard luck that just as he uttered the words, Dr. Stafford appeared in the doorway! Handy was given the benefit of the doubt and five hundred lines.

When the First Eleven played Yexford College Seniors the other day, they arrived home battered, sore and torn. The Yexford fellows, it seemed, had played a dirty game all through. No wonder Fenton and his men had no appetite for tea—they'd been having "foul" all the afternoon!



We notice that the weighing machine on the platform at Bellton Station is hopelessly out of order. Is it surprising? We have just discovered that Fatty Little tried to weigh himself on it one day last week!

The rumour that the Washington Conference, with their "Scrapping of Armaments" proposals, have condemned Handforth's boots to be scrapped along with certain battleships, is unfounded. We understand that the Head has informed the Conference that Handy's boots were built for entirely peaceful purposes.

Armstrong as a leader is something new. At the moment of going to press he has blossomed out as the chief of the Remove Rebels. What we wonder is this: Is his Armstrong enough to carry him to victory? M'well, we hardly think so.



Mr. Stockdale, entering just as one of the gates was closing of its own accord (we'll leave it at that, anyway!) received the full force of it in his chest. He was bowled over into the lane like a ninepin. So now he knows what it's like to be "gated."

GREAT FREE PLATE! Nipper's Magazine will present a magnificent free plate—of tarts to Fatty Little, in recognition of his services as contributor!

SERIAL STORY.

THE MYSTERY OF MOOR COTTAGE!

By Reginald Pitt, Dick Goodwin, Solomon Levi, and Sir Lancelot Montgomery Tregellis-West

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Pitt, Goodwin, Levi, and Tregellis-West are on Bannington Moor. A storm is raging. They rescue Lord Clinkerstone from some mysterious strangers and a burning cottage. Nipper joins the party. Just when they have got Lord Clinkerstone safe, the villains come up with a big car, and kidnap the unfortunate peer. But Nipper, armed with an electric torch, discovers that the oil-tank of the car is leaking, and the juniors get on the trail.

(Now read on.)

FINAL INSTALMENT.

By Sir Montie Tregellis-West.

STRICTLY speaking, I don't profess to be an author, but as I've undertaken to finish this exciting serial story, I suppose I'd better make a shot at it. It's a frightful bore, and all that kind of thing, but I suppose it must be done. And, to tell the truth, I don't know how to get going—I don't, really.



The other fellows have made an appalling hash of things, and left me with a shocking mass of tangled threads to piece together. Levi was explaining how we got on the track of this bally motor-car—you know the one I mean. There are three villains in it—or four, I forget which—and Lord Clinkerstone, who's been kidnapped.

Begad! It was a shockingly cold night. The wind howled across the moor, and huge snowflakes came down like the very deuce. I was worrying no end, because I was wearing some of my best clothes, and my trousers were getting utterly ruined.

With Nipper using his electric torch, we hurried along the moorland road on the track of the motor-car—following the trail of oil. Why on earth Levi wanted to invent this, I don't know, because the tracks of the car were as clear as daylight, and we didn't need anything else.

"Dear old boys, we'll soon be in the thick of the excitement!"

Nipper said this, and Tommy Watson growled with disgust. No, that can't be

right, because Tommy Watson wasn't there. It would be frightfully absurd to bring him in. So I'll make it Pitt who growled.

"Excitement!" he repeated. "Begad! How can we overtake that car, going at this pace? Pray don't be so shockingly absurd, dear old fellow!"

Nipper told him to wait, and he also made some ridiculous remark about keeping his hair on. Probably he thought the wind might blow it off.

Anyhow, we soon came to the excitement. The car had got properly piled up in a snow-drift, and there it was, tipped over on one side. But there was nobody in it. There it lay quite abandoned.

But this didn't deter us. Nipper was there, and he simply followed the tracks of the men through the snow. And before we knew much more, we found ourselves down in the old moor quarry. This was probably twelve miles from the spot where the car was abandoned. But in our excitement we hardly noticed the distance. But it must have been a fearful bore for the villains, because they were carrying Lord Clinkerstone. And, after all, twelve miles is a good way—it is, really.

I haven't got much more room, so I'll have to condense the rest into a frightfully small space. That's the worst of being restricted, begad! It doesn't give a fellow a chance to get really going.

Anyhow, we followed these bounders into the tunnel. And away we went toward the old vault under the monastery ruins. We had nearly got there when there was a frightful shout, and the three villains came rushing along. Nipper whipped out his revolver (it turned out to be a pencil, afterwards) and pointed it.

"Hold!" he shouted. "Stand, or I fire!"

I don't think he exactly said those words, but that's all I can think of at the moment—and it sounds appropriate. The three frightful rogues gave in, and the next moment they were in the grasp of six stalwart constables. It was amazing where these policemen came from. But then we learnt the truth. For Lord Clinkerstone appeared, with his moustache on one side.

He took it off, and he stood revealed—

THE MYSTERY OF MOOR COTTAGE

(Continued from preceding page)

as Nelson Lee! This, of course, was a fearful shock to us. Nelson Lee explained that he had used the subterfuge as a means of capturing the three crooks, who were badly wanted by the police. Nelson Lee had lured them into the trap. And so

everything ended rippingly, and we were all happy. I believe I've made a shocking hash of all this, but I've done my best.

THE END.

(Thank goodness! Lord Clinkerstone turning out to be Nelson Lee doesn't agree with the first instalment a bit, but if I made these discrepancies right, I should have to re-write the whole yarn. So I think I'd better let it stand. And, anyhow, it's over. What a relief! I don't think I shall go grey, after all.—ED.)



FELLOWS I ADMIRE.

No. 1.—NIPPER.

WITHOUT the slightest doubt, Nipper is an extremely clever, highly accomplished fellow. I admire him exceedingly. Our Editor is not

merely clever, but very nearly a genius. He does things in a manner which stamps him as being possessed of a brain of the very first water. This expression may be misunderstood, so let me hasten to add that I don't mean to imply that Nipper has water on the brain. I should have said that his brain is of the very finest quality.

I have chosen him as the subject of this article because I admire him the most. I will just deal with his many accomplishments, one after the other, and explain why I have such great admiration for him.

To begin with, he's the captain of the Remove—a sturdy, resolute skipper who rules the destinies of the Form in a highly admirable manner. As a Form captain he is practically without an equal. Indeed, there is only one fellow who could skipper the Remove better than Nipper. And one day, when prejudice is killed, I shall get my chance. Strictly speaking, I ought to be Form captain now. But jealousy is a terrible thing to fight against.

Then we will take Nipper's accomplishments as a footballer. He is an astoundingly clever centre-forward, and the finest goal-scorer in the front line of the Remove eleven. Of course, the position of centre-forward should really be given to me,

since I could easily beat Nipper in this position in the team. Through rank prejudice, I am made goal-keeper. They couldn't find a better custodian, of course, but it's rather galling for a first-class forward to be put in goal. However, as I said, Nipper is a wonderful centre-forward—nearly as good as myself.

Then we will just say a few words about him as an editor. Could the magazine have a finer editor than Nipper? In asking this, I am, of course, excluding myself from the discussion. Nipper edits the magazine in a masterly way. The whole production is, in fact, a striking tribute to his genius. Personally, I consider it a rag, and I'm giving no secret away when I say that I could edit it far better. However, we mustn't bring personal opinions into an article like this.

As Nelson Lee's assistant, Nipper should know as much about crime and criminals as any boy living were it not that I have made a special study of detection myself. In this respect, I feel that I can pay him no higher compliment than to invite him to become my assistant when I am engaged in my next big case, which will not be long. Churchy and Clurey are such asses when it comes to detective work.

Altogether, Nipper is a fellow that anyone could admire. He is, without the slightest doubt, the cleverest chap in the Remove—with the single exception of myself. Putting the whole thing into a nutshell, I will aptly conclude by remarking that Nipper's braininess is nearly equal to my own—but, of course, not quite!

He's a really wonderful fellow!

SHORT STORY

THE GREAT RESTAURANT MYSTERY!

By FATTY LITTLE.

A Story of Crime and Criminals.

Getton Track, the famous detective, crouched in cover behind the lamp-post. His face was grim, set, and determined.

"So you see, Winkle," he hissed, "our man has gone into the restaurant."

"He must be hungry!" said Winkle, the great criminologist's assistant. "By pancakes! I could do with some grub, too, sir! Are we going into that restaurant? We can watch this crook, and feed at the same time!"

Getton Track nodded.

"You are right, Winkle," he said. "I am famished, too."

They crossed the busy thoroughfare, their eyes fixed steadily upon the array of choice articles of food in the window of the restaurant. Even as they were dodging the traffic, Getton Track was turning over in his mind what dishes he should order for the prospective feed. Winkle's mouth was already watering. Neither had tasted food for at least three-quarters of an hour. It was little wonder that they fairly burst into the restaurant.

Fortunately, there was an empty table



at the far corner. They made straight for it, and sat down. Getton Track seized the menu, and scanned it hungrily. Winkle waited with fast-beating heart. Then the waitress came up, and looked at the celebrated detective inquiringly.

"Would you like something, sir?" she asked politely.

"Yes, you had better take down a list," said Getton Track. "Bring up mutton cutlets, grilled tomatoes, stewed kidneys, and chipped potatoes. Cabbage, vegetable marrow, and Brussels sprouts. Stewed steak, Yorkshire pudding, and mashed potatoes. That will do for the first course."

(What about the plot?—Ed.)

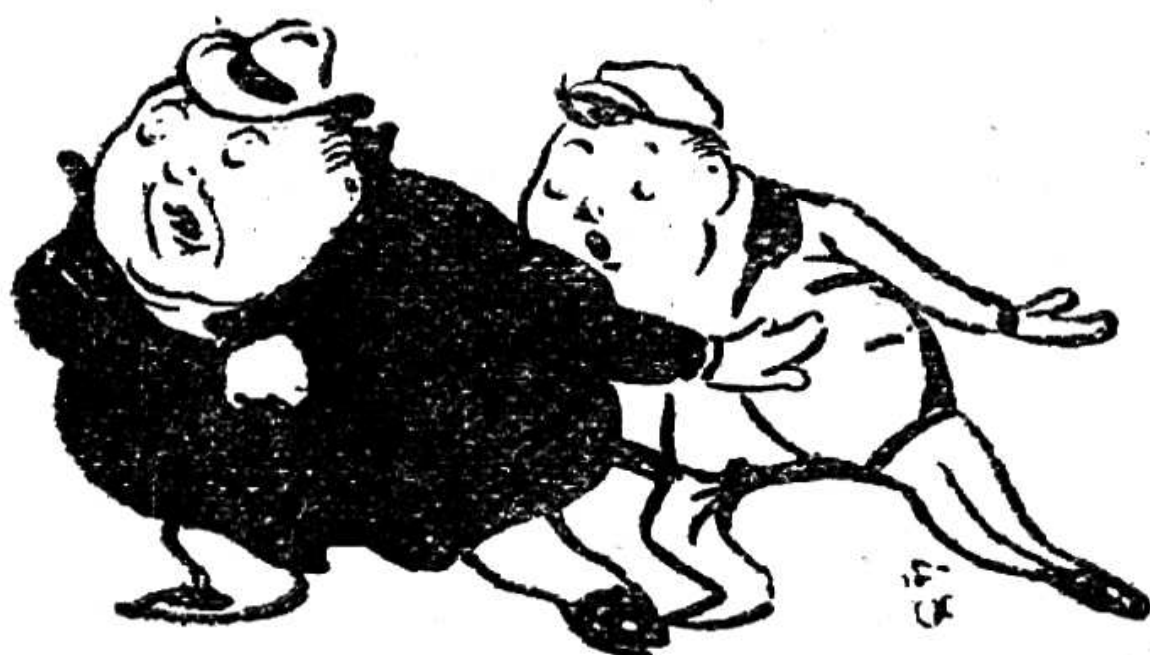
But at last the food arrived, steaming hot. Glorious grub! It came in all kinds of dishes, with gleaming covers, exuding forth the most luscious and delicious smells. The waitress set the tray down, and the celebrated detective and his assistant did not wait any longer. With eager, feverish hands, they helped themselves to the food, and partook ravenously. The course disappeared within a very few moments, since only a small amount had been ordered.

"For the next course we will have something rather more solid," said Getton Track, studying the menu. "Ah, here we are! Two large steak puddings, two treble portions of macaroni and tomato, poached eggs on rice, Welsh rarebit, sardines on toast, and shepherd's pie, and Irish stew. Bring also two loaves of bread and a dozen bottles of ginger pop!"

(What about that crime, and what about those criminals?—Ed.)

It was Winkle who gave the order for the next course.

"We will have pork pie, veal and ham pie, beef patties, beef rolls, jam tarts, cream puffs, doughnuts, buns, pancakes, Dundee cake, and



French pastries," he said breathlessly. "Wait a minute. You might as well bring some trifle and custard, stewed prunes and rice, buckwheat cakes and maple syrup, crumpets, toasted scones, and buttered muffins. Oh, and lemon blanc-mange, raspberry blanc-mange, wine jelly, and sliced pineapple. That'll do to be going on with, sir!"

"Yes, we can easily order more later," said Getton Track.

While they were partaking of the snack, which soon arrived, both Getton Track and Winkle were paying their whole attention to the menu. They finally decided to continue the meal with plum pudding, college pudding, apple pudding, baked roly-poly, peach tart, apple flan, sponge sandwich, ice-creams, merinques—

(Too late for the plot now! And the Great Restaurant Mystery, so far as we can see, is how in the name of miracles Getton Track and Winkle managed to demolish so much before the ambulance arrived! Short stories aren't in your line, Fatty. In future, you'd better confine yourself to grub. That's what you've done now, anyhow!—Ed.)



Scenes from my Diary

By Cuthbert Chambers
of the Fifth



Keeping a diary is one of the most interesting of pastimes. I have just been glancing through my old diaries, and it has struck me that my reminiscencies will make very entertaining reading for the MAGAZINE. In going to this trouble I am, of course, conferring a great honour upon Nipper's insignificant little publication, and I am sure he realises to the full how great this honour is. (Cuthbert tried to bribe two of our sub-editors to wangle this effusion into our pages. Having failed, he brought it personally to the Editorial Office, and after kicking the author out on his neck, I glanced through the manuscript. When I recovered I decided to publish it—simply and purely as an awful example. Ed.).

An entry in my first diary reminds me of the day when I arrived at St. Frank's. I was quite a youngster then, but my knowledge was so far in advance of other boys of my age, that I was placed in the Third. (He was old enough to go in the Remove.—Ed.). Naturally, I was supposed to be nervous, being a new boy. But nervousness is an unknown quantity to me. My first move was to interview the Headmaster. Boldly and coolly I entered the Head's study, and announced that I had arrived. He was very courteous, and we had quite a long chat, his opinions coinciding generally with my own. Of course, I didn't exactly chat with the Head. What I meant to say is that I answered his questions. In other words, he put me through an examination, from which I emerged with flying colours. In a nutshell, the Head was very personal.

Another interesting entry into my diary concerns the quarrel I had with Mr. Crowell, while I was in the Remove. I refer to it now because it was a great personal victory for me. Mr. Crowell insensed (Fifth Form spelling!—Ed.) me to a great extent by telling some of the other fellows that my boots were too small for me. He didn't exactly say it in this way. He put it most unpleasantly—actually remarking that I was too big for my boots. Naturally, I wasn't going to stand this. Without a moment's hesitation I strode to Mr. Crowell's study and faced him.

It was a dramatic moment. I was filled with righteous indignation, and at such times as these I am unconquerable. (He must have been thinking of chestnuts!—Ed.). My eyes blazed, and Mr Crowell visibly shrivelled beneath the fire of my scorn. At any rate, he jumped to his feet and went to a corner of the room. He was obviously alarmed.

I stormed, I raved, and I told Mr. Crowell precisely what I thought of him. At least, this is what I intended doing. How was I to know that Mr. Crowell went to the corner to fetch a cane? Not that this made any difference. I told him off in the most vigorous terms (after he got outside!—Ed.), and it was rather unfortunate that he failed to hear these remarks of mine. But I had the satisfaction of knowing that I had done the right thing. I was sore for three days afterwards. And I never had further occasion to put Mr. Crowell in his place.

Turning further pages, I come to the incident where I saved the school from being destroyed by fire (By blowing out a match, I suppose? Anyhow, we're having quite a cheerful blaze in the Editorial Office. The rest of Cuthbert's manuscript will save us from getting chilly. Oh, how could you, Cuthbert?—Ed.).



PERSONAL LIMERICKS*By CHARLES TALMADGE.*

Tom Burton, who's known as the Bo'sun—
 A nickname both apt and well-chosen—
 A son of the sea,
 Strong, sturdy and free,
 With a smile that couldn't be frozen !
 Study E boasts of Reginald Pitt,
 Who plays footer with prowess and grit,
 As swift as a hound,
 He covers the ground ;
 At outside-right he's certainly "it."
 If you're looking for tatters and rags,
 And a pair of disgraceful old bags,
 You'll find 'em on Sommy,
 A Duke who's quite rummy,
 Who on questions of dress never brags !
 Rumour says that Sol Levi's a Jew.
 In business he is hot, it is true,
 With vigour and zeal
 He's smart on a deal,
 But you must all agree he's true blue !
 We must have a word about Fatty
 Who dotes on the ham-and-beef patty,
 All day his mind runs
 On tarts and cream buns ;
 Unless he's well-packed he gets ratty !

IT IS RUMOURED

THAT the fellow who told Chambers he
 could write has been slaughtered.
 THAT Chambers intends to keep his
 famous diaries, and publish them
 in later years.
 THAT there's no Christmas pudding in
 existence large enough to satisfy
 Fatty Little's appetite.
 THAT Fatty is sending his clothes away to
 be enlarged in preparation for the
 coming Christmas festivities.
 THAT Tommy Watson's pretty sister
 Violet will shortly be making a
 visit to St. Frank's.
 THAT Handforth is eagerly looking
 forward to the day.
 THAT he is politeness itself to Tommy.
 THAT this looks significant.
 THAT Armstrong has a feeble idea that
 he's a strong leader.
 THAT everybody else has a strong idea
 that he's a feeble one.
 THAT the Rebels are making plans for a
 big coup.
 THAT it might turn out to be a coop,
 instead.

Who's Who at St. Frank's**STUDY E.**

REGINALD PITT.—The leader of Study E. He is about fifteen years of age, with dark hair and eyes and a swarthy complexion. Although rather slim of build, he is intensely active. As a new boy at St. Frank's, Pitt did not create a good impression. There was something cruel and cunning about him, and because of this, he became known as the "Serpent." On his arrival at St. Frank's he entered the College House, but he became so unpopular with the Monks that, after a fortnight, he was turned out, and had to seek fresh quarters elsewhere. Then he took up his abode in the Ancient House. Here he tried to bring disgrace on Nipper and schemed to get Tregellis-West and Handforth expelled. It would have gone badly with him had he not shown that beneath his unprincipled exterior he possessed courage of a very high order. At great personal risk, he saved Watson from a terrible death. He immediately earned the respect of the Juniors, who had previously looked upon him with contempt. His past bad record was completely forgotten in their

admiration for his pluck and self-sacrifice. This changed attitude of the Juniors towards him no doubt brought out his better qualities, and, as he found life at the school a great deal pleasanter when on good terms of fellowship, he renounced all his former ways, and became the good fellow we know him to-day. Turned to good account, his cleverness has made him a valuable asset to the Remove. He is a first-class footballer—as a right-winger he has never been equalled in the history of St. Frank's. As an amateur actor, Pitt is no less remarkable than as a footballer. On one occasion he impersonated his sister and deceived all his friends. Quite recently, he disguised himself as an Egyptian in order to play in professional football, and for the Christmas Number of "Nipper's Magazine," he is writing a play. Pitt first appeared in No. 170 of "The Nelson Lee Library," in a story called "The Coming of the Serpent." Other subsequent stories in which he has figured prominently are: "The Boat Race Mystery," "Nipper in Disgrace," "Expelled from St. Franks," "The Remove on Strike," "Poor Old Handforth," "The Closing of the Net," "The Serpent's Redemption," and, latterly, as the hero of a popular Footer series. His Study chums are Jack Grey and Timothy Tucker.

(Jack Grey and Timothy Tucker will appear in the next Who's Who.)

(Continued from page 20.)

behave in that mad way again, restrain me. Take no notice of what I say—treat me with contempt and scorn. If necessary, use violence—do anything to bring me to my senses. You are the only man who can do it, for you have strong will-power.”

“The whole matter is not so sinister as you fear,” went on Lee. “It appears in an exaggerated form to your own mind—”

“No, no!” interrupted the Head huskily. “I have a letter here, Mr. Lee—a letter from Sir John Brent, one of the School Governors. At the next general meeting of the Board it is quite probable that he will be appointed chairman. He requests me to send him an immediate explanation of my recent conduct. What can I say?” asked the Head brokenly. “How can I even reply?”

Nelson Lee frowned.

“How did Sir John Brent learn that anything was wrong?” he muttered. “How did he know that you have acted in any way different to your usual custom? I do not think the boys have complained—”

“Oh, it is possible that some of the juniors have written home, and their parents may have communicated directly with Sir John,” said the Head. “The fact remains, Mr. Lee, that Sir John knows the truth.”

Nelson Lee was looking very grim; he guessed how the information had reached Sir John Brent. Lee was practically certain that Mr. Hugh Trenton knew something about it.

“I fear to take my pen up in order to reply,” went on Dr. Stafford. “I have nothing to say, Mr. Lee; I can give no satisfactory explanation. Indeed, there is only one course open to me. I was considering it as you entered. I shall resign.”

Lee jumped up.

“No, you must not do that!” he said firmly.

“Must not! But—”

“You mustn’t think of resigning, Dr. Stafford,” said Nelson Lee. “That is exactly what your enemies are working for—to bring about your resignation. If you resigned you would simply be playing into their hands. All my work would be for nothing, and we should meet with failure. No matter what

happens, you must retain your post as Headmaster.”

The Head lay back in his chair.

“I don’t know what to do!” he said painfully. “I am worried out of my life, Mr. Lee. I am worn and miserable, and it seems to me that there is nothing left to me but to leave St. Frank’s in disgrace.”

“You are very pessimistic to-night,” smiled Nelson Lee. “You must cheer up, Dr. Stafford; you must try to look upon everything in a brighter light. I have every reason to believe that the worst corner of the lane has been negotiated. Take my advice, and go straight to bed and get a good sleep. In the morning you will be feeling better.”

“You are kind and thoughtful, Mr. Lee,” said the Head gratefully. “What I should do without your comforting personality, I do not dare to think. I have only you to look to—to rely upon. The other masters are polite and concerned, but they have recently assumed a coldness towards me which I cannot fail to observe. Even Mr. Stockdale is greatly changed. Mr. Trenton is the only other man who seems thoughtful and considerate; but, somehow, I don’t like him. He always strikes me as being insincere.”

“All these troubles will soon come to an end, Dr. Stafford,” said Nelson Lee smoothly. “If I comfort you I am greatly pleased. I need no other reward than to know you receive a certain amount of peace of mind when I am with you.”

“You are thinking always of me—and never of yourself,” said the Head. “Even at this moment, Mr. Lee, you are not well. I can see it in your face—I can hear it in your voice. You have a bad cold.”

“A mere chill—just a sore throat,” said Nelson Lee lightly. “You need not concern yourself on my behalf, Dr. Stafford.”

“But I do,” said the Head. “And even in that I am selfish, for I fear what would happen to me if you were taken really ill. Oh, by the way, try one of these. A sore throat, you say? I think these will give you relief, Mr. Lee.”

The Head reached forward, and took a little tin box from his desk. It contained a number of little black throat tablets—a patent medicine which the

Head was rather in favour of. They were of the kind which can be procured from any chemist's shop in the kingdom.

Nelson Lee laughed, and opened the box.

"Quite an old-fashioned remedy, eh?" he said, as he slipped one of the tablets into his mouth. "Thank you, Dr. Stafford."

"I have used those throat tablets for years," said the Head. "They always give me relief, Mr. Lee. As you know, I suffer a little with bronchial trouble, and one of those tablets every morning relieves me immediately. Take two or three, and slip one into your mouth just before you go to sleep."

Nelson Lee did so, and dropped the tablet into his waistcoat pocket.

"You must try to keep your mind at ease," he said. "Do not worry yourself unduly, Dr. Stafford. All these troubles will soon fade away."

"I sincerely trust so," replied the Head gravely.

Shortly afterwards Nelson Lee took his departure. He was glad that he had had this interview with Dr. Stafford, for he had completely put the stopper on the Head sending in his resignation. That would never do, for it would be playing directly into Mr. Trenton's hands. Right from the start, the science master had been working to secure that object.

Lee arrived in his own study, poked the fire into a blaze, and sat down. In spite of his sore throat he lit a cigarette and lay back dreamily, regarding the curls of blue smoke as he considered the situation.

Lee was rather worried. He knew his man, he knew something of the way in which this man was working. But he was absolutely in the dark regarding his actual methods of procedure. Once he had discovered that he would be well on to the road to complete success.

A piece of coal fell out of the fire, and rolled into the fender, flickering and smoking. With a sharp exclamation, Lee thrust his foot forward and savagely kicked at it. It flew into a hundred fragments.

"Good gracious!" muttered the detective.

He was rather startled—he couldn't quite understand what had caused him to act in that way. It was so abrupt

—so drastic. It was not his habit to give way to such unnecessarily savage impulses. For a few minutes he sat quite still, thinking it out, and he was slowly becoming aware of a subtle change in him.

Without exactly knowing why he did so, he rose to his feet and commenced pacing the study. The clock on the mantelpiece seemed to be ticking louder than usual. The regular swing of the pendulum irritated Nelson Lee beyond all measure. This was strange, since it had never irritated him before.

Acting on another impulse, he suddenly strode forward, seized the clock, and smashed it down into the fender with a terrific crash. At the sound of it Nelson Lee burst into a harsh, gloating cackle of laughter.

The sound startled him exceedingly. It didn't seem like his own voice—it had a queer, unnatural sound in his ears. Yet it was to his liking. And the fact that he had smashed the clock pleased him to an absurd extent. It was a valuable clock, too.

He continued his pacing, and with every step he took he became more and more strange. It wasn't as though he was unaware of this. He knew it—he felt it distinctly in his very marrow.

Happening to pause opposite the mirror, he glanced at his reflection. Then he stood perfectly still, a choking sound coming into his throat. For that vision in the mirror looked out upon him like another being. And it was a terrible shock to him.

For Nelson Lee saw a strained, distorted face with glaring eyes and twisted lips. He had been expecting to see his own reflection.

But this—this!

After the first moment or two he smiled, and the face became more horribly distorted than ever. And Nelson Lee began to like it—he approved of it. Ugly and horrible as it was, he was overjoyed to see it.

But what could this mean? What was this terrible change? This change which had occurred so swiftly, so unexpectedly? Somewhere within him, Nelson Lee knew what it meant, but his own personality was stifled—smothered—by this new character which had come to the fore.

He gave another harsh laugh, and then pulled himself up short. He clenched

his fists, and exerted every atom of his will power. And he was rather surprised to find that he gained control of himself. His face relaxed—he became himself. His mind reverted to its normal state.

But it was only by sheer concentration of will power that he kept this up. And during this brief period the truth came to him as a flash of light. He was in one of those extraordinary fits which Dr. Stafford had been so frequently attacked with!

He was in the same condition as the Head—only Lee's case seemed to be more violent, more terrible. But how? What was the cause of it? What insidious drug had been administered to him?

And then something seemed to snap in his head, and in a second his face was more distorted than ever, and he glared at the window with savage ferocity. Two juniors outside were shouting, and the sound filled Nelson Lee with black hatred.

It was nearly nine-thirty; nearly time for the juniors to go to bed. Those voices in the Triangle were like a spark to a fuse within Lee's brain. He tore his coat open, and whipped a revolver from his hip-pocket.

He knew why he had done so—his desire was to fling open the window, dash outside, and shoot down those wretches who were disturbing his peace. The very thought of killing them sent the blood tingling through his brain with ghastly joy. The desire to see blood flowing gripped him like a vice. The potency of this powerful drug was horrifying.

Lee took a step towards the window, his finger quivering on the trigger of his revolver. He paused, hesitated, and fought fiercely with himself. Once again his will power proved stronger than the poison which threatened his brain. With tense, drawn features, he turned away, threw himself upon a heavy oak bureau, and thrust the revolver into the top drawer. He turned the key, and then flung the key with all his force into the heart of the fire.

Even as he did so he rushed to the grate, and gave vent to a wild, insane exclamation of savagery.

"Fool!" he muttered. "Infernal fool!"

The key was in the heart of the glowing coals. With every second that passed

Lee was becoming wilder and less fit to control himself. He turned with a snarl, and commenced beating furiously, and helplessly against the bureau. He wanted that revolver—he wanted it so that he could shoot anybody he came in contact with.

His efforts to tear the drawer open were in vain. The thing was strongly built, and the lock a good one. Even his distorted mind realised that he could do nothing with his bare hands.

Back he went to the fender. He grasped the poker and smashed it down with all his strength upon the bare bars of the grate. The top one cracked in two, live coals were sent flying up in a shower, and the poker was bent by the tremendous force of the blow. And then Nelson Lee plucked at the live coal with his hands—searching for the key—searching for the tiny object which would put death into his hands.

He scarcely burnt himself, for he only held each coal for the fraction of a second. With blackened fingers he picked up the poker again. He stirred the fire, but the key had lost itself amid the glowing embers. Lee was like a maniac now. He was foiled, and by his own hand! But he had forgotten this. His feverish mind only knew that the key was in the grate.

He suddenly pulled himself up, and crouched there, listening. If anyone could have seen him at that moment, the watcher would have been scared almost to the point of swooning. For the famous detective looked ghastly with his unnatural features and glittering eyes lit up by the ruddy glow from the fire.

Voices! He could hear voices!

Like some animal of the forest he turned away from the fire, in a crouching attitude, with the poker held firmly in his grasp. Every trace of self-control now seemed to have deserted him. He was no longer a human being, but a fierce, fiendish Thing whose only desire was to destroy!

The voice that he heard distinctly was—my own. At that moment I was happily unconscious of the dreadful shock which was awaiting me. If I had known what lay in store, I would have turned down the passage and rushed away; for as long as I live I shall never forget what took place—what I saw.

It was just about bedtime, and I

had just come along to have a few words with the guv'nor before going upstairs. Tregellis-West and Watson had strolled to the end of the passage with me. I had nearly reached Nelson Lee's door when Watson asked me how long I would be.

"Only about two minutes!" I shouted.

"Don't forget to bring up those sweets!" called Tommy.

"Keep your hair on!" I yelled cheerfully. "They're in my pocket!"

I tapped on the guv'nor's door, and was about to enter when a strange sound came from within. In fact, I had got the door slightly open. It was slammed to and held so secure that I could not budge it.

I was astonished. But, as a matter of fact, Nelson Lee had saved my life by that action of his. He had crouched there, in the centre of the room, waiting—waiting for me to enter.

For, in spite of his changed personality, he knew it was I who was coming. He heard me tap at the door, and he gave a gloating gasp of evil delight. His first victim was at hand—almost within reach!

Then came a revulsion of feeling. A brief flash of reason returned to Nelson Lee. Any ordinary man—any man with a will of less power than Lee's—would have lost control utterly and completely. But the famous detective had an iron constitution, and a will like forged steel, highly tempered and sensitive. And, at this crucial moment, when my death hung in the balance, he took hold of himself.

And he slammed the door to and held it firm. Then he turned the key in the lock.

"Go away, Nipper—go away!" he said chokingly.

Outside, I gave a violent start. The voice seemed hoarse and muffled, and not at all recognisable as the guv'nor's. Just for a second I was alarmed, but then I laughed.

"None of your giddy games, guv'nor!" I said cheerfully. "You can't scare me like that! Let us in!"

I waited, grinning in anticipation, in happy ignorance.

For, inside the study, my voice acted like a spur to Nelson Lee's madness. He uttered a harsh laugh—which wasn't actually a laugh, but an animal-like gurgle of evil glee.

His burning eyes turned, his gaze resting upon the key in the door. With a wild shout he seized the key, and turned it. Then he flung the door open and crouched there, the poker upraised above his head.

This ghastly vision came before me in a flash. It was the biggest shock I had ever known in all my life. There he stood, with twisted, distorted features, his teeth bared, his shoulders hunched up like a deformed creature. And in his eyes there shone—not a light of madness, but something so revolting and terrifying that I staggered back, shivering in every limb.

Somehow, I knew that this was Nelson Lee, although he was absolutely unrecognisable as himself. I could see the guv'nor through this fiendish guise, and I could tell that he meant murder. It was there—staring at me.

I don't know what it was—perhaps the very sight of me—but the detective seized control of himself for the last time. What effort of will power it cost him I cannot possibly judge.

But he suddenly gave a sobbing, gasping cry, seized the door, and slammed it to with a crash which shook the whole passage. I heard the key turn in the lock, I heard the key removed, I heard it clatter across the room.

Nelson Lee staggered back from the door, a wild, dishevelled creature, hardly recognisable as a human being. He caught up a chair and sent it crashing across the room as though it was no heavier than a waste-paper basket. He clutched at the table, and a peal of horrible, fiendish laughter burst out from his snarling lips. Then he toppled over backwards.

It was over—Nelson Lee lay perfectly still.

CHAPTER VI.

THROUGH THE NIGHT!



JUST for a few moments I felt so weak and sick that my legs almost refused to hold my weight.

I sagged at the knees, and only kept my balance by clutching at the wall opposite Nelson Lee's study-door.

I was trembling in every limb.

Although I had no mirror to see a reflection of myself, I knew that my cheeks were ashen. My breath came and went in short, sobbing gasps.

The impression of that figure standing in the doorway was vividly before my eyes. I shuddered violently, and tried to pull myself together. I beat my hands against my sides, half-hoping that I was in the midst of a ghastly nightmare.

But no; this was the truth—the terrible, appalling truth.

And that apparition which I had seen—that horrifying, distorted, grotesque caricature of humanity—had been Nelson Lee! I knew it for certain, and I was scared out of my life.

“Oh, Heaven above!” I panted hoarsely. “What can it mean? It was the gov’nor—the gov’nor! And—and he looked like a demon! I can’t believe it. It’s too awful—too awful to think of!”

But, with a supreme effort, I took a hold of myself. I forced myself to become calm, so that I could think with some measure of clearness; and I realised that Nelson Lee was still in the study, locked in.

And, instinctively, I was glad that he was locked in. Many a time I had looked upon death in the course of my adventures with Nelson Lee; but never before had I so closely faced death as I had done a few minutes earlier. For I had read in the gov’nor’s eyes that he was waiting to kill me!

After the first wave of fear and horror had passed, I became strangely calm. It was something like the calmness of despair. Was it possible that Nelson Lee had turned into a raving maniac? I couldn’t believe it, although I had seen such terrible evidence. Yet, somehow, the gov’nor hadn’t seemed mad. Behind that frightful mask there had been the light of sanity in his eyes. He had wanted to kill me—not because he was insane, but because the desire to destroy had been there.

And the thoughts which flooded my mind were so appalling that I felt numb and helpless. All this, of course, swept through my brain in less than a minute. As soon as I had become calm, I felt a great fear for Nelson Lee’s safety.

I had heard that fiendish laugh of his, and I had heard him crash over to the floor. And now, within the

study, all was stillness—terrible; significant stillness. It was almost worse than the previous sounds.

A cold hand seemed to clutch at my heart as a thought came to me. Was the gov’nor dead? Was that sound I had heard the last utterance he would make in this world? I couldn’t believe it. Yet, lurking at the back of my mind, the fear was there—stark and awful.

And then came another change.

Panic seized me. I had an impulse to rush away, and to shriek for help; but something stopped me—some caution. I realised that I was the only one who had seen Nelson Lee in that ghastly state. There was not another soul in the whole school who had seen or heard.

What would happen if I ran shouting for help?

Prefects would come—Mr. Crowell, and some of the other masters. Nelson Lee’s study would have been burst open, and he would be seen there. The whole truth would come out; and the school would never understand. Whatever the explanation, outsiders would never know the truth.

But what if Nelson Lee was dead?

Awful thought though it was, it had to be faced. The panic fled as rapidly as it had come, and once again I stood there in the passage, as cold as ice and shivering in every limb. But I had a grip on myself, and while I stood in that way a soft sound came to my ears.

It was a sound which could not be mistaken.

The heavy, regular breathing of a human being! My heart gave a leap, and I knelt down, and applied my ear to the keyhole. Yes, I was right—my ears had not deceived me. Distinctly now I could hear the sound of Nelson Lee’s breathing; it was even, regular, but decidedly heavy. It was like the breathing of a man who was in a nightmare.

But there was no doubt about the fact that Nelson Lee was alive, and the regularity of his breathing convinced me that he was in no danger. I took my ear away, and applied my eye.

Never for an instant had I expected to see anything of the gov’nor; but I did see him. Directly in line with the keyhole, Nelson Lee was stretched across the floor, face upwards. I could only see a portion of his chest. His coat was flung back, his waistcoat was torn

open, and he looked thoroughly dishevelled. But the rise and fall of the chest was a sight which brought gladness to my terrified heart. And even then I hardly knew what to do.

Nelson Lee was safe. There was no fear of him dying for want of attention. It occurred to me that I might be able to slip out into the Triangle, and gain admittance by the window. But I was afraid to; I don't mind confessing that the very idea caused me to shudder. The greatest riches on earth could not have made me enter that study.

For all I knew, the gov'nor was only lying there—and not asleep. At my entrance he might leap to his feet, and hurl himself at me. That glimpse of him that I had received had put such horror into my soul that every ounce of my natural courage oozed away.

And all the time I felt a terrible, awful fear for my beloved gov'nor's safety. What had happened to him? That was the question which throbbed through my brain incessantly. What had caused this ghastly change? Less than an hour before I had spoken with Nelson Lee, and he had been himself. What had taken place during that interval to change the gov'nor from a man into a fiend?

I didn't want to leave the spot. The very thought of going away was dismissed on the second. No; I had to stay there. I had to wait—wait until something else happened. I was filled with a mad desire to see Nelson Lee himself once more. The thought of him remaining as I had seen him in that brief moment was so awful that my blood ran cold through my veins.

"Oh, so there you are!"

The voice came to me thickly, as though my head was encased in blankets. I turned dumbly, and through a mist I saw Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West approaching me. They were coming up the passage.

"Go away—go back!" I panted hoarsely.

I wasn't conscious of having spoken the words. They were forced from me almost without my knowing it. My chums halted, and stared at me in sudden alarm; and as they did so I managed to get myself under control.

"Great Scott!" gasped Watson. "What's the matter?"

"Matter?" I repeated huskily. "Nothing!"

"Dear old boy, you're as pale as a ghost!" exclaimed Montie, with deep concern. "Begad! You're shiverin' from head to foot—you are, really! What has happened, Nipper, old boy? Tell us!"

"I—I can't!" I said, clenching my fists. "Go away!" I added fiercely. "Do you hear? Go away! I don't want to speak to you—I don't want to see anybody! Leave me alone! Oh, for Heaven's sake, leave me alone!"

Sir Montie and Tommy exchanged startled glances.

"He's dotty!" muttered Watson, in a scared voice.

"No, Tommy boy, he's sane enough, but he seems to be a bit hysterical," said Sir Montie quietly. "He must have had a frightful shock—that's the only explanation. An' it must have been somethin' appallin' to send a chap like Nipper into this state."

I heard them discussing me, but took no notice. All I wanted was to be left by myself. These two were my closest chums, but their very presence got on my nerves at such a moment as this.

All my thoughts were in one direction—the gov'nor! I had no room in my brain to give attention to anything else. I was thinking of Nelson Lee all the time—only Nelson Lee.

"Can't you see I'm nearly distracted?" I asked, in a whisper. "Go away, you chaps! Please leave me alone!"

"But—but——"

"I want to be alone!" I said mechanically.

And I leaned back against the wall, covered my face with my hands, and fought to control my voice. There was a lump in my throat, which made speech almost impossible. What my chums thought of me, I didn't care, and to give them any explanation was out of the question. The secret of what I had seen would remain locked in my own breast for all time. To no living soul would I breathe a word.

Then came another thought—an appalling one.

Supposing the gov'nor heard us—supposing he got up and opened the door? What if Tregellis-West and Watson saw him as I had seen him? The very thought of it drove me frantic.

I grasped their arms, and gripped so tightly that Tommy Watson gave a yelp of pain.

"You've got to go away from here!" I said tensely. "Do you hear? You've got to go away!"

"Pull yourself together, you ass!" gasped Watson. "What's the matter with you? Have you seen a ghost, or what? What are you hanging about Mr. Lee's door for? What's happened in his study?"

The words startled me.

"Nothing!" I said harshly. "It's bedtime, isn't it? We'll all go up to the dormitory. Bed's the best place on a cold night like this."

While I was speaking I realised that the only way to get my chums off the scene was to take them away myself; otherwise they would have stopped there until goodness knows when.

I walked up the passage, and was conscious that I swayed as I did so. My mind was reeling, and I felt sick and dizzy. Straight before me there was the empty passage; but filling it, from wall to wall, came that dreadful face of the gov'nor. I could see it everywhere.

How I got upstairs I don't remember. Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West were just behind me. Poor chaps, they were terribly concerned, and filled with the deepest anxiety on my behalf. They couldn't understand what was the matter, and their only thoughts were for me. And I certainly looked ghastly—as pale as a ghost, haggard, and wild-eyed.

My chums only knew that I had suffered from some big shock. They found it impossible to discover anything else. As for guessing what could have happened, it was quite beyond them.

Outside the dormitory door, I paused. I didn't want to go in—I didn't want to face the Remove. Questions would be asked by the hundred. But I had to go in; there was no help for it. If I didn't, there would be more trouble. Prefects would come after me, and I should be hauled upstairs by force. Indeed, it was quite likely that the fellows would get alarmed, and send for Mr. Crowell. And perhaps Mr. Crowell would go for Nelson Lee—

Awful thought!

Yes, I had to go into the dormitory. It was the only way which would save

trouble; it was the only way which would assure Nelson Lee's study being undisturbed. Nobody must go there! Nobody must get inside and see the— the thing which I had seen. What the juniors thought, I didn't care.

I opened the dormitory door and strode in.

"Late bounders!" said Handforth, who was sitting up in bed. "We were practically ready to go to sleep. You'll get into a row— Hallo! What on earth— By George! Has anything happened?"

"Goodness knows!" said Watson. "We found Nipper like this in the lower passage, close against—"

"Shut up, confound you!" I snapped fiercely.

Watson flushed.

"Why, what's the idea?" he asked. "I didn't know—"

"Dear old boy, Nipper ain't himself," said Sir Montie quietly. "The best thing we can do is to leave him alone. He needs sleep, and perhaps he'll be feelin' better in the mornin'."

"Yes, but what's happened to him?" asked Pitt curiously.

"Out with it, Montie!"

"What's wrong with Nipper?"

"I don't know," replied Montie. "We found him like this—er—downstairs. I think he must have had a bad shock over somethin'. Don't question him, dear fellows. You can see he is fairly bowled over."

"Thanks!" I muttered gratefully.

In a mechanical kind of way I got undressed, rolled into bed, and pulled the blankets over me. A dozen fellows crowded round, full of curiosity and concern. They were full of eager, excited questions.

"Tell us about it, Nipper!"

"Don't be a rotter!"

"Let's know what gave you a scare!"

Their voices grated on my ears terribly. At such a time as this I wanted to be alone. More than anything else, I wanted complete silence, and they were babbling at me until I was nearly driven mad.

Suddenly I sat up and glared round.

"Go away!" I shouted thickly. "For mercy's sake go away!"

The juniors started back.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Handforth.

"He ought to see a doctor—"

"I don't want a doctor—I'm all

right!" I exclaimed. "All I want is to be left alone. I can't tell you anything I don't want to speak—and if you've got any consideration for me you'll get into bed and be quiet."

Something in my voice seemed to scare the juniors a bit. When they spoke again it was in whispers. And they went to their beds, and got quietly between the sheets. They continued discussing me, but in low tones. I lay in bed in a fever of fear and worry and trouble.

I don't remember the prefect coming to turn the lights out. My mind seemed to be something of a blank. My chief anxiety was for the fellows to get to sleep. All I wanted was silence—so that I could be alone with my thoughts.

Into my mind that picture kept coming—or, rather, two pictures. I could see Nelson Lee as he had crouched into the doorway with poker uplifted. And I could imagine him lying stretched upon the floor. I didn't want another soul on earth to know about that.

I thought I should have gone frantic with impatience. It seemed to me that the juniors kept talking in whispers for hours and hours. It seemed that half the night went before the murmur of conversation died down. As a matter of fact, the fellows hardly talked any longer than usual. And they only kept it up because they were discussing the extraordinary change in me.

But at last the the final whisper was uttered, and the Remove dormitory slept. Sleep for me was impossible. I couldn't even close my eyes. I lay there, staring at the ceiling—and there, upon that white-washed ceiling, was the haunting, horrible figure of Nelson Lee as I had seen him in that ghastly moment.

But I wasn't horrified now. I was anxious—wildly, dreadfully anxious. I wanted to go down and see how the guv'nor was getting on. I had no fear—I felt that I could face anything just so long as I knew the truth. It was only at times such as this that I fully realised the bond which held us so closely together.

Eleven o'clock struck and I thought that I was dreaming. I had imagined the time to be between two and three. Why, it was quite possible that some of the masters were not yet in bed. But this did not deter me. The juniors were

soundly off, and it would be safe for me to get up.

I slipped out of bed, and didn't wait to dress. The very thought of wasting time on such a thing seemed madness. I just grabbed a blanket, and in my bare feet I left the dormitory and padded softly downstairs.

The Ancient House was still and quiet, but outside the high wind was roaring round the corners of the old buildings with as much force as ever. Snow had ceased falling long since, but the whole countryside was clothed in the white mantle of winter, and the air was icy.

Arriving in the lower passages I sped towards Nelson Lee's study. The chill air gripped me, but I cared nothing for this. And at last I arrived at my destination. A gleam of light came from under Nelson Lee's door, causing a faint glow in the otherwise inky passage.

In a fever of excitement I dropped to my knees and stared through the key-hole.

There, in exactly the same position, Nelson Lee lay on the floor. He hadn't moved an inch. He was breathing more quietly now, and was probably in a sound sleep. Intensely relieved, I paused to consider the position.

Dare I knock?

It only took me a few moments to decide that I dare not. I don't consider myself funky, as a rule, but the mere suggestion of arousing Nelson Lee filled me with stark fear.

If he should be in that same demon condition—what would happen to me? I should be killed on the spot. I knew it. Horrible though it was to contemplate, I could not keep the truth from myself. And I decided that my only course was to wait—to wait until the guv'nor awoke. I should soon know the truth then. No matter how long it would be, I was determined to stop outside his door.

I rolled myself in my blanket, and laid down, careless of the draught and the cold. Never in my life have I spent such an awful night as that one was. I didn't sleep—I couldn't. But, continually, I had waking nightmares. Faces leered at me from the darkness—awful, distorted faces, with bared teeth. And in every face there was a resemblance to Nelson Lee. It was horrible.

And no sound came from within Nelson Lee's study. I could not even hear

his breathing now, for it was quiet and regular.

I suppose, in the end, I did actually drop off into fitful dozes, for every now and again I would wake up with a start—freezingly cold and with my teeth chattering.

And still no sound came from within Nelson Lee's study.

CHAPTER VII.

DISCOVERIES!



It seemed only a few minutes later, when suddenly the door opened and allowed a flood of light to come out into the dim passage. And there, standing in the doorway, was Nelson Lee himself.

Just for the first second I thought that I was dreaming. I lay on the floor in my blanket, my eyes wide open and staring, and my heart commenced to thump violently against my ribs. And a fear was gripping hold of me—a deadly, intense fear which nothing could alter.

It was a tense moment. I knew—now—that the gov'nor was a reality, and not merely the trick of my imagination. With the light streaming out behind him, I could not see his face. I couldn't tell whether he was his old self, or whether he was that awful apparition that had appeared to me just before bedtime.

Nelson Lee was about to walk out into the passage. Then, suddenly, he noticed my form stretched across the doorway. He pulled up short, and stared down. There was a catch in his throat.

"Why, good gracious!" he ejaculated. "What on earth—Nipper! What are you doing here, young 'un?"

My tense muscles relaxed. I went all limp, and the swift reaction left me rather faint and helpless. The voice was the old voice! Nelson Lee was himself again. The sudden relief was almost too much for me.

"Gov'nor," I said faintly. "It's you! Oh, thank heavens! I—I was afraid that—that—Oh, gov'nor! You gave me an awful scare!"

Lee bent down. He was rather shaky himself. His face was pale, and he was



I rolled myself up in my blanket and lay down, careless of the draught and cold. Never in my life have I spent such an awful night as that one was.

untidy and dusty and dishevelled. But there was no mistaking that strong set of his jaw, and the keen, kindly gleam in his eyes.

"How long have you been here, Nipper?" he asked softly.

"Ever since—ever since—Oh, you know, sir!" I muttered. "I went upstairs with the rest of the fellows, and then crept down. I—I couldn't rest up in the dormitory, gov'nor—I had to come here! I just had to!"

"Clad merely in your pyjamas, without slippers, and with only a single blanket to cover you?" exclaimed Lee reprovingly. "You reckless young scamp! Do you want to catch pneumonia?"

I tried to sit up.

"I don't know, guv'nor," I replied. "But—but then I didn't care what happened to me! Oh, you don't know how frightened I was! You—you don't know——"

"I think I can understand, Nipper, old boy," interrupted Nelson Lee tenderly. "I might have guessed that you would be here. Poor old chap! I expect I did give you a bit of a turn. But you mustn't be frightened of me now!"

"I'm not, sir!" I said huskily.

Nelson Lee went on his knees, and felt my hands and forehead. Then, without further ado, he gathered me up in his arms, and carried me swiftly into the study. The air within the apartment was warm and cheery. The bright electric light was welcome after the dimness of the passage. In the grate the fire was blazing up briskly and merrily.

Nelson Lee took me straight across to a big, comfortable lounge. He laid me upon it, and then swung it round so that I was right in front of the fire. I noticed the damage which had been done in the room.

"There you are, young 'un—you'll soon warm up now," said Nelson Lee smoothly. "Take a swig of this—it'll do you a world of good. I've just had a hefty dose on my own account."

He held a brandy flask to my lips, and I took a big gulp.

"Thanks, guv'nor," I muttered. "My hat! It's strong!"

"It need be—you require bucking up," said the guv'nor. "Poor old Nipper! What a time you must have had! But I don't think you've come to any real harm, and after you're thoroughly warmed up you'll feel more like yourself. Camping on my doorstep wasn't exactly pleasant, I'll warrant."

I rolled luxuriously on the comfortable lounge.

"I don't care, sir!" I said happily. "Nothing matters now. I was prepared to camp outside your door all night; all I wanted was to see you back as you are now, instead of—instead of——"

I broke off, shivering.

"You nearly succeeded, since the time must be almost four o'clock," said Nelson Lee. "I was just about to go outside for a breath of fresh air; but the sight of you, Nipper, has acted upon me as a much better tonic."

I'll stay here now—and you'll stay, too!"

What with the cheerful fire, and the dose of brandy, I was already feeling brighter and stronger. Colour had come back into my cheeks, the numbness had left my limbs, and a thousand questions were on the tip of my tongue.

Nelson Lee went across to the door, closed it, and then came and sat on the edge of the lounge, close beside me. He took hold of my hands, and pressed them affectionately.

"It's all right now, old son!" he whispered. "Thank Heaven, it's over!"

I tried to swallow the lump in my throat.

"But what happened, guv'nor?" I asked huskily. "You've got to tell me what happened! Oh, if you could only know how you looked when you crouched there in the doorway with that poker in your hand——"

"Hush—hush!" whispered Lee. "Don't think about it, young 'un; put the memory of that terrible moment right out of your mind. I did see myself—there is a mirror in this room. I never wish to see such a ghastly sight in my life again! That you should see me in that condition, Nipper, was an appalling catastrophe!"

"It wasn't you, guv'nor!" I whispered. "It was—it was a demon!"

"Tell me—there is one thing I am most anxious to know," said Nelson Lee. "Is there anybody else in the school who shares this dreadful secret——"

"Not a soul, sir," I interrupted quickly. "I'm the only one who saw you; I'm the only one who knows anything at all about it. Watson and Tregellis-West came along after—you had slammed and locked the door; but I got them away, and we went straight upstairs. So there's nobody in the Remove who even heard that anything unusual had happened. And I don't suppose anybody else knew, or I should have seen some indication of it."

Nelson Lee breathed a sigh of relief.

"A heavy weight is off my mind," he said fervently. "You don't know how thankful I am to hear this, Nipper."

"But what caused you to go like that, sir?" I asked. "It—it wasn't

as if you'd gone mad. It was worse—fifty times worse—”

“The thing happened for the first and the last time, my boy,” interrupted Lee quietly. “In a way, I am glad it did happen, for I have had an actual experience of this fiendish brain-poison which has been affecting the Headmaster so gravely of late. Furthermore, much that was obscure has now become perfectly clear.”

I stared at the gov'nor blankly.

“Brain-poison!” I repeated. “I—I don't understand, sir!”

“Surely, you ought to grasp my meaning,” said Nelson Lee. “I have already told you that the Head has been recently suffering from some mysterious drug. Well, I suffered also to-night.”

“Great Scott!” I panted. “Do—do you mean that Trenton gave you a dose?”

“No; I took it with my own hand.”

“Well I'm blessed!”

“But you may be quite sure that I did so unwittingly,” continued Nelson Lee. “This drug never affected Dr. Stafford in such an awful manner as it affected me. And I think I can understand the reason for this. You see, Nipper, the Head has been receiving these doses for some little time now, and no doubt Mr. Trenton has increased the drug—for, naturally, the Head is becoming inured to its use, and he requires stronger doses now than he did to begin with, to bring about the same effect.”

“Yes, I suppose that's reasonable, sir,” I said.

“I have never had the stuff in my system until to-night,” went on Lee. “And, you see, taking this extra large dose had an appalling effect. I was not only violent, but worse than any maniac. Nipper, I cannot possibly describe to you the awful change which occurred in my character. When you came to the door, my one wish was to kill you—to mangle you to pulp. How I managed to control myself while I slammed and locked the door, I shall never understand.”

“I thought it was all up with me, gov'nor,” I muttered shakily. “I—I didn't care, either. When I saw you like that, I wanted to finish everything! I shouldn't have cared if the world had come to an end! But—but what

horrible stuff that must be—that drug! It's worse than poison!”

“Well, although I referred to it myself as brain poison, it can hardly be regarded as dangerous to human life,” said Nelson Lee. “As an example, I am now perfectly healthy, and feel no ill-effects. This drug acts merely upon the brain—in some peculiar, subtle kind of way. It has no effect upon the heart, as far as I can judge. Dr. Stafford's health is somewhat weakened, but that is on account of his worry and constant trouble. The drug itself has not harmed him physically.”

“But look what it's done to his mind, sir!”

“It has not even harmed his mind, Nipper,” said Lee. “You see, this drug does no actual damage, but has a terrible effect while it works on the system. This effect soon wears off—leaving the brain as active and virile as ever. So far as I can understand, the stuff acts temporarily upon the brain—destroying, for the time being, every trace of kindly human instinct. Thus the victim is reduced to an animal-like state, with all the evil in his nature ready to find an outlet—unbridled and out of control.”

“It's awful, gov'nor!” I muttered. “I didn't think you had any evil in your nature.”

Nelson Lee smiled.

“Even the best of us have evil, Nipper,” he replied. “Men who are naturally humane and kindly succeed in quelling their evil natures so effectively that there is no indication that any evil exists. On the other hand, a born murderer—a man possessed of blood-lust—has no control over his bad self. This drug of Trenton's has the peculiar and terrible effect of separating the two characters which every man has in his being. Or, to be more exact, it temporarily destroys the good character, leaving the evil in full sway.”

“Trenton ought to be imprisoned for life, gov'nor!” I exclaimed hotly. “He's a deadly criminal! He's discovered this stuff, and he's been using it in horrible ways. But how did you manage to take a dose, sir?” I added. “That's what I want to find out. And how has Mr. Trenton been administering it to the Head?”

“I do not know for absolute certain—but I have a very strong suspicion,” replied Nelson Lee. “In any case, Nipper, it is not my intention to discuss the

matter further with you now. You have had a trying ordeal, and you must get off to sleep at once. We will have a further talk to-morrow."

I positively refused to get to sleep. I told the gov'nor that I wouldn't sleep a wink unless he took me into his full confidence at once. And in the middle of it, I succumbed to the genial warmth of the blankets, the cheerful glow of the fire and the weary, tired feeling which had been stealing over me. In other words, I fell off into a sound, untroubled sleep.

But Nelson Lee remained very much awake.

A few minutes by the window cleared his brain wonderfully, and he was soon feeling practically his old self.

It was now getting on for five o'clock, but Nelson Lee had no intention of going to bed. With his face set grimly, he made his way to the Headmaster's study. It was not locked, so he easily gained an entrance. And from Dr. Stafford's desk he removed that innocent-looking little box of throat tablets. The hour following was an important one—an hour spent in Lee's laboratory, where he ap-

plied chemical tests and made a brief analysis of the tablets.

The result was as he had expected. In the two tablets he experimented with, there were traces of some foreign drug which the manufacturers had never included among the ingredients. This was merely a preliminary analysis—Lee would undertake elaborate experiments later on, when he had more time.

But he was satisfied for the moment.

He knew how Mr. Trenton had been administering the drug into the Headmaster's system. So simple—and yet so cunning! A mere box of throat tablets! The Head was in the habit of taking one every morning—and Trenton had had no difficulty in getting at this fact. Obviously, the science master had removed the tin in the dark hours of the night, had tampered with each tablet, and had then replaced the tin—the Head knowing and suspecting nothing. Every one of his attacks had been brought on by the taking of an apparently harmless throat tablet!

It was now close upon seven o'clock, and only a few domestics were up and about. Nelson Lee went to the village.

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knocked up the chemist, and obtained a new box of throat tablets of the same well-known manufacture as the Head's. They were of a widely used brand which could be purchased in almost every town and village.

And when the Head entered his study that morning there was nothing to tell him that there had been an alteration. But there had been an alteration—quite a small one, but of extreme significance.

And Nelson Lee, sitting before his own fire, was looking grim and stern.

"Now, Mr. Trenton!" he murmured softly. "I rather fancy that your claws are clipped!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A GENERAL INVITATION.



"WELL I'm jiggered!" "What's become of him?"

"Where can the ass have got to?"

All sorts of questions were being asked in the Remove dormitory. The rising-bell had clanged out some little time earlier, and the juniors were reluctantly commencing to attire themselves for the labours and worries of the new day.

Then, in the midst of the yawns and grumbles, somebody had made the momentous discovery that my bed was empty. A little interest was awakened—particularly when the fellows remembered my strange behaviour of the previous night.

"It's frightfully queer, Tommy boy," murmured Sir Montie Tregellis-West anxiously. "It is really! What can have become of Nipper? I'm shockin'ly concerned, begad! I hope the dear fellow is all right."

"He was jolly rummy last night," said Watson. "Wouldn't tell us a thing—had a fearful shock, or something. Perhaps he got up in the middle of the night, and is roaming about with his mind wandering with him!"

"Pray, don't attempt to be funny on such a matter," said Montie severely.

"Don't you chaps know where Nipper is?" demanded Handforth.

"How should we know?" said Watson. "He didn't tell us——"

"What-ho, within! Greetings of the fair morning, sweet ones!"

The juniors turned, and found me in the doorway. I was tastefully attired

in a blanket and precious little else, and my face wore a smile about twice as broad as it was long.

"It's Nipper!"

"You—you bounder!" shouted Watson, rushing up. "Where have you been?"

"Dear old boy, you scared us frightfully!" said Sir Montie. "You did, really!"

I waltzed into the dormitory. As a matter of fact, I was feeling supremely happy just then. I had awakened in the gov'nor's study with Nelson Lee bending over me. He was all right, and I was all right. Therefore, everything was all right. The memories of the night were like a ghastly nightmare.

"Explain yourself, you prize fathead!" said Handforth politely. "Where have you just sprung from? What was up with you last night? Why did you go white and shivery? How many ghosts had you see?"

"Steady on!" I grinned. "Give me a chance——"

"Out with it, Nipper!" said Pitt. "We're all waiting for the yarn!"

"Yes, rather!" chorused the others. I looked round calmly.

"There isn't any yarn!" I said. "I wasn't quite myself last night—that's all. Awfully sorry I haven't got anything startling to tell you. That's the worst of letting your imaginations run riot. There was no earthly reason why you should imagine things about me."

"Do you think we're satisfied with that?" roared Handforth. "You—you fathead! Last night you were scared so stiff that you couldn't even speak! You were as hysterical as any girl! And now you tell us we've been imagining things."

"Sorry," I said. "But I can't say any more."

And, although I was threatened with the most dire consequences—including some awful punishment with boiling oil in it—I said no more. Not one word of the actual truth could I breathe to the fellows. And I certainly couldn't tell them a string of lies. The only course, therefore, was to say nothing.

To Tommy and Sir Montie I gave a mere ghost of the actual truth. In the privacy of Study C, just before breakfast, I told them that I'd been very foolish—that I thought that Nelson Lee was in serious trouble, and that I had worried unduly. They knew well enough

that there was more in it than this, but they easily understood that I should prefer to let the matter drop.

The rest of the fellows being thoughtless schoolboys, very soon dismissed the matter from their minds. I was all right now, and so there was no need for them to worry—and there was nothing for them to talk about.

I was truly thankful that nobody else in the school had seen Nelson Lee under the influence of that horrible drug. Nobody had seen him, and nobody knew anything about him.

I felt as though a great weight had been lifted from my shoulders. When I looked out into the Triangle, the grass seemed greener, the sky brighter, the fields fresher.

And I was further cheered by the fact that Nelson Lee had now got on the track—decisively and positively. There would be no further probing into the darkness. He had a direct clue, and it could only be a matter of a few days before Mr. Trenton was unmasked. Indeed, I didn't see any particular reason why he shouldn't be unmasked at once.

The gov'nor had plenty of evidence, and as I pointed out to him, it was dangerous to have such a cold-blooded rogue about the premises. But Nelson Lee smilingly shook his head, and told me the time for action had not yet come. He added that it would probably not arrive until after the Christmas holidays were over—not until the new term had commenced.

He assured me that Dr. Stafford would be all right henceforth—but, personally, I was not quite so sanguine about this. I feared that Mr. Trenton would find some other method of introducing his drug into the Head's system. But Nelson Lee explained that Trenton was merely an agent. He was one member of a powerful organisation. To expose him would be a mad mistake, since he would be exposed alone. Nelson Lee wanted to induce larger fish into the meshes of his net.

And so I decided not to worry further about the matter. For there were plenty of other things to engage my attention. The Christmas holidays were close at hand, and all sorts of things had to be done. Even the Rebels, under Armstrong's leadership, almost forgot to be Rebels in the general excitement of the near approach of Christmas.

Soon after breakfast that morning Mr.

Trenton tapped upon the door of the Head's study, and quietly entered. He was as smilingly suave as ever—the last man in the world whom one would suspect of evil doing.

He entered the study almost hesitatingly, as though he were half afraid of what he might find within. The Head was sitting at his desk, and he looked up with a smile at the science master.

"It is quite all right, Mr. Trenton," he said. "I am not in an ill-humour to-day. I'm afraid I must have insulted you on more than one occasion. If so, I trust that you will forgive me."

"Certainly, sir—freely and willingly," said Mr. Trenton earnestly. "I have been worrying about your health, sir, and I took the liberty of coming in this morning to see if you were feeling better. I am relieved and delighted to see you so well."

"Thank you, Mr. Trenton—I appreciate your kindly thought," said the Head warmly. "Yes, I am quite myself, except for a slight cold— Oh, by the way! That reminds me—I have been so busy that I have neglected to take my usual throat tablet."

Mr. Trenton smiled curiously.

"You mustn't forget that, sir," he said. "May I hand you the box?"

He passed the box over, and the Head selected one of the little tablets, and swallowed it. Mr. Trenton only remained a few minutes longer. And as he strode down the passage the smile vanished, and was replaced by a look of cunning hatred and gloating triumph. It was an expression which Mr. Trenton allowed nobody to see.

"The Head will be violent to-day," he murmured. "Oh, yes—quite violent! It will probably mean a big scene, and general trouble. Within an hour, Dr. Stafford will be a changed man!"

And while the science master was thinking in this way, other rather mysterious happenings were taking place in a different part of the school. Nobody noticed it particularly—nobody, that is, except the fellows who were taking part in the affair.

Those who were not "in the know," thought nothing—suspected nothing.

But it was an undoubted fact that Armstrong, Griffith, Doyle, Merrell, Marriott, and all the other Rebels wandered off in the same direction. They finally gathered together in a quiet loft somewhere at the back of the College

House. And here Timothy Tucker presided.

It was not a noisy meeting, as one might have supposed. There was no laughter, and no hilarity whatever. All the faces were serious, and momentous matters were discussed.

It was evident, in fact, that the Rebels had taken up Tucker's scheme in real earnest. The Brotherhood of the Free was to become an actual society, and not merely a myth. T. T.'s dream of a Schoolboys' Union seemed as though it was to be realised.

In that old loft some plans were discussed—grim, desperate plans. These fellows were not regarding the thing lightly. They were absolutely firm in their determination to carry their plans to success. And the nearness of the Christmas holidays was highly to their satisfaction.

"Comrades and brothers!" said Tucker solemnly. "This is a momentous occasion. H'm! H'm! That is so! The position is this—we are a grim and organised body. The Brotherhood of the Free is a real organisation—and the time will soon come when the Brotherhood will strike. Yes, friends, the Brotherhood will strike the great blow for freedom. Then, when we have emerged victorious, the school will be ours. No longer shall we slave under the present prison-like system. Our object is to capture St. Frank's entirely. Quite so. We shall run it ourselves—on lines that are to our own liking. And, once the Brotherhood of the Free is in sole command, the Soviet system will be established, including Special Councils—which correspond to Workmen's Councils in a different sphere of life. Be ready, my friends—be prepared! The great moment for action will arrive while we are absent from the school—while we are on holiday! I must have no blacklegs in my ranks. All must remain true to the cause. And when the call comes—that call must be answered unquestioningly, blindly, and without a second's delay. And the call will come. So be ready!"

This was only a portion of Tucker's earnest speech. And Armstrong was no less voluble. It was fairly evident, in fact, that the Rebels were preparing for some big coup—which was to come off during the holidays! If the Loyalists had only known of it things might not

have developed in the actual manner that they did. But for once the Loyalists—including myself—underestimated the strength of the enemy.

The Rebels were proving themselves to be a live force. And, ere long, they were destined to show us the full strength of their newly born power!

I certainly did begin to notice that Armstrong's followers were rather more excited than usual. In the Form-room that morning there were many whispers amongst the Rebels. And, after lessons, they gathered about in twos and threes, whispering, and drying up when any outsider happened to approach.

But then came a diversion.

It was during the free-and-easy spell before dinner. A big open motor-car rolled in at the gateway, and in it sat a figure I recognised on the instant. The figure waved a cheery hand, and I flushed up with pleasure and excitement.

"Dorrie!" I chuckled delightedly.

"Begad!"

We rushed across to the car, which contained no less a person than Lord Dorrimore—Nelson Lee's great friend. Lord Dorrimore, the sporting peer, the great explorer, the happy-go-lucky, good-natured, dear old Dorrie!

"Well, how goes it, my cherubs?" he asked languidly, as he elbowed himself out of the driving-seat. "Hallo, Nipper! Hallo, Watson! Hallo, Montie! In fact, hallo, everybody! Even if I knew all your names, I haven't got time to string 'em all out!"

He grinned amiably, and shook hands.

"I didn't write or wire, because I didn't want you to make any special arrangements for me," he went on. "There's nothin' I hate worse than bein' pampered. I simply hate causin' people trouble. An' I've only come down to say a few words, in any case."

"Just the same as ever, Dorrie!" I chuckled. "You're as unchanging as the stars!"

"You see shootin' stars sometimes," remarked Dorrie. "By gad! That's true about me, too! I do a bit of shootin' sometimes. In fact, I've just got back from Africa, an' a few deceased denizens of the jungle testify to the fact that my shootin' is a dashed sight straighter than any bally star can boast of!"

"I suppose you've come over for Christmas?" I inquired.

"Your powers of reasonin' are still staggerin' to the senses," observed Dorrie calmly. "Yes, Nipper, I've come home for Christmas. I simply hate bein' lonely; an' Dorrimore Hall is such a large place that there's no fun there unless it's well filled. So I want all you youngsters to spend Christmas with me. I can promise you a first-class time!"

"Can I come, sir?" shouted Hubbard excitedly.

"You're as welcome as flour in a puddin'-basin!" said Dorrie cheerfully.

"You lucky bounder, Hubby!" said Armstrong. "I wish I could go——"

"I'm invitin' the whole Remove," interrupted Lord Dorrimore. "That's what I've come here for. We don't want to make any exceptions, or restrict the numbers. Dorrimore Hall is big enough for the whole crowd. Come in your multitudes, my sons, an' you'll be received with open arms—to say nothin' about Christmas puddin' an' mince pies an' turkey an' trifles, an' goodness knows what else! I want to spend a really merry Christmas, an' the best way to do it is to have you youngsters dodgin' round me. We can have some merry old times!"

"Great doughnuts!" said Fatty Little dreamily, clasping his hands and smacking his lips with ecstasy. "Christmas at Dorrimore Hall! Tarts—custards—sausage rolls—beef pasties—cream puff—pork pies—plum cake——"

"All them, and a few more!" chuckled Dorrie.

Of course, the Remove went nearly dotty with excitement at first. This was just like Lord Dorrimore—to make a sweeping invitation to the whole Remove. And, naturally enough, nearly all the fellows accepted. Some of them couldn't, being booked elsewhere. But at least eighty per cent. of the Remove gladly and joyfully promised to be at Dorrimore Hall. Nelson Lee and I

would be there, of course, but the guv'nor hinted to me that it would probably be necessary for him to make several journeys during the stay.

If the juniors were delighted that day, there was somebody at St. Frank's who was puzzled, and not only puzzled, but secretly alarmed and dismayed. Mr. Hugh Trenton was nearly staggered.

For the Head remained in the best of health, and in the best of tempers. Yet he had taken the tablet in Mr. Trenton's very presence. There was utterly no effect!

It was not surprising that the science master was secretly worried. He did not actually suspect that the tablets had been changed. After much thought he came to the conclusion that one of the tablets had missed his attention, and thus remained untampered with.

But, although Mr. Trenton comforted himself in this way, he was nevertheless worried and uneasy. He suspected Nelson Lee in a vague, uncertain kind of way. And he feared the great detective with a very real fear.

If he had only known the actual truth he would probably have forsaken his evil scheme on the spot. But he was in ignorance, and so he continued his plans—plans which were ultimately to lead to his undoing.

Lord Dorrimore did not stay long at St. Frank's. But his visit was quite lengthy enough for him to tell us all that the preparations at Dorrimore Hall were of the most magnificent order. Lavish in all things, and being blessed with more money than he could do with, Dorrie was making ready to give a Christmas party which would break all records.

Little did we realise what dramatic and startling events would happen during our holiday stay at Lord Dorrimore's ancestral home!

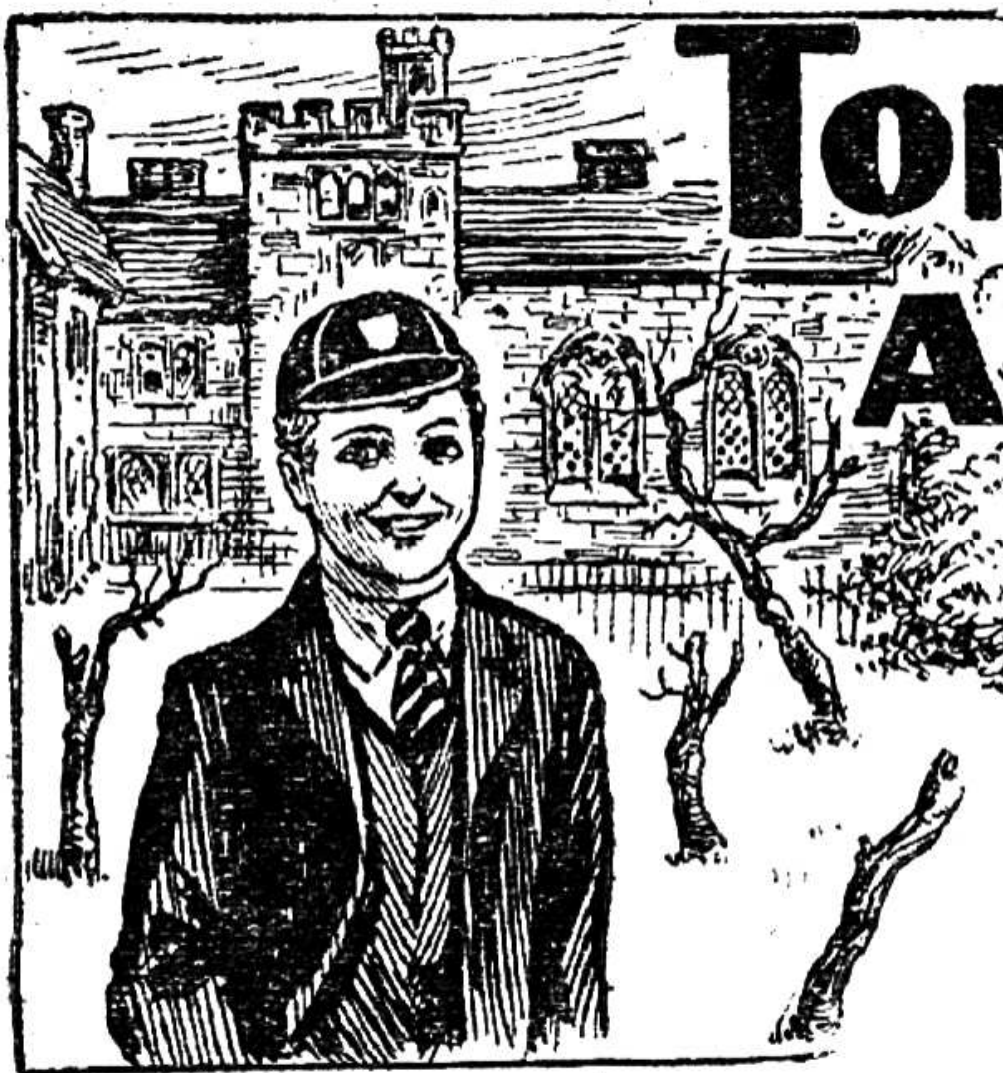
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TOM TARTAR AT SCHOOL

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THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Tom Tartar arrives at Mr. Wrasper's school, an institute for the culture of the young by moral force only. The school consists of thirty-boys and Foster Moore, a tutor, who is much feared by the boys. Tom chums up with Sam Smith and Willie Gray, who acquaint him with Mr. Wrasper's original methods and initiate him into the band of the "Eagles," a party opposed to the "Cuckoos," of whom Jonah Worrey, a bulley, is the leader.

(Now read on.)

CHAPTER V.

Turrell is Mysterious.

THE wide staircase was, as an example of wood-carving, the most wonderful Tom had ever seen. Every bit of it was quaint and striking, and the panels on the walls were of polished walnut, dimmed by neglect, but still rich and good to the eye.

The dormitories were situated on the first-floor, and the doors were numbered from one to six. Worrey opened No. 1 door and walked in, followed by Tom and four other boys.

There were three beds on each of two sides of the room. The other sides were occupied by two windows and a fireplace.

The beds struck Tom as peculiar. Between each was a tall, carved wooden screen, with a flap at the bottom, which, when closed, completely shut off each occupant from his neighbour, and also from the room itself.

"Nice and snug, ain't it?" remarked Jonah Worrey, with an unpleasant grin. "If you expected pillow-fights and rotten larks of that sort, you won't get 'em here. Into bed—sharp, so that I can bolt you in for the night."

"What?" exclaimed the amazed Tom. "I said bolt you in," repeated Worrey. "I'm head of the room, and it's my duty to shoot the bolts. Look!"

And closing one of the flaps, Jonah pointed to a big bolt fixed on the outside.

"And who bolts you in?" asked Tom.

"Nobody!" replied Worrey, still grinning. "I'm head boy of the room, and I'm trusted—see?"

"All right, I don't mind," said Tom, and stepped into the enclosure, feeling very much like a horse—or an ass—being put into a stall for the night.

Jonah Worrey drew the bolt outside, and Tom heard the click of the other four bolts. He found there was space to move round his bed, and his boxes had been placed at the foot ready to be opened. In addition, there were pegs on the partition for the hanging up of his clothes.

"It's certainly the rummiest show I ever struck!" mused Tom, as he undressed. "But it's a novelty, and that's something!"

And, with a yawn, he got into bed and was speedily sound asleep.

"Six o'clock, don't skulk there!"

Tom, with a struggle opened his eyes, and saw Jonah Worrey standing at the foot of his bed.

"Come," he said again, "get up!"

"What's the hurry?" asked Tom.

"You've got to get up!" growled Jonah; "this side washes first this morning."

"Oh, all right! Don't get excited! Where's the lavatory?"

"You won't find luxuries of that sort here, so don't think it! That's where you wash—look!"

(Continued on next page.)

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Jonah pointed to a stand with washing arrangements for three in the middle of the room.

Two weak-looking lads were already there performing their ablutions.

Tom got up and washed, and having speedily dressed, was going out of the room, when Jonah called out:

"Stop! I'm not ready."

"What of that?" asked Tom.

"You have to wait for me—it's one of the rules."

"Oh, blow you and the rules," said Tom, as he walked out of the room.

"I'll report you!" yelled Jonah after him.

"Report away," was all Tom said.

Half-way down the stairs he met Wooden Jerry coming up with two jugs of hot water, evidently for the master and usher.

"Which is the way to the door of the playground?" Tom asked.

"I can't answer questions all day, on my wages," replied Wooden Jerry.

"You could answer a civil question on no wages," replied Tom. "Don't you think you would be more comfortable here if you were more agreeable?"

"I don't want to be agreeable," replied Jerry. "It ain't my natur' to be agreeable—not to boys, anyway. Boys is rips, an' I hates 'em accordin'!"

Tom laughed and went below, but could not at first find any boys about.

He however found the door he wanted, and sauntered into the playground.

He was pleased to find on one side of it, outside the wall, a level meadow, with evidence of being used as a football ground.

A short, thick-set boy was engaged in pulling a garden-roller up and down the centre of the ground.

Tom crossed over to him, and saw that he was a red-headed youngster with a snub nose and small twinkling eyes.

In the matter of clothes, he might have effected an exchange with a scarecrow, and got the better of the deal.

He stopped work as Tom approached, and a grin spread over his face.

"Good morning," greeted Tom, with a smile.

"Mornin' to you," answered the boy. "You be a new 'un here, baint you?"

"Yes," said Tom. "I'm a new 'un right enough! And who are you?"

"Oh, I be only Rosy Ralph. I jobs about for my livin'. When I gets a job I gets a bite o' vittles to eat, and when I don't get a job, I goes wi'out!"

And Rosy Ralph grinned broadly, as if he thoroughly enjoyed the uncertainty of the food question.

Tom found himself liking this ragged youngster for cheery philosophy.

"Haven't you got any parents?" he asked.

"Got a feyther," answered Rosy Ralph.

"And what is he?"

"Oh, feyther be nowt."

"But a man must be something, you know, even if only an idle vagabond."

This was what Tom shrewdly suspected Ralph's father to be, but the shock-headed lad did not enlighten him on the point.

"He be nowt, baint my feyther," was all he said.

"All right, have it your own way," laughed Tom. "How often do you do this job?"

"Once a week."

"And how long do you work at it?"

"Two or three hours."

"What do you get paid for it?"

"Sometimes Mr. Wrasper give I thrip-pence, sometimes fourpence."

"What beastly pay!" exclaimed Tom. "I say, Ralph!"

"Yes, Measter New 'Un."

"How often do you get hold of a shilling—eh?"

Rosy Ralph's small eyes opened to double their usual size.

"A whole shillin'?" he gasped.

"Yes, a real silver bob!"

"I once had one," said Rosy Ralph. "I found 'un in the road, but feyther took 'un away from I."

"Well, if I give you this one," said Tom, producing a shilling, "will your father take it from you like the other?"

"I wouldn't let feyther see 'un!"

"Well, here you are then, Ralph. I hope you'll spend it on grub."

"Thankee, Measter New 'Un, I'll spend this shillin' on Widow Blake's plum-duff! She makes rare good plum-duff, Widow Blake do!"

"You be a mortal kind young gent," went on the lad gratefully. "Maybe I'll be able to pay 'ee back some day. Rosy Ralph is a fool, some people will tell 'ee, but, mind you this, he baint all fool!"

"Of course you're not!" replied Tom, as he turned away laughing.

Rosy Ralph looked after him with a countenance that had suddenly changed. No longer was there a grin upon it.

There was something very soft and tender in that look, and two tears sprang into his eyes, but did not fall.

"He spoke kind to I," he murmured.

"And he's give I a whole shillun'! He must be a mortal rich young gent to give money away like that!"

Tom returned to the playground, and finding it deserted, went back to the house.

There he found that he had broken another rule!

The boys, it appeared, were not allowed to go out until they had first been inspected by Mr. Wrasper or the usher, to see whether they had performed their toilets in a "becoming manner."

Such an inspection was going on in the hall when Tom entered.

"Tartar!" exclaimed Mr. Wrasper, with a frown, "you had no business to go out without my permission. It is against the rules."

"I didn't know that, sir," answered Tom.

"Then you must ask Jonah Worrey, your

room monitor, to enlighten you as to the rules."

"I saw you from my window talking to that disreputable youth Ralph Powner!" put in Foster Moore.

"Well, I don't see that there's any harm in that," protested Tom.

"He is the son of one of the biggest ruffians for miles around," replied Mr. Wrasper, "and is occasionally employed here out of charity. You are forbidden to communicate with him. Fall in on the left side of Worrey."

Tom, with a curious expression of face—a compound of amusement and indignation—fell into the position allotted him, and, being one of the sprucest and cleanest of the boys, passed examination without a word.

The boys were dismissed for half an hour to play. Then came breakfast, and immediately afterwards the morning school work began.

Neither Gray nor Sam Smith appeared, and Tom's curiosity was powerfully excited, but he did not get a chance of inquiring about them of Turrell or McLara.

It was not until morning school was over that he got a word with McLara:

"I say, old fellow," said Tom, taking his arm as they went out, "what's become of Gray and Smith?"

"Maybe they are in solitary," replied Cautious Johnny, "but I won't say for sure."

"You don't know?"

"No; but Turrell is going to find out. Don't say anything more. Perhaps it's only for a day."

Tom looked among the boys who were trooping out, and found that Turrell was missing from among them.

He still kept by McLara, and on reaching the playground he saw the main body of the boys were making for the football field.

The two waited about five minutes when Turrell came running out.

He cast a quick look at Tom and then at McLara, receiving a nod from the latter.

"They are in solitary," he said; "but it's all right. I've given them something to read."

"Solitary means solitary confinement, of course?" said Tom.

"Yes," replied Turrell.

"But they are not locked in."

"Oh, yes, they are!"

"Then how did you get at them?"

The eyes of Turrell became fixed on vacancy.

"I can't tell you," he said, "without leave from our chief, and he's in solitary, you know. Don't bother—they will get along now. I've given them a stunning book each. Can you play football?"

"A little."

"Come into the field and let's see what you're like at it. We have a match on Saturday. A strong side of boys from the quarries are coming to play us. The eleven

is not made up, and if you're good enough we shall be glad of you."

They made for the ground, and were soon taking part in the somewhat rough and tumble game of football that was in progress.

The "form" displayed was by no means brilliant, and Tom quickly showed that, compared with the other boys, he was quite a "star" performer.

"You're safe for a place on Saturday, Tartar," remarked Turrell as, the game over, they returned to the school house for dinner. "I'm one of the fellows who have the picking of the eleven, and I shall see that you're not left out. Where would you rather play—forward or half-back?"

"Just where you like to put me!" laughed Tom.

"Right you are! I'll talk it over with the other chaps!"

And they went into the dining-hall.

(Continued on page 40.)

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(Continued from page 39.)

CHAPTER VI.

A Dastardly Attack—Rescued.

MR. and Mrs. Wrasper presided at the dinner-table, one at each end. The food was fairly good, and there was no stint; but it was a horribly quiet, oppressive meal.

When it was over, Mr. Wrasper looked at Tom, and said:

"Tartar, I want you. Come to my study."

"Hallo! I'm in for it now!" thought Tom. "My turn for moral treatment, I expect!"

But he was mistaken. Whatever moral treatment might be in store for him in the future, he was not destined to have any of it that afternoon.

On reaching the study, Mr. Wrasper sat down and hurriedly wrote a short letter. This he placed in an envelope, addressed it, and handed it to Tom.

"I wish you to take this note to the quarry, Tartar," he said. "It is for the manager, and it is rather urgent, so be as quick as you can in getting there, at all events. I will show you the best way to the quarry. Come!"

He took Tom out the back way and pointed out the direction.

"You strike the canal cutting that leads up to the quarry," he explained, "and then cross the lock. After that, keep to the road, and you cannot possibly miss your way."

Tom had no objection whatever to being sent on such an errand. He was, in fact, glad of the outing, and blithely started off.

The road, though new to him, was easily found, and after crossing the lock he could not go out of the path unless he desired to do so.

Here and there by the way Tom passed a cottage, sometimes two or three together, occupied by the quarrymen.

Half-way up the road he saw a fine house away on the left, backed by a wood, evidently the residence of a man of wealth.

In front were some splendidly kept grounds enclosed by a low holly fence, with a lodge and bronze gates by the roadside.

The latter were opened, and standing in the gateway was a fine-looking, grey-headed gentleman talking to a lad about Gray's age and build.

They looked at Tom as he went by, and Tom returned the compliment, little thinking how his after-life would be mixed up with theirs.

From there to the quarry Tom did not meet with a living creature, and he found the manager's office at the opening of the works.

The manager, a portly man, was standing by the door, and Tom delivered his letter.

He opened, read it, and said, "All right. Tell Mr. Wrasper I will see that the boys leave early enough on Saturday for the match. It is very thoughtful of him, but he

is a thorough good man. You boys ought to be happy at such a school."

"I suppose so," replied Tom, "but I don't know yet, I only came yesterday."

Tom turned and sauntered down the road, bent on taking things more easily on the way home.

He did not see what great hurry there was for the delivery of that letter, but the fact was the manager left early on that day to visit another quarry under his care, and Mr. Wrasper was aware of the fact.

Out of school, Wrasper played the game of being the thorough good fellow, anxious to promote the welfare and happiness of the humbler classes.

To this end he had countenanced a football match with the quarry boys, which was to be the opening one of the season.

Tom passed the lodge gates again, and saw nobody there this time but an old woman peering out of the doorway of the little house.

Down the road he sauntered, and at a bend came in sight of the lock he had crossed by way of its footbridge.

There he saw the young lad he had seen at the lodge gates on his way up to the quarry.

The boy was stooping down, watching something in the water below.

But that was not all.

Creeping up behind some bushes by the lock gates was a burly ruffian, whose very attitude betrayed that he meant mischief.

And the nature of it flashed upon Tom Tartar.

The handsome lad upon the bridge was in peril.

Tom saw a stout stick lying upon the road, and seizing it he sped down to the rescue.

"Look out there!" he shouted.

He was too late to stop the man's carrying out his fell purpose, for he sprang up, and like a tiger leaped upon the boy.

Then, with a ferocious yell, the ruffian hurled the lad into the deep waters of the lock.

Half-maddened by the spectacle of such a dastardly crime, Tom, who had now reached the bridge, sprang forward, and with the stick dealt the ruffian a staggering blow on the side of the head.

Tom had no time to take particular note of the man, whose face he had not up to the present fairly seen.

The fellow when struck fell upon his hands and knees, but the next minute was up again, and had bounded away.

It was impossible for Tom to follow him without leaving the lad who had been thrown into the lock to almost certain death.

He was tossing about in the water in a manner which showed he was not a good swimmer, and in a few moments would certainly sink.

(To be continued.)

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