

SPECIAL NEW YEAR No. OF "NIPPER'S MAGAZINE"! (See Inside.)

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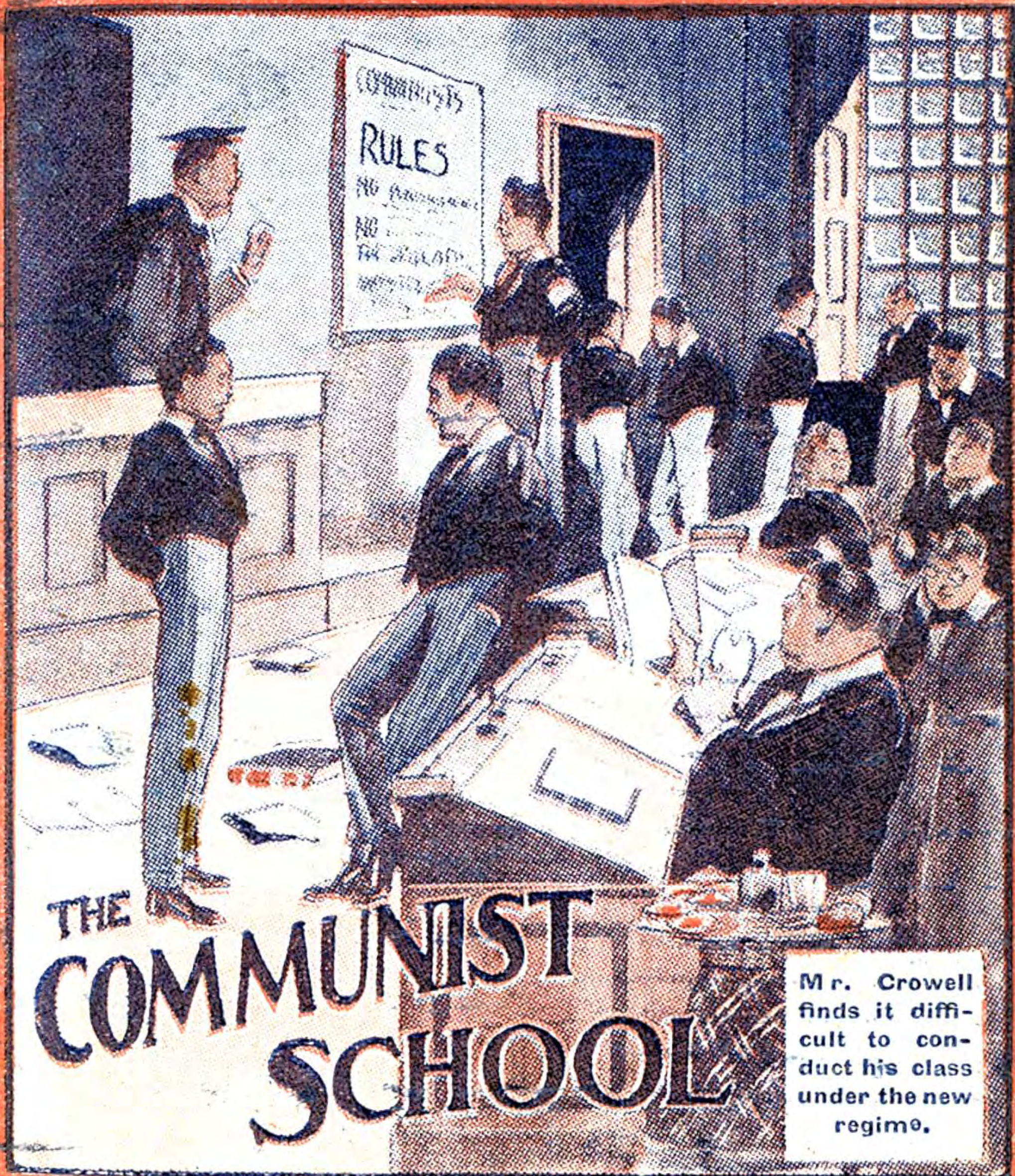
PRICE

NELSON LEE

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No. 344.

JANUARY



THE COMMUNIST SCHOOL

Mr. Crowell finds it difficult to conduct his class under the new regime.

Another Fine Plate of Famous Footballer Given Away!



Lee was just in time to see into the room before a tall man, wearing a pince-nez, switched off the electric light, plunging the whole room into darkness.

The COMMUNIST SCHOOL

NOTICE
 THE BOYS HAVING
 FULL CONTROL
Melton Clifford



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 Schoolboys' Union," "The Christmas Plotters," "The Schoolboy Soviet," and many other Stirring Tales.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER I.

THE FALL OF THE MIGHTY.

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH, of the Remove Form at St. Frank's, marched briskly along the junior corridor in the College House. He came to a halt outside the door of Study Z, and opened the door by the simple expedient of kicking it with such force that he nearly broke the lock. Handforth generally opened doors in this way.

He found the study empty, and the fire was burning rather low. It was almost teatime, and the evening was dark and cold and windy. Handforth kicked the fire into a blaze, and put on some more coal.

"Careless bounders!" he muttered gruffly. "Fancy letting the fire nearly go out on a cold day like this! I'll give Clapson a pretty stiff word or two when he blows in! I don't stand rot of this kind!"

Many sounds of activity came from the junior and senior studies in the College House. It was quite usual, of course, for such sounds to be heard; but just at present they were greatly intensified.

And this was explained by the simple fact that nearly every study contained at least



double its usual number of fellows. In fact, the College House was uncomfortably packed out. It had not been designed to accommodate such a great number of boys. Consequently, life was not precisely happy.

A large number of Ancient House juniors, and all the Ancient House seniors, were at present being billeted, as it were, in the rival House. And this circumstance was necessary because Armstrong and his supporters had broken into open revolution, and had forcibly seized the Ancient House.

The Rebels, to be exact were in sole possession of the Ancient House. They had barred everybody else out by the simple process of barring themselves in. Every door and window was carefully barricaded. And, although there had been one or two attempts to drive the Rebels out of their stronghold, these attempts had failed.

Armstrong, of the Remove, was proving himself to be quite an able leader, and there was no doubt that he was running his little revolution in a business-like way. They were up against Mr. Malcolm Stafford, the Headmaster; they were demanding the dismissal of both Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee, and they declared that they would not give up the Ancient House until their demands were met.

They believed they had just cause for taking this action; but it cannot be said that they were very popular. Seniors and juniors alike were highly incensed at being barred out of their own quarters.

Handforth and Church and McClure, usually occupying Study D in the Ancient House, were temporarily residing with Oldfield and Clapson and Nation of Study Z in the College House. It was not a particularly large study, and very tight quarters for six juniors. However, these little discomforts had to be borne with as much patience as possible.

Handforth and Co. were guests, in a way of speaking, and they ought to have been only too pleased to find temporary quarters. It was just like Handforth, however, to take everything for granted. He was quite prepared to declare that Study Z was his own, and that it was only by his condescension that the other fellows were allowed in it. He possessed a somewhat peculiar mind, and his methods of reasoning were weird and wonderful.

The fire was now burning up brightly, and Handforth pulled the one easy chair in front of it, and sat down, elevating his legs in an elegant fashion with his heels resting upon the mantelpiece.

"Yes, it's queer—jolly queer!" muttered Handforth. "I can't help thinking that there's some mystery here. It's up to me to get to the bottom of it. I shall have to get on to the track, and find some clues!"

Handforth rather fancied himself as an amateur detective, and he had been thinking rather deeply this afternoon about the re-

cent attacks which had troubled Dr. Stafford. Handforth was coming to the conclusion that these extraordinary bouts of fury were not of a normal kind.

And Handforth had set himself the task of thinking things over. He knitted his brow, and stared thoughtfully into the fire.

The door opened, and Clapson stalked in.

"Hallo! You here already, Handy?" he asked pleasantly. "Lazy bounder! Why couldn't you start getting the tea ready?"

"Go away!" said Handforth curtly.

"Eh?"

"Clear out!"

"Oh, certainly—anything to oblige!" said Clapson sarcastically. "But this happens to be my study, Handy, and—"

"Will you go away, or shall I kick you out?" roared Handforth, turning a red face to the surprised junior. "Understand, I'm not putting up with any of your rot! If you don't clear out, I'll punch your nose!"

Clapson was taken aback.

"Why, you silly fathead!" he snorted. "I'll soon show you whether— Oh, good! I say, what do you think, Harry? This Ancient House ass has been threatening to chuck me out!"

Harry Oldfield, the rightful leader of Study Z had just entered with Billy Nation, the third member of the study's rightful trio. Oldfield and Co. were next in importance in the College House to Christine and Yorke and Talmadge.

"Handy's trying to be funny!" said Oldfield. "He always was a bit touched, you know. I think we were rather unwise to admit him into this noble apartment. In the end he'll only cause trouble—"

"Are you chaps going to shut up, or shall I jolly well make you?" demanded Handforth fiercely. "Go out and stay out! I'm busy!"

Oldfield strode forward.

"Busy?" he repeated, staring.

"Yes!"

"Looking into the fire?"

Handforth snapped his fingers.

"Of course, it's too much to expect that you fellows can understand!" he said loftily.

"I'm busy thinking!"

"What with?" asked Nation, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"With my brains, of course!" roared Handforth. "I'm thinking hard! There's a problem on my mind, and it needs acute concentration. How do you expect me to concentrate while you keep interrupting? I'll give you just twenty seconds to buzz off!"

Oldfield and Co. looked rather grim.

"Poor old Church!" said Clapson.

"Poor old McClure!" observed Nation.

"Those chaps have to stand this kind of thing every day," said Oldfield. "I'm just beginning to realise what a ghastly life they lead! We've always heard rumours that Handforth led them a lively dance, but this is proof positive."

"Eh? What's that?"

Church and McClure had just come in. They did so briskly, for they were hungry, and they were anxious to get busy on tea. And they were somewhat surprised to see the indignant expression of their hosts.

"Anything wrong?" asked McClure.

"Nothing much—your wonderful leader seems to imagine that he's the boss here, that's all," said Oldfield. "He's just ordered us out!"

"Oh, the ass!" muttered Church. "I thought something like this would start! I say, Handy, don't be a fathead! We're guests now—this ain't our study——"

"It's as much our study as it is theirs!" snorted Handforth, jumping to his feet, and pushing up his coatsleeves. "And they'd better realise straight away that I'm not standing any of their piffle! I'm leader here, and I'm going to have my orders obeyed! That's flat!"

"Frightfully interesting; but there's nothing doing," said Oldfield grimly. "I don't like to be rude to a guest, but if you don't dry up and behave like a sensible chap, we'll sling you outside on your neck!"

"Hear, hear!" said Clapson and Nation.

"You will?" bellowed Handforth, glaring.

"Yes, we will!"

"Try and do it——"

"Here, I say!" shouted Church desperately.

"Steady on, you asses. There's no need to break out into open squabbling over nothing! You see, you don't understand Handy as we do. We're used to his little ways. And when he goes off like this we generally leave him to himself. He comes right in course of time."

Oldfield grunted.

"What you do, and what we do, are two different things!" he replied. "Do you think we're going to clear out of this study just because he orders us to? Not likely! If anybody clears out it'll be Handforth!"

"Oh, will it?" roared Handforth. "We'll see!"

"You chaps have been in the habit of giving way to him," went on Oldfield. "You simply let him do as he likes, and as a consequence, he's running wild. It's just about time he was taken in hand."

"Exactly!" said Clapson. "We're ready for the job!"

Church and McClure looked rather helpless, but they were secretly overjoyed. If Oldfield and Co. would give Handy a lesson, they would be extremely delighted. Personally they were not capable of the task.

Handforth looked from one junior to the other, and apparently imagined that they ought all to have collapsed on the spot. It was a piercing look, which Handforth intended to be withering. Strange to say, however, Oldfield and Co. didn't wither. They glared at Handforth in return.

"So that's how things are, eh?" exclaimed Handforth deliberately. "You fellows are rebelling already——"

"Rebelling?" repeated Clapson.

"Yes!"

"What against?"

"My authority!" retorted Handforth curtly.

"Oh, your authority!" said Oldfield. "Who the dickens told you that you had any authority?"

"I don't need any telling!" snapped Handforth. "The very fact that I am in this study is enough. It's not my habit to boast, or throw my weight about. But you'd better understand that I'm boss here, and I'm going to have my way. If I don't there'll be ructions!"

Oldfield and Co. exchanged amazed glances.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Oldfield blankly.

"The nerve! The pure, unadulterated nerve! Did you ever hear anything like it? Out of sheer good-nature we take these chaps in, because they're barred from their own quarters, and all they can do is to make out that they're running the show!"

"I say, don't include us!" protested Church. "I should think McClure and I know our manners better!"

"Well, it's Handy, then," said Oldfield.

"His authority! He'll jolly soon find out that——Yaroooooh!"

Biff!

Handforth's fist lunged forward, and it caught Oldfield on the ear before he could dodge. The leader of Study Z reeled over, lurched against the table, and nearly fell headlong.

"That's for being cheeky!" said Handforth, as though he were talking to an urchin. "And it's just to show you fellows that I'm in earnest! My authority hasn't got to be sneered at——"

"You—you—you——"

Oldfield paused, panting. Words failed him. He was as red as a beetroot, and his ear was smarting painfully. Clapson and Nation were looking pretty hot, too. They instinctively moved forward towards Edward Oswald.

"Ready?" asked Clapson.

"Yes!" shouted Oldfield. "Collar him!"

"Hi! Look out!" roared Handforth, as the three juniors charged at him. "By George! You—you—— What the dickens——"

Handforth went over backwards before he knew where he was. The charge of the three determined Monks could not be denied. Handforth tripped over the coalbox, clutched at the table, and finally sat down with a terrific bump upon a chunk of coal that had rolled loose. The howl which Handforth emitted was startling. And probably the coal hurt him, for he smashed it to crumbs.

The fact was, the famous leader of Study D was positively staggered by the fact that these juniors had attacked him at all. So curious was his mind that he had firmly believed they would knuckle under without question. When he found that they really meant business, he was out of his depth.

"Yow—yaroooh!" he hooted. "I'm hurt! Ow! I—I'm half killed! You—you rotters! Is this the way to treat a guest? Take that!"

Swipe!

Considering that he was half killed, Handforth did remarkably well. He leapt to his feet, and swung his long arm round at the same second. The blow was intended for Oldfield, but, unhappily, Oldfield wasn't there. And Handforth's fist struck the side of the bookcase with a rap which sounded like a hammer blow.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh!" bellowed Handforth wildly. "Ow—yow! I've broken my giddy wrist! You—you rotter! What did you dodge for?"

"I didn't want to be brained!" said Oldfield. "You've got fists like sledge-hammers! Now then, you chaps, out with him!"

"About time, too!" panted Clapson. "Another two minutes of this, and the study will be a wreck!"

Handforth vainly attempted to stem the on-rushing tide. He couldn't do it, and he was swept over again, and this time Oldfield and Co. made no mistake. They rushed straight at Handforth's feet, grabbed them, and held on securely.

And then, in this undignified position, Handforth was dragged round the study to the door. He couldn't punch anything in that attitude, but his roars attracted a great crowd outside in the corridor. Church politely opened the door, a fact which Handforth noted. Exactly what would happen to Church later was something appalling to consider.

"My hat! Who's being murdered?"

"What's the trouble here?"

"Where's the victim?"

All sorts of questions were shouted out in the passage. Then the door of Study Z opened, and Handforth emerged. He didn't come in the ordinary way. Clapson and Co. gave him a good send-off. They pitched him through the doorway with all their strength.

Handforth slithered out, charged into three or four juniors, and they collapsed on the top of him. By the time they had picked themselves up, Handforth was in a sitting posture, gazing round dazedly. His waistcoat was wide open, his collar was unbuttoned, one eye was blackened, and a trickle of blood was streaming from his nose. His hair was like a mop.

"Great pip!" he muttered. "I—I'll slaughter somebody for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Witness the fall of the mighty!" grinned Oldfield, from the study doorway. "Anybody who wants to have this lot can take it away free of charge! There are no bidders in this study! Handy has been kicked out!"

The door of Study Z slammed to, and the curious juniors dispersed. Edward Oswald Handforth was left sitting on the draughty

floor. He slowly picked himself up, and limped away towards the staircase—bound for a bathroom and the dormitory. He needed a complete change and a good wash.

He was beginning to realise that life in the College House was different from what it had been in the Ancient House. And Handforth's fury, instead of centring itself upon Oldfield and Co. veered round against the Rebels. They were responsible for all this!

If Armstrong and his supporters had suffered all the dreadful things which Handforth mapped out for them, their earthly existence would have completely ceased!

CHAPTER II.

DOCTOR'S ORDERS!



NELSON LEE filled his pipe, and thoughtfully rammed the tobacco home with his forefinger.

"Of course, Brett, the whole position is most extraordinary," he said. "It will be very difficult for you to appreciate the actual complexity of it. But I tell you frankly that Dr. Stafford is the victim of a dastardly plot."

Dr. Brett nodded.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I can't exactly picture Dr. Stafford as a tyrant and a bully," he said. "I've heard some rumours about his recent conduct, but I dismissed them at once. I just set them down as idle gossip. But you say that they were really true, these stories?"

"Unfortunately, yes," said Nelson Lee. "You have just examined the Head, haven't you?"

"I have."

"How do you find his general health?"

"Quite excellent," said the doctor. "He seems rather run down and fagged, but the general state of his health is as sound as a bell. I was considerably puzzled until you gave me these details. Honestly, Lee, I can't take them all in at once."

Dr. Brett shook his head as he finished speaking, and frowned. He was sitting in a comfortable easy chair before the fire in Nelson Lee's study. It was not the famous detective's usual study, for that, of course, was in the Ancient House. Lee was temporarily residing in a comfortable apartment in the same passage as the Headmaster's sanctum.

It was evening, and outside everything was dark and cold. Dr. Brett had been listening for some little time to his host's story, for Lee had been telling him a good many inner facts about the Headmaster.

"This rebellion, too," went on Brett. "I'm quite astonished, Lee. I had no idea that things were so bad as this."

"That's satisfactory, for it proves that the gossips in the village have not been able to do much," said Nelson Lee smiling. "We

want to keep this affair as private as possible, Brett."

"You needn't be afraid of me noising it abroad," said the doctor. "All they know in the village is that some of the boys are causing a bit of trouble, but there's no suggestion that the Headmaster is to blame. Your efforts to keep the matter hushed up are quite successful."

"I'm very glad to hear that," said Nelson Lee. "But the facts are serious enough. These boys, led by a determined junior named Armstrong, have seized the Ancient House, and are now in possession—"

"Can't you drive them out?"

"It would be comparatively easy to do so," said Nelson Lee. "But it could not be done without a lot of noise and excitement—and, consequently, publicity. So we prefer to let things stand as they are at the moment. I'm only waiting until I am ready to strike."

"Whom?"

"The men who are behind this whole conspiracy."

"You know who they are?"

"That's just the trouble—I don't," said Nelson Lee. "Mind you, I have strong suspicions against certain parties, but I have no actual evidence. That's what I'm after now—that's what I mean to get. I'm leaving St. Frank's for a couple of days for the express purpose of obtaining these proofs. And I want you, Brett, to look after the Headmaster while I'm away. I mean to charge you with his safety."

"I am quite prepared to help in any way possible," said Dr. Brett willingly. "But about these boys. I can't quite understand how they got hold of the Ancient House. Somebody must have been napping, surely, to allow them—"

"My dear man, I've already told you that Armstrong and his supporters swooped down upon the school quite unexpectedly during the recent holidays," interrupted Lee. "There was hardly anybody here—just a stray servant or two—and there was no opposition. The boys barricaded themselves in a most thorough manner. By the time the school reassembled for this new term they had thoroughly entrenched themselves, so to speak."

Dr. Brett whistled.

"'Cute beggars!" he exclaimed. "And now they are demanding the dismissal of Dr. Stafford and yourself?"

"Exactly!"

"I could understand them being up against the Head; but why should they include you?"

"Because I have maintained authority—because I have continuously taken Dr. Stafford's part," replied Nelson Lee. "I don't blame the boys, Brett. Under the circumstances, it would be unfair to do so. They know nothing of the inner truth. They cannot believe that these fits of savagery are unavoidable. They firmly believe that

the Headmaster is a brute. And, in their way of reasoning, I must be a brute, too—since I have been supporting the Head."

"Yes, it's pretty difficult," said Brett. "And decidedly rough on you. You've always been so popular in the school. It must be a great change for the boys to be openly antagonistic towards you?"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"I don't think you understand boys as well as I do, Brett," he replied calmly. "At present I am scorned and despised by a large section of boys. When they know the truth they will turn like weathercocks. What popularity I have enjoyed will be increased treble-fold when the full story against Dr. Stafford is revealed."

"You mean to publish the truth, then?"

"Most certainly—at the right time," replied Lee. "I shall make every effort to spread the story broadcast. And I predict that it will cause a sensation throughout the whole country. Trenton will be the most notorious man in the world, and the whole affair will be a nine-days' wonder."

Dr. Brett took a deep breath.

"It sounds like some hair-raising romance," he said. "Now, in a story this man Trenton would be a most forbidding character. Yet he is a mere ordinary looking fellow such as you can meet in any street. It seems ridiculous to suspect him of such weird and wonderful powers."

"Trenton himself possesses no particular powers, but this drug of his is the most startling stuff I have ever come across," said Nelson Lee. "In the first place, it leaves no after-effects. It is not harmful to the system. But while it is active, the brain is so affected that all kindness and good feeling vanishes from the man's nature. There is savagery in all of us. But this savage instinct is always held in check by our better selves. Trenton's drug brings this savagery to the fore, and while under the influence the most kind-hearted man in the world would yield to it, and become a cold, calculating brute."

"The frightful scoundrel!" said Brett hotly. "And he's been administering this stuff to Dr. Stafford! What for? What on earth for?"

"Simply to get the Headmaster dismissed from his position," replied Nelson Lee. "That, I believe, is the main object of the whole scheme. Of course, they want to get rid of me, too. I don't exactly know why they are so anxious for all this, but there must be something behind it all."

"It's a pity you must go away," said the doctor. "Or to be more exact, it's a pity you can't nab the ruffians at once."

"Yes, a great pity; but I do not think I shall be gone for long," said Nelson Lee.

"I'm leaving to-night, Brett, and I want you to take charge of Dr. Stafford during my absence. At the first opportunity Trenton will try to get at his victim. At all costs, we must prevent that. And so you

must issue orders, as Dr. Stafford's medical adviser, that he is be confined to his own bedroom."

"That'll be easy enough," said Brett. "But will the Head agree?"

"He has already promised me that he will do whatever I think necessary," replied Nelson Lee. "The Head doesn't actually know what all this trouble is about, but he is certain that I am doing my best for him."

"You think Trenton will try to get at him?"

"I am sure of it," said Nelson Lee. "And the Head must not be left alone for one minute, night or day. I was hoping that you would be able to remain constantly with him—but, of course, your practice makes that impossible."

"H'm! I'm afraid it does," said Brett. "However, I'm rather slack just now, so I can spend the mornings, at least, with Dr. Stafford—and I can also be here at night. So it would only be necessary to find a relief for the two afternoons. You won't be away more than two days?"

"No; I shall try my utmost to return within twenty-four hours," said Nelson Lee. "Mrs. Poulter will keep guard over the Head while you are away, Brett. She is a thoroughly trustworthy soul, and will see that nothing untoward occurs. If Trenton succeeds in dosing the Head now, it will be disastrous."

They continued talking for some little time, and then went upstairs to Dr. Stafford's bedroom. It was a cosy, comfortable apartment, and had been converted into a kind of sitting-room as well. The bed was screened off, and a little desk had been brought in, and a couple of comfortable easy-chairs. The Headmaster of St. Frank's was sitting before the fire, reading.

"Really, Mr. Lee, I feel absurdly foolish," said the Head, as he rose to his feet. "It is preposterous for me to remain locked away up here while the school is in such a regrettable state. And I am feeling quite well—"

"Now, now, Dr. Stafford, you mustn't object to doctor's orders!" smiled Nelson Lee. "Brett insists that you must remain here, and that you must not worry about your scholastic duties in any way whatsoever."

"In other words, you insist, eh?" smiled the Head. "I am convinced that Brett is only carrying out your wishes. However, I ought not to grumble, since I know that this is all for my own good. After the dreadful affair of the other evening, it is highly necessary, I suppose, that I should be locked up!"

The Head was referring to the incident which had occurred when Trenton had succeeded in administering a dose of his drug. The Head had gone into a frightful frenzy! And Nelson Lee had only kept him down by the application of force. Later, the Head had been grateful for this.

Dr. Stafford did not know that Trenton

was the chief plotter. He was completely mystified about the whole strange business. Lee thought it better to keep him in ignorance.

"It won't be long before you will be completely free from all these troubles," said Nelson Lee. "My case is nearly complete, Dr. Stafford, and within a few days all danger to yourself will be over. You have promised to do just what I request, and it would be a great pity if you spoilt all my arrangements by objecting."

"I don't object—I am in your hands entirely," interrupted the Head quickly. "You are working for my good, Mr. Lee, and I should be ungrateful, indeed, if I put obstacles in your way. You say it is better for me to remain confined to my bedroom during your absence. Very well—I will submit. But I hope I shall be allowed to communicate with the outside world? For example, if I wish to see one of my under-masters, I suppose I can do so?"

"No," said Nelson Lee firmly. "Not a soul will be allowed to approach you, Dr. Stafford. Only Dr. Brett and Mrs. Poulter will come, and strict orders will be given that nobody else must disturb you."

"But why—" began the Head.

"Because we must take every precaution," interrupted Lee. "This drug has been administered to you secretly, as you are aware. We must not allow your enemies the slightest opportunity to repeat their previous performances. So, if you do as I ask, all will be well. If you wish to communicate with Mr. Stockdale, or any of the other masters, please do so by letter. These letters will be placed on your study table, and the pageboy will receive instructions to deliver them. Any answers will be placed in readiness, and Dr. Brett will bring them to you. These precautions may seem out of all proportion to the danger, but we cannot be too careful."

And so the whole thing was arranged in that way. Dr. Stafford did not quite like it, but there was no alternative. And thus it came about that he was destined to remain a prisoner in his own bedroom for perhaps two days. Nelson Lee was going away, and he wanted to be perfectly satisfied that no harm could befall the Head during his absence.

Before the evening was far advanced, Nelson Lee had gone. I managed to have a few words with him, and I was rather cut up because I couldn't accompany him—for I knew that he was going away on grim business.

"I suppose you've got on the track of those scoundrels who tried to kidnap us the other day?" I asked eagerly.

"To tell you the truth, Nipper, I have not succeeded in tracing them so far," said Nelson Lee. "But I mean to hound them down if it is at all possible. Once I have done so I shall be in a position to make the final move. And then our excellent Mr. Trenton will find himself in the

grip of the law—and all this trouble at St. Frank's will blow over."

"I'd love to come with you, sir—but, of course, that's impossible," I said. "How long do you think you'll be away?"

"Not long—two days at the most."

"Do you think you'll go into any danger?" I asked anxiously. "We had a pretty exciting adventure on that motor-launch—when we were kidnapped."

"I shall start my investigations at that point," said the gov'nor. "How far I shall progress, I don't know, but I have an idea that I shall be successful. I have made all arrangements for the Head's safety during my absence, but it would be just as well, perhaps, if you kept your eyes well opened. Without appearing to do so, watch Trenton all you can."

"Right you are, gov'nor," I said. "I'll keep my eyes skinned."

And soon afterwards Nelson Lee departed. It was fairly early in the evening, and I did not feel particularly cheerful. I knew that the gov'nor had gone off on a mission that was likely to be dangerous. And all my instincts urged me to be by his side. I couldn't be—and so I was grumpy.

And, exactly as Nelson Lee had surmised, it was not long before Mr. Hugh Trenton made a move. The science master knew nothing of the arrangements which had been made, but he had been keeping his eyes well open, and he knew that something special was afoot.

Mr. Trenton was, as Dr. Brett had said, quite an ordinary looking man—fairly young, well-set-up, and with a breezy, free-and-easy manner, which was calculated to delude anybody. The majority of the juniors considered him to be a sport, and he was very popular in the school. This was one of his main objects—to make himself liked by all. And, certainly, he had succeeded, for his popularity was even greater than Nelson Lee's had been.

Mr. Trenton had worked on a plan—he had sympathised with the fellows, joked with them, and had generally made himself pleasant. The boys were not particularly astute in reading character, and they had only seen the surface. They had had no idea of what lay beneath.

Mr. Trenton had obtained his post at St. Frank's because he was well qualified. He was a very clever science master, and eminently capable of performing all his duties. But his chief idea in coming had been to plot against the Headmaster—to secretly administer his strange drug, so that Dr. Stafford should disgrace himself and be compelled to resign.

At first, Trenton had had his own way. But more and more of late he had found that Nelson Lee was standing in his way. And Trenton knew well enough that Lee was aware of the game, and was fighting it. Trenton had communicated this knowledge to his mysterious associates—and only a

day or two earlier they had made a determined attempt to get the famous detective out of their way. The attempt had failed, but Trenton had seized the brief opportunity to dose the Head again. It had come to nothing, owing to Nelson Lee's earlier return.

And now, this evening, Trenton was feeling elated again. Nelson Lee had gone—the field was clear. The Head, as Trenton knew, did not suspect him. Indeed, Dr. Stafford was as much deluded as the boys—he rather liked the smooth-tongued science master.

Trenton waited until about eight o'clock, and then made his way upstairs towards Dr. Stafford's bedroom. He had heard that the Head was confined to his own room. Arriving on the landing, he found that the green baize door, which divided the Head's quarters off from the rest of the building, was securely locked. Trenton knocked upon it vigorously. In a short time it was opened by Dr. Brett. The latter regarded the science master somewhat grimly.

"Why, hallo, Dr. Brett!" said the science master pleasantly. "Quite a surprise to see you! How's the patient?"

"Dr. Stafford is taking a complete rest," replied Brett shortly.

"Well, he certainly needs one. He's been having a pretty strenuous time lately," said Trenton. "I should just like to have a few words with him, if you don't mind."

"But I do mind!"

"Really—"

"I am sorry, Mr. Trenton, but I can allow nobody to approach the Head at present," said Dr. Brett, with relish. "Mr. Stockdale has already been, and I was compelled to refuse him admission. It will save a lot of trouble if you refrain from making requests which cannot possibly be granted."

Mr. Trenton frowned.

"But this is absurd!" he protested. "I don't see this at all, Dr. Brett! The Head is only run down, and it is preposterous for you to keep all the other masters away from him. I have important business to discuss—matters connected with the school—"

"If they are so important, you can communicate by letter," interrupted Brett curtly. "Under no circumstances can you see Dr. Stafford personally. I am his medical adviser, and my word is final. Good night, Mr. Trenton!"

The science master prepared to speak, but closed his mouth with a snap. Then, without a word, he turned on his heel and strode away. It was rather foolish of him, as he afterwards realised. He ought never to have shown such annoyance. But, inwardly, he was boiling, and couldn't help it.

"Lee again!" he muttered harshly. "Lee's at the bottom of this! But I'm not defeated yet—there must be a way of getting at the Head, and I'll find it!"

CHAPTER III.

IN THE REBELS' CAMP.



"ALL quiet!"
 Doyle briefly made his report as he came off duty. He was well wrapped up in his overcoat and muffler, and he stamped his feet and came nearer to the fire. It was evening, and everything was quiet in the rebel camp.

"Beastly cold this evening!" said Doyle, as he held out his hands towards the blaze. "Jolly glad my spell's over, anyhow! I'm getting a bit sick of this game, you chaps. It was all very well to start with, but too much of a good thing is inclined to be wearisome!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Armstrong gruffly. "We've been doing well, and we shall gain the day in the long run. Things are a bit quiet just now, but they'll soon liven up."

The juniors were all gathered in the Remove common-room in the Ancient House. A cheerful blaze was roaring in the fireplace, and the apartment looked very cosy and warm.

It had altered a good deal, for all sorts of furniture had been brought into it—easy-chairs from two of the masters' studies, several couches from the domestic quarters, and numerous other articles. Juniors were lounging about in all sorts of careless attitudes.

Some of them were reading, and others were playing chess and draughts, and killing time by other methods. And that, in fact, was the greatest difficulty of the rebellion.

How to kill time! With no lessons to do, and with no attacks to beat off from outside, the rebels were left with all the hours on their hands. From morning till night they had only to think of eating. While they weren't eating they tried to pass the time in a way which they had always longed for.

At first it had been all right, but they were finding that too much freedom was irksome. They were almost beginning to long for lessons again. Somehow, after a hard spell of lessons, enjoyment was much more enjoyable. Pleasure was inclined to pall when there was no relief.

All day Armstrong & Co. had done nothing. They had been absolutely ignored by the Head, by the other masters, and by the Loyalists. It was as though they didn't exist.

And it was rather disconcerting to find that the school was able to carry on without the Ancient House. Somehow or other, the usual school routine was being maintained, and no serious efforts were being made to force the Rebels into surrender. It was just what they needed to make them more determined. But blank silence was awful. The heart was being taken out of them.

And this, as a matter of fact, was just what Nelson Lee had anticipated. Left severely alone, he believed the Rebels would finally get fed-up with the whole thing, and meekly surrender.

Armstrong had not relaxed his vigilance. He kept sentries on duty all the time—promenading up and down the flat leads on the Ancient House roof. From this high elevation every movement in the Triangle could be seen. Doyle had been on duty for two hours, and he was thankful to get down into the cheerful light and warmth.

Other sentries were now on duty, and they were stamping about in the cold, biting air, trying to convince themselves that this rebellion was a huge success, and that they were enjoying it. But, somehow, instead of being joyful, the Rebels were glum and gloomy.

Food difficulties had cropped up in all sorts of ways. The Food Department of the Schoolboys' Union was doing its best, and the meals were passable—but they couldn't possibly compare with the ordinary meals of the school. And schoolboys like good grub as well as anybody else.

"It's all very well to talk about gaining the day!" said Doyle, as he sat down in an easy-chair. "What have we done? Nothing! What chance have we of getting the Head and Mr. Lee sacked? Not a ghost!"

"Oh, don't growl any more!" snapped Armstrong. "In any case, we're not so keen on getting the Head pushed out now."

"No, there's this other dotty idea!" said Doyle. "Tucker's mad scheme about running the school ourselves! Just as if it would ever come to anything! That blessed manifesto of his, demanding that St. Frank's should be handed over to the boys! Whoever heard such rot!"

"Well, you signed the manifesto, anyhow!"

"I know I did—but I hadn't thought about it thoroughly then," said Doyle. "But the whole thing is obviously dotty! According to this wheeze of Tucker's, the whole school has got to join the Union. And the Union will run the school, and the masters must surrender all control to the boys. And Form Councils will be introduced, so that they can control things. What rank rot!"

Armstrong said nothing. Mature consideration was beginning to have an effect upon him, too. At first he had wholeheartedly agreed with Timothy Tucker's extraordinary scheme—Communism at home, so to speak. It had seemed very attractive while the enthusiasm for the rebellion was at its height. But, on reading that famous manifesto again, Armstrong was beginning to see that it looked very ridiculous!

T. T., however, was by no means discouraged.

He had been sitting at the table while the juniors were talking, and now he came

forward, wagging a finger at them, and blinking behind his big spectacles.

"Dear, dear, dear! What is this?" he said mildly. "Is it possible that you are losing heart, my comrades? Is it possible that you are beginning to have doubts? This will never do! Dear me! I can see that I shall have to——"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Doyle.

"Do you realise whom you are addressing?" demanded Tucker severely. "Do you realise that I am the brains of this whole revolution?"

"Pity we haven't got better brains to rely on!" put in Griffith.

"This is bad—very bad!" said T.T.

"Never spoil a good mind!" snapped Armstrong. "We shouldn't be sorry to lose you, you cad! But you're afraid to clear out now—you know jolly well you'd get it in the neck! I've got a fine lot of supporters round me—I don't think!" he added bitterly. "If this thing fizzles out, it'll be because you're a set of weak-kneed cads!"

Conversation of this kind was getting quite common, for the nerves of the Rebels were on edge. They were always expecting something to happen, and yet nothing did happen. They were in a continual state of suspense. And suspense is not an ideal frame of mind.

"No, we have not heard one word from



And then, in this undignified position, Handforth was dragged round the study to the door. His roars attracted a great crowd outside in the corridor.

"H'm! H'm! Quite so. The position is serious, I can observe. Yes, the position is serious. The fact is, things have been too quiet—too smooth. Well, I shall immediately proceed to wake matters up."

"Oh!" said Armstrong. "How are you going to do it?"

"I regret to say that the Headmaster has been most ungentlemanly," said Tucker.

"Yes, my dear sirs! Most ungentlemanly! Not one word have we heard from him regarding our generous offer!"

"Did you expect him to knuckle under?" sneered Doyle.

"The chap's off his rocker!" put in Fullwood sourly. "I've a good mind to clear out, an' leave you all in the lurch."

the Headmaster!" exclaimed Tucker. "But that does not mean to say that we are defeated. By no means. My dear sirs, we are more determined than ever! I have already written a new offer to Dr. Stafford, and I shall take means of having this delivered at the first opportunity."

"The letter's no good, and who'll deliver it, anyhow?" asked Armstrong.

"We frequently observe Tubbs crossing the Triangle," said T.T. shrewdly. "We have noted his peculiar figure on many an occasion. Surely it will be easy for us to drop him this note with a little—ahem!—palm-oil, so that he will deliver it to its correct destination."

"Well, that's not a bad wheeze!" admitted Armstrong. "But what's in the letter, anyhow?"

"I will tell you," said T.T. "For the main part, I am repeating the wording of our manifesto, and I am requesting the Headmaster to send a reply at once—one way or the other. I have asked him to be good enough to state definitely whether he will give this new order of things a trial, and I have promised to revert back to normal conditions if our system fails after a period of one week."

"Well, that's pretty reasonable," said Armstrong, with more interest.

"My dear sir, I am convinced that Dr. Stafford will listen. I am sure he will take heed!" said Tucker. "And there is no doubt now that our system will triumph, once it is put into operation. We shall be victorious from start to finish."

"What if the Head agrees, and then starts his old tricks?" inquired Doyle.

"Dear me!" said Tucker mildly. "Dear, dear me! How preposterously absurd! If the Headmaster starts his old tricks, as you term them, he will be put in his place without any loss of time. My dear sir, you do not seem to realise that we shall be in command then—the school will be controlled by the boys! And if any master does not please us we shall promptly correct him!"

"Sounds too good to be true!" said Armstrong, shaking his head. "Still, there'll be no harm in sending the giddy note."

"It is the only course that we can safely adopt," said Tucker. "Things are in an unfortunate state, my comrades. We should have been successful long ago, but our enemies are obstinate. Even if this plan fails, I have other plans in mind. I may even say that I have scores of plans in mind. That is so. A fellow with brains must come to the surface, he cannot be held down. And, ultimately, I shall triumph. Have no fear on that score!"

Armstrong grunted.

"To tell you the truth, T.T., I'm beginning to think that you're a wind-bag!" he said bluntly.

"Dear me! How extremely insulting!"

"You're all words, and no action!" went on Armstrong. "So far, we've followed your advice. The whole revolution was your idea, and look what it's led to!"

"Are you suggesting that we have failed?" asked Tucker, blinking. "Good gracious! Are you insane? Surely, my dear sir, you cannot mean to imply that the position is bad? It is precisely the reverse! Have we not succeeded in all our designs? Have we not captured the Ancient House, and are we not holding back all attempts by the enemy to drive us out? Victory is all on our side!"

"Well, when you look at it that way, it sounds all right," admitted Armstrong. "But I can't help feeling that the Head or Mr.

Lee have got something up their sleeve. This inaction seems jolly suspicious to me."

"Not at all," said Tucker. "They merely realise that they are powerless."

"I don't believe it," said Doyle. "It is just the calm before the storm. There'll be a terrific lot of trouble soon, you mark my words. They're getting up something big against us, and when it happens they'll drive us out, and it'll be the finish. Three or four of us will be sacked on the spot!"

"Well, it was you chaps who started it!" exclaimed Fullwood roughly. "You can't blame me! If we're collared, I'll jolly soon tell the Head that you persuaded us to join you—"

"Oh, ring off, you cad!" snorted Armstrong curtly. "All you think of is your own safety! I'm just about fed up with you, Fullwood! You and your pals, too! If we have much more of your grumbling, we'll pitch you out!"

"And it wouldn't take us long, either!" added Doyle.

Fullwood scowled, and said no more. He had sense enough to realise that the leaders of the revolution were just in the mood to put their threat into execution. And to be cast out just now would be appalling.

No matter what cheering words were spoken, no matter what hopes were voiced, the Rebels could not get over that overpowering feeling that something was being stored up, and that there would be an explosion before long. Being ignored in this way was worse than having to beat off hourly attacks.

Tucker prepared his letter and sealed it down. Then he scrambled into his overcoat and cap, and went upstairs to the roof. Arriving there, the cold wind struck at him, and it caused him to pull his coat tighter about his skinny frame.

"Hallo! Who's that?" demanded a voice out of the gloom.

"Friend!" said Tucker impressively.

"Oh, it's you, T.T.!" said Marriot, coming forward. "I'm fed up with this job! Where's the sense of four of us staying up here, freezing to the marrow? There's nothing doing—we might as well come down."

"Impossible—quite impossible, my dear sir!" exclaimed Tucker. "A watch must be kept constantly. The slightest lack of vigilance may spell disaster."

"Well, I wouldn't care much!" growled Marriot. "I'm fed up with this!"

"How truly weak!" murmured T.T. "I'm amazed—I am shocked! That you should all be so weak-hearted and limp! If things do not go right, you start grumbling on the instant. It is most distressing."

"I'm going down soon—"

"You must not go down until you are relieved, by the ten o'clock watch!" said Tucker dramatically. "Remember that all sentries deserting duty will be court-martialled and punished on the instant."

"Rats!"

"You seem to imagine that you can do as you like, but you are wrong," went on T. T. "Discipline must be maintained. It is the only way of gaining our complete success. Have you seen Tubbs?"

"Tubbs!" grunted Marriott. "What's he got to do with it?"

"Nothing," replied Tucker mildly. "But am rather anxious to catch the page-boy. shall wait here until I see him down in the Triangle. I shall then converse with him."

"Oh, do what you like!"

Marriot walked off along the roof, grumbling under his breath. Truly, the Rebels were like a lot of bears with sore heads. They could do nothing but growl and grumble at one another. It was all the result of inactivity. It was lowering their morale hour by hour.

Nelson Lee had been very astute when he decided upon this policy of pretending indifference. It had two good points. Firstly, no publicity was created, for there was no great upheaval to be talked about. And, secondly, the Rebels were slowly but surely getting tired of themselves.

Tucker marched up and down with the note in his pocket. And he kept blinking down upon the Triangle. The chances that he would see Tubbs were somewhat remote, for the page-boy was not in the habit of running out into the Triangle in the cold darkness.

However, it was still fairly early, and it was quite possible that the page-boy would be sent on an errand. But since there was no intercourse between the Ancient House and the College House, the likelihood of Tubbs appearing was slim.

T. T. was a patient youth and his patience was partially rewarded after about half-an-hour. He heard the side gate click, and, going to the parapet and peering over, he beheld one of the maid servants just coming in. He at once called down to her, and she girl paused and looked up.

"Just a moment, please!" called Tucker. "May I speak to you?"

"You're a set of young bounders, that's what you are!" said the maid-servant boldly.

"You ought to be right down ashamed of yourselves, and that's what we're all saying in the servants' hall—"

"Dear, dear!" interrupted T. T. "How distressing! How very impertinent! I am wondering if you wouldn't mind sending Tubbs out? I am rather anxious to have a word with him. Please do so, my girl—please do so."

The maid-servant tossed her head, and walked off. Tucker's hopes sank, but three minutes later Tubbs appeared. It was quite probable that the girl had told him about it, and had advised him not to come. But Tubbs was a curious youth, and he possibly scented a tip. Tubbs was not averse to tips, and he had no scruples as to their source.

"Ah, excellent!" exclaimed Tucker. "Tubbs! Yes, it is surely Tubbs!"

"Was you wantin' me, young gent?" grinned Tubbs, from below.

"Yes, indeed, I was—that is to say, I am!" said T. T. "I have here half a crown and a sealed note. I want you to take this note and deliver it to the Headmaster. It is most important that there should be no delay."

Tubbs considered for a second or two. He knew that he couldn't deliver the note to Dr. Stafford direct, but he would place it on the Head's table for Dr. Brett to take up. The page-boy didn't think it necessary to mention this.

"Right you are, Master Tucker!" he said. "Chuck it down—I'll deliver it!"

"Splendid—splendid!"

Tucker tossed down the note, and it floated to the ground. Tubbs didn't go after he had picked it up, but waited for the half-crown, which duly followed. And then the page-boy marched off.

And even the Rebels had no idea what astonishing results were to follow!

CHAPTER IV.

COMMUNISM LET LOOSE!



"BLOW me tight!"

Master Tubbs made that somewhat inelegant remark in a tone of considerable amazement. He was standing in Dr. Stafford's study,

and the early morning sunshine was streaming through the window. It was not yet breakfast-time, and Tubbs had come, according to orders, to see if there were any letters to deliver.

Dr. Brett had already told him that if the Head wished to communicate with any of the other masters he would leave notes—and Tubbs was to deliver them. There were several notes here, including one for Timothy Tucker!

But Tubbs was not amazed by this. He was reading a notice, written upon a large sheet of foolscap, in the Head's handwriting. And it had been folded up and enclosed in an envelope. On the envelope was written "To Tubbs. Pin the enclosed notice on the board in the College House lobby at once."

Tubbs, as already mentioned, was of a curious nature, and his first task was to read through the notice. And these were the words which met his startled gaze:—

NOTICE.

"The conditions existing at present are highly unsatisfactory, and it is much to be regretted that a certain section of boys should be opposed to discipline and order. This state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue, and I have decided that certain suggestions put forward by the discontented section of juniors shall be given a fair trial.

"These suggestions were first set forward in a manifesto which four boys named Armstrong, Doyle, Tucker and Griffith, made

public a day or two ago. The chief innovation will be the adoption of Form-councils; and, in short, the school will be run on an entirely new basis, the boys themselves having full control. I have decided to give this new system a trial, and it is to be hoped that every master and boy in the school will do his utmost to be patient and fair.

"If the trial is satisfactory, the scheme will be adopted as a permanent plan at St. Frank's. I wish it to be thoroughly understood that I require no comments upon this decision, and any seniors, boys, or masters will receive no reply if they send me notes on the subject. Acting upon the orders of Dr. Brett, I am confined to my own apartment for the present.

"MALCOLM STAFFORD (Headmaster)."

"My heye!" said Tubbs. "This is a go, if you like! Lummy! Them young gents have got their own way arter all! My heye! There'll be some bloomin' ructions now, I'll bet!"

Tubbs' understanding was somewhat limited, and he had not been able to get a full grasp of the Head's notice. However, he knew quite enough to realise that a new order of things was to be tried at St. Frank's. And he took the notice with alacrity to the College House, and securely pinned it on the green baize-covered board. So far, none of the fellows were down, for the rising bell had only rung five minutes earlier.

Having completed this task, Tubbs stood back and surveyed the notice with satisfaction. It could not fail to attract the attention of everybody, since there was no other paper on the board.

Tubbs passed out into the Triangle, and looked up eagerly at the parapet of the Ancient House. And there, as he had expected, one or two figures were visible on the flat roof. They were overcoated, for the frost still held, and the Triangle was covered with tightly trodden snow.

Tubbs ran over at full speed, waving the letter, the one that was addressed to Tucker in the Head's handwriting.

"Master Tucker—Master Tucker!" shouted the page-boy.

One of the juniors leaned over the parapet.

"Hallo! What's wrong?" he asked.

"Is Master Tucker there, Master Cobb?"

"No; Master Tucker isn't, and Master Cobb isn't going to fetch him!" replied Cobb, of the Remove. "Likely I'm going to fetch—"

"But I've got a note, young gent—a note from the 'Ead!"

"What!"

"It's from the 'Ead—honest, Master Cobb!" said Tubbs excitedly. "An' I've just pinned up a notice on the board in Dr. Stafford's own 'andwritin'. This 'ere notice says that the boys are going to have control of the schoo—"

"What rot!" shouted Cobb, although his heart was beating fast. "You're trying to pull my leg, you young ass!"

"No, it's true—honest!"

"Well, I'll come down to the side window—the window of the little passage," said Cobb. "You can hand the note through the barricade. We'll soon see whether you're telling the truth."

Not only Cobb, but all the other sentries rushed down. They were very excited. And this, of course, was a most unwise proceeding. They should never have deserted their posts in a body. For, if this had been a trick, the Ancient House would have been left quite unguarded.

Cobb hurried to the side window, and found Tubbs waiting for him. The note was passed through, and Cobb gave a yell as he looked at the envelope.

"My hat!" he shouted. "Look! It's addressed to Tucker, the Head's handwriting, too! He's sent a reply!"

"Oh, good!"

"Where's Tucker?"

"Go and find the fathead!"

Doyle and Griffith and several other juniors rushed off to find Tucker. Nearly all the Rebels were in bed, for they didn't believe in getting up to early. Those awake merely comprised the four sentries and those who were about to relieve them. But when the little knot of juniors burst into the dormitory, they found T. T. sitting up in bed blinking.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "What is the excitement, my dear sirs?"

"A note for you—from the Head!" yelled Griffith.

T. T. leapt out of bed, grabbed the note, and opened it. He unfolded a sheet of notepaper which was covered by the Head's neat handwriting. And these were the words which met Tucker's startled and victorious gaze:—

"My dear boy,

"Your letter reached me quite safely, and I have given the matter my careful and thorough attention. I cannot say that I altogether agree with all your suggestions, but it is only fair, perhaps, that they should be given a trial. Many of them appear to be quite sound and commendable.

"The idea, for example, of setting up Form-councils strikes me as being exceeding sensible. It will ultimately lead to a better understanding between boys and masters. With regard to your plan that the entire school should be run by the boys themselves, this is more daring, and I am rather doubtful as to whether it could ever succeed when put into actual practice. However, I am quite prepared to see what can be done, and you have my full permission to run the school on your own lines for the period of one week. I shall then be able to see how you have progressed, and what likelihood there is of the new order becoming permanent.

"At present the state of affairs is most distressing. You and your supporters are not only breaking many rules, but you are de-

priving a great many boys of their rightful comfort and education. It is not fair that the Ancient House should be occupied by a mere handful of junior boys who have defied authority. Give this up at once, and no punishment will be meted out. You have my full permission to go straight ahead with your scheme, starting from this morning. Whether there will be lessons during the morning, I leave entirely to you. At the end of the week you must deliver a full report to me personally. Until then I will not interfere in any way with your movements.

"MALCOLM STAFFORD."

Tucker nearly dropped the letter in his excitement. It was grabbed from him by the other juniors who read it feverishly. Their faces were flushed, their eyes glittering, and they could hardly hold themselves still.

"Dear, dear, dear!" murmured Tucker dreamily. "Is it possible? Can it be true? The Head has actually succumbed! Yes, my friends, he has given way! We have won the battle—we are victorious!"

A moment later the dormitory was in a state of hubbub.

"It's true!" yelled Griffith. "The Head's given in!"

"Hurrah!"

"We're going to run the school ourselves!" shouted Cobb.

Armstrong and the other Rebels sat up in bed, sleep being impossible under the circumstances. They jumped out, and excitedly demanded to know what all the noise was about.

They soon knew, and the din they created was rather remarkable. They cheered and cheered at the top of their voices. After the first incredulous five minutes, they realised that it was actually a fact, and they fairly went off their heads.

Over in the College House, the din could be heard quite clearly. Fellows looked out of the windows of the various dormitories, and could see nothing. I was decidedly curious, and wondered why the Rebels could be making such a demonstration.

"They're jolly excited over something," I remarked. "They seem pleased, too. But I can't make out why they're cheering such a lot."

"Dear old boy, it is very remarkable—it is, really!" said Sir Montie. "In fact, it is quite astoundin'. I can think of nothin' to make Armstrong and Co. give such a demonstration."

"Oh, they're mad!" said Handforth.

And just then Jack Grey came tearing in at the doorway. He was red with excitement—a most unusual state for him, for he was generally a very calm and collected junior.

"Come downstairs—quick!" he shouted. "The Head's written a notice, and it's on the board!"

"Nothing very dramatic in that!" said Pitt.

"But—but he's given way to the Rebels!" yelled Grey. "The Head's knuckled under completely, and Armstrong and Co. have won! They're allowed to come out, and to start all those mad Bolshevik ideas!"

"What!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"You can't pull our legs like that!"

But the juniors rushed down into the entrance-hall, and they crowded round the notice-board. They were absolutely staggered when they saw what was written there.

I read the notice with grim amusement. Somehow, I couldn't believe that this was actually true. There was something behind it. Was it possible that this scheme had been adopted in order to get the Rebels out of their stronghold.

Many of the fellows suggested this idea, but it was rejected. The Head would not descend to such methods—even if he was in one of his peculiar fits.

And when we went out into the Triangle, the barricades were already being torn down, and the victorious Rebels were pouring out into the open. They only realised at this moment, how much they had missed the privilege of chasing one another about on the solid ground.

"Well, what about it?" demanded Armstrong, as he came up, grinning. "Shows what determination will do—eh?"

"Oh, you needn't crow!" said Pitt. "The Head must have gone off his rocker!"

I was having a word with Pitt a minute or two later, and we watched the proceedings with particular interest. Feverish activity was afoot.

Breakfast was not thought of. Within an hour startling changes had taken place. Fellows from all Forms got back into their own quarters from the Ancient House. Handforth and Co. marched triumphantly into Study D. Tregellis-West and Watson and I entered into possession of Study C again. And servants came in, and went to their usual quarters.

There were no morning lessons that day. Lessons were impossible. And Armstrong announced that the Form Councils would be set up at once, with as little delay as possible.

As for the masters, they were staggered. No communication was made to the Head, for he distinctly stated that he would not reply. And as the day progressed, so the excitement grew.

That which had seemed impossible had become possible.

And even the senior Forms took to the idea with alacrity. The Fifth and Sixth declared that they were quite capable of running the school without any help from the masters, and the juniors, of course, had been positive of that from the very first. Tucker's scheme for inaugurating Form Councils was considered to be quite excellent. Each Council was to be voted for, and the fellows on the Council would have

complete control of the Form. The orders of the Council, in fact, would be very much after the style of the Form-master. The masters themselves would have no say—they had suddenly become a negligible quantity.

I intimated to my chums that chaos would occur before so very long, and it would be rather amusing to see what really did take place. Communism at St. Frank's was decidedly novel, particularly if it was practised as Armstrong and Co. were likely to practice it.

"If the gov'nor had been here, it wouldn't have happened," I said grimly. "Well, he'll be back to-morrow, at the latest—and then you'll see something. Don't make any mistake about that, my sons!"

But we're destined to see something in the meantime!

CHAPTER V.

DRASTIC CHANGES!



DINNER-TIME came, and the first Communist ideas were just coming into force. So far there had been nothing but muddle. All the morning the fellows had worked feverishly, getting things into their usual shape. Barricades had to be taken down and the rubbish cleared away. And in the servants' quarters, the most tremendous muddle had to be set straight, for the Rebels had made a terrible mess of everything.

When dinner was over, Mr. Crowell rose in his place, and made a short speech to the Remove. He announced that the new order of things was totally opposed to all discipline, and the Head was obviously unwell. He could never have given such instructions had he been perfectly fit. And Mr. Crowell hoped that the boys would go on precisely the same as usual, and attend afternoon lessons at the right time.

Armstrong was soon on his feet, and he looked bold.

"I'm sorry, sir, but afternoon lessons will start an hour later than usual," he said smoothly. "We have to elect certain members of the Form Council, and that'll take a bit of time."

"Armstrong, how dare you?" said Mr. Crowell curtly. "Every boy in this Form will attend lessons at the right time——"

"Not likely!" shouted Merrell.

"Merrell, you will take two hundred lines for impertinence!" snapped Mr. Crowell.

Merrell looked round.

"Are you going to stand that, you chaps?" he shouted. "Two hundred lines for nothing!"

"Pardon me, Mr. Crowell, but you don't seem to realise the position," said Armstrong smoothly. "You are here to teach us—not to punish us. Under the new system,

it is not allowable for any master to inflict punishment."

"Upon my soul!" gasped Mr. Crowell. "You insolent young rascal!"

"I don't mean to be insolent, sir. I'm just telling you how things stand," said Armstrong. "If any boy is impertinent, or if he commits any breach of rules, it will be your duty to report him to the Form Council. His punishment will then be inflicted as the Council deems fit."

"Hear, hear!"

Mr. Crowell positively shook.

"I have never heard of such nonsense in all my life!" he exclaimed hotly. "I do not intend to submit to it—not for one moment!"

"Very well, sir, you can do as you like," said Armstrong. "We shall attend afternoon lessons an hour later than usual, and it will be your duty to be there. If you fail to attend, the Form Council will report you to the Headmaster."

"Upon my soul!" gasped Mr. Crowell.

He had nothing further to say, for, as a matter of fact, words failed him. He was of the old school, and a strict believer in discipline. To his mind, the whole school had gone mad, and he was more than astounded at the Headmaster's action in letting the boys have their way.

Tommy Watson was rather astounded, too.

"What's the idea, Nipper?" he asked bluntly.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, letting Armstrong and these other bounders run everything?" asked Watson indignantly. "You're Form skipper, aren't you?"

"I believe so."

"Then why are you tamely knuckling under——"

"My dear chap, I'm doing nothing of the sort," I said sweetly. "This Communist idea is the cheerful plan of Tucker, Armstrong and Co. Let them get on with it. I'm not going to associate myself with such a dotty scheme!"

"Dear old boy, I entirely agree," said Sir Montie approvingly.

"Everything isn't exactly as you think," I went on. "I'm just wondering how long it'll last. And it's not at all a bad idea to let the Rebels have their fling. They can show us what practical communism amounts to—and, unless I'm mistaken, the whole affair will be a ghastly failure. In theory these things may seem all right, but in practice they are hopeless."

"I daresay you're right," said Watson. "It'll be an object lesson for the bounders they won't forget—and perhaps it's just as well to keep aloof. We can watch and pity the poor fatheads!"

Dinner was soon over, and then the chaos continued.

Most of the Loyalists agreed to my plan—that is, they remained inactive, looking on and wondering how it would all end. And

for the time being Armstrong held full sway in the Remove.

In the meantime, Chambers had taken full command of the Fifth. He had sneered openly at the Rebels during the revolution; he had called them every impolite name under the sun. But now he veered round like the wind, and wholeheartedly declared that the idea of Form Councils was terrific. He appointed himself the chief person of importance in the Fifth.

At this stage, of course, everything was in a state of flux, so to speak. That is to say, no definite arrangements had been arrived at, and every Form was doing very much as it liked.

Armstrong was quite ready to admit that the position was difficult, and that it would need a good deal of hard work before the new system was got into shipshape order. Once, however, the plans had been perfected and put into operation, St. Frank's would be running smoothly and serenely.

Chambers, of course, wanted to be the boss—and, at present, he certainly was the boss in the Fifth. If any of the other fellows didn't obey him, he immediately caused trouble.

Feverish activity existed in the Remove. A large number of fellows who had always been staunch to the Loyalists, entered into the new regime with enthusiasm. For, after all, they were boys, and the very idea of being their own masters filled them with glee and joy.

They still remained loyal to Nelson Lee and to the Head; but, as they argued, this was no reason why they shouldn't enjoy the benefits of Communism. The fellows were too young and inexperienced to fully realise what this sort of thing might lead to. They thought only of the minute.

Fenton, of the Sixth, the school captain, was rather grave and serious. At first he was just as amazed and staggered as the masters. But, as soon as he realised that this thing was really a fact, he sought out Armstrong.

"I don't pretend to understand why the Head has given you permission to carry on with this fool scheme of yours," said Fenton briskly. "But it's quite evident that you're going to be given a trial."

"Exactly," said Armstrong. "And we don't need any help from the Sixth—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Fenton grimly. "Not quite so fast, young man. By what I understand, this Communist scheme simply means that the boys at St. Frank's are to run the school entirely on their own?"

Armstrong nodded.

"Yes, that's the wheeze," he agreed.

"In that case, the Sixth has just as much right in the say of things as any other Form," said the school captain. "You juniors needn't think that you're going to have everything your own way. And you'll have to obey the prefects in just the same way as you've always done—"

"Oh, shall we!" yelled half-a-dozen juniors.

"Leave him to me, you chaps," said Armstrong. "Look here, Fenton, most of the chaps in the Remove respect you. You're senior skipper, and I think you're pretty popular in both Houses."

"Thanks!" said Fenton shortly. "Well?"

"We don't want to have a squabble with you—that's all," said Armstrong. "But you'd better understand at once that prefects are obsolete."

"Eh?"

"Absolutely obsolete!" repeated Armstrong. "Prefects, like masters, are an indication of a form of slavery. Tucker has pointed all these things out to us, and we've—"

"Gone off your heads?" suggested Fenton sarcastically.

"No, we've just come to our senses!" replied Armstrong. "We've been downtrodden enough, and now that we've got the chance, we're going to show the whole world what practical Communism means. If Communism can be successful in ruling the destinies of a whole nation, it can be equally successful in controlling a school."

"Quite so!" agreed Fenton. "But can you tell me the nation that is being successfully ruled by Communism? I'll give you a fiver if you can name one!"

"That's beside the point," he growled. "Everybody knows that Communism is an ideal state of affairs, if it's worked right. And, to get back to the original point, prefects are as dead as the Dodo!"

"In other words, you'll do just as you like?"

"Not at all," said Armstrong quickly. "And I'm rather glad of this opportunity to have a word with you. Every Form will have a Council, and this Council will deal with all punishments, and so forth. In the event of any Council giving an unjust decision, it will be possible for the victim to appeal to the Supreme Council. This Council will act in very much the same way as the Headmaster. At present it consists of four fellows only, and they only belong to the Remove. That's wrong, of course. To be representative of the whole school, it ought to consist of delegates from every Form."

"By Jove!" said Fenton. "You've got all the terms off pat! What next will you be up to? You'll be appointing shop stewards—"

"No; they'll be called Form-room stewards," interrupted Armstrong. "Every Form-room will have at least two stewards to see that things are going on smoothly. And it will be the duty of the stewards to report irregularities and misdeeds. Tucker is getting out a whole schedule, and it'll be ready by to-morrow. Until then we shall have to get on as best we can. It'll naturally take a day or two before everything is going in the right way."

Fenton shook his head, and marched off.

I heard this conversation, and I was secretly amused. Armstrong and Tucker, apparently, were determined to run St. Frank's on very much the same system as a big engineering works. All the boys were members of the union, there would be Form-room stewards, and the destinies of the whole school would be ruled by Form Councils—a Supreme Council presiding over the whole. It seemed ideal in theory. What would it be like in practice?

As I have mentioned, the Rebels were tremendously busy before afternoon lessons were due to commence. And then it was time for work, and Mr. Crowell arrived in the Remove Form-room—dignified, grim, and stern.

He entered the apartment, and then paused, staring.

"Good gracious me!" he gasped.

He had every reason to be amazed, for the sight which met his gaze was a truly astounding one. Mr. Crowell had never expected anything like it, although he was aware of the drastic changes.

The Remove was ready for afternoon lessons. In fact, every member was present, and there was a quiet, orderly air about the room. This, in itself, was a surprise—and was not likely to continue. But Armstrong had impressed upon the fellows the necessity of creating a good impression.

Mr. Crowell strode into the Form-room, breathing hard.

"What—what is the meaning of this?" he demanded furiously.

Armstrong stood up.

"Of what, sir?" he asked innocently.

"Of what!" thundered Mr. Crowell. "Upon my soul! You ask me of what! Who—who caused all these absurd alterations to be made? Who has had the audacity to remove the forms and desks—"

"Audacity is hardly the word to use!" interrupted Armstrong. "You will please understand, sir, that we are now in control of the Remove, and it is our intention to do our lessons under more favourable conditions. We are waiting for you to begin, Mr. Crowell. It is your duty to educate us!"

Mr. Crowell had no words.

He continued looking round the room in a dazed kind of way. He hardly recognised it. All the desks and forms had been removed. And, in their stead, were all kinds of easy chairs and lounges. These sumptuous articles of furniture had been deliberately taken from other parts of the Ancient House—lounges from the masters' own smoking-room, couches and chairs from private studies, and many from the domestic quarters. The Form-room was another place.

And, standing on either side of the room were juniors wearing armlets. Mr. Crowell strode up to one of these fellows, and seized him.

"What is this?" he demanded, gazing at some wording on the armlet. "Form-room

steward"! "Good gracious me! What absurdity, and—"

"There's no absurdity about it, sir!" shouted Fullwood. "We're havin' our own way now, an' you'd better get on with your job, or we'll find somebody else. It's up to us to sack you if we want to!"

"Dry up, Fully!" said one of the stewards curtly.

Mr. Crowell took a deep breath.

"This—this is beyond all endurance!" he shouted thickly. "Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that you boys would go to such preposterous lengths! Have you lost your wits? Have you gone out of your mind? This nonsense will cease at once—and the desks and forms will be brought back without delay!"

Mr. Crowell fairly danced with rage as he looked over the tops of his spectacles. The Remove was taking things very easily. Fellows were lounging about on the couches and easy-chairs, with crossed legs, and in various attitudes of languid ease. Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West, and I, and a few of our immediate supporters, were the only ones who sat upright and at attention. And this was not very easy, considering the nature of our seats.

"Pull yourselves together!" shouted Mr. Crowell. "Do you hear me? At once! Get to your feet, and stand at attention!"

Nobody took the slightest notice.

"Fullwood, you will stand out here!" went on the master harshly. "A minute ago you were grossly insulting, and I intend to cane you with the utmost severity. Stand out, sir!"

Ralph Leslie Fullwood laughed.

"Nothin' doin'!" he drawled easily, as he lounged into an easier position.

"You—you wretched young scamp!" stormed Mr. Crowell. "I shall—"

"Pardon me, sir, but you won't improve matters by losing your temper," interrupted Armstrong. "Under the new order of things, you are here for the sole and only purpose of instructing us in our lessons. I have already told you that you have no power to inflict punishment, and it would be better if you realised the truth at once. Will you please begin the first lesson?"

Mr. Crowell went off just like a rocket.

"No, I will not!" he exploded violently. "I wash my hands of the lot of you! Until this arrant madness ceases, I shall not enter this Form-room again! Somebody shall suffer for this appalling state of insubordination!"

And the enraged Form-master snapped his teeth, and strode out of the room, and slammed the door. The Rebels looked at one another rather surprised, and not a little concerned.

"Well, what do you think of that?" asked Griffith blankly.

"Did you expect anything else?" inquired Reginald Pitt. "My dear chaps, don't spoof

(Continued on page 25.)

OUR SPECIAL NEW YEAR NUMBER!
Two Grand New Features Coming! See Next Week's Number.

NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

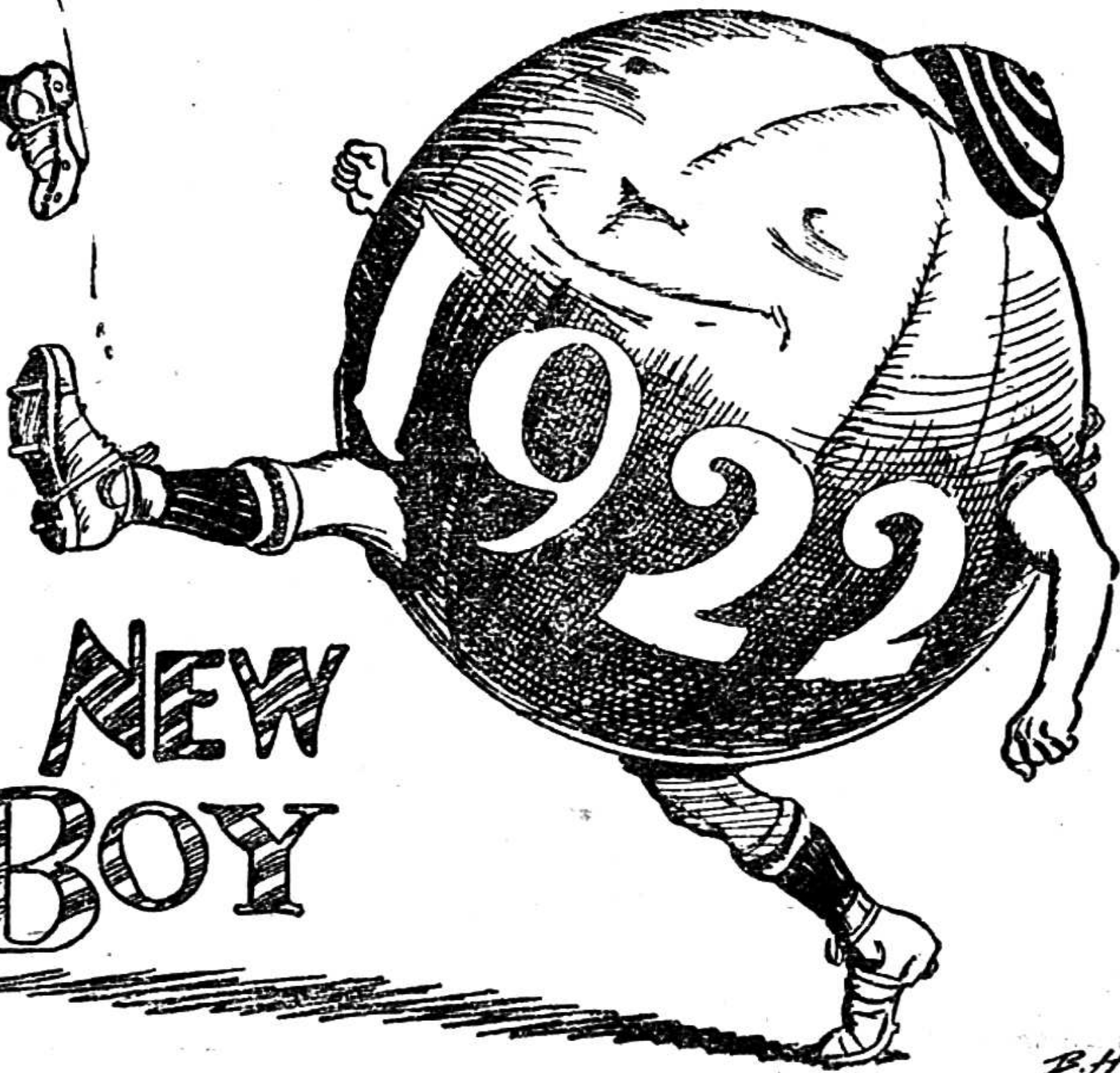
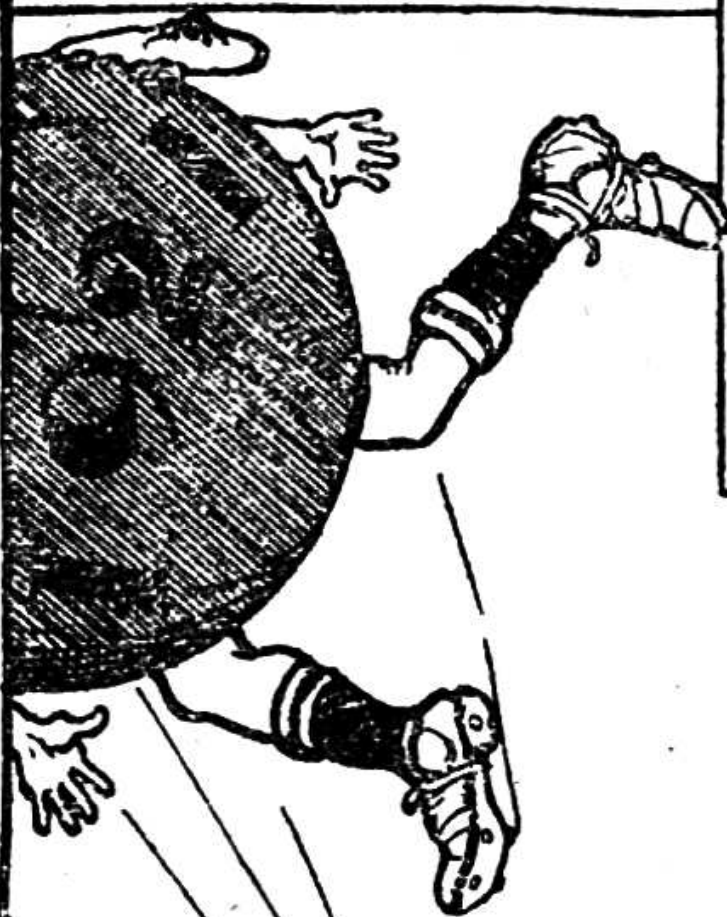
No. 7. THE JOURNAL OF THE REMOVE OF ST. FRANK'S
Edited By Nipper. Jan. 7, 1922.

A Topping

JANUARY

New Year

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**THE NEW
BOY**

B.H.

THE EDITOR'S DEN

ENTRANCE

EXIT

EDITOR

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

My dear Readers,—I must first acknowledge with heartfelt thanks your good wishes for the continued success of our "Little Rag" during 1922. Letters from well-wishers have been received from all parts of the school. I am an exceedingly busy individual these days, or I would answer each letter personally. The least I can do is to reciprocate your kind wishes, and to hope that you will derive the keenest possible delight from forthcoming numbers of the "Mag."

HANDFORTH'S NEW JOB.

When I first started this job of editing a paper, I had no idea what a tremendous amount of work it would involve. The business of making jokes, for instance, for our Topical Mixture is anything but a joke really. Handforth said it was as easy as shelling peas until he had a try. All I can say is that Handy did not shell many peas. I have engaged him, however, as official reporter, and his first article in this capacity appeared last week. Although I cannot vouch for the accuracy of his accounts, you will surely find them highly imaginative and extremely funny.

OUR NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS.

So many people are making Good Resolutions just now that it will fully be expected of me to do my share. As Captain of the Remove and Editor of the Remove Journal, I have a double responsibility which I shall endeavour to perform to your complete satisfaction. In the realm of sport, I shall strive to lead you on to fresh triumphs in 1922—and we shall have our work cut out, I can assure you, for I hear that our Bannington and Helmsford rivals will be exceptionally strong in their football and cricket teams this year. Touching on the matter of school discipline, it is essential that we should stand together at all times, but never was a greater need for us to show a firm front than at the present. As to the Mag., I am not going to be satisfied with its present standard. Every week I shall try to give you a better number than the week before, and I invite all of you to help me with suggestions for improvements.

In conclusion, I wish you all a **BRIGHT**
and **PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.**

Yours to a cinder,
NIPPER.



When the Head came on the field with his axe during the match Ancient House v. College house, he was not long in "finding the goal!" And it was no axe-ident, either.



No, the extraordinary noise heard recently in the Second Form Common Room was not a free fight, nor a scramble for nuts, nor yet a family of chickens being killed. It was the Second Form Impromptu Dramatic Society, trying to perform Pitt's play—"The Secret of Hill Cottage."



By the way the heroes of the Second rendered the play, we suggest that the title would better have been "The Uproar at Hill Cottage." Our own performance at Lord Dorrie's was quite quiet in comparison.

* * *

Edward Oswald, lost in the recent fog, came upon a large, enclosed building. Round and round the wall of this he walked absolutely in a q-wandery, in fact. And when the fog lifted, and he found that the building was nothing less than St. Frank's—well, he made a few *frank* s-tatements that were certainly not *saint*-ly!

BURNING QUESTIONS AT ST. FRANK'S

What did Edward Handforth?
What did Arnold McClure (Mak' lower?)
Who asked Tommy Watson (What's on?)
Why went Tregellis-West?
Against whom did Reginald Pitt himself?
What made Teddy Long?
Why isn't Fatty Little?
What turned Jack Grey?
What made Peter Short?
Why is Edward Long?
Who asked where Timothy Tuck'er?
Why isn't Timothy(s) Armstrong?
What has Owen Major?
What makes Mr. Crowell (crow-well?)

Fatty Little has promised to write our next serial—one with plenty of meat in it, he says. Just the kind of remark we might expect from Fatty; but it is *meet* that we see something of what it's like first!



What price Handforth as an exponent of repartee? He marched forth to the footer fray without his football boots. Having come back to the study for them, Church asked him: "Forgotten something?" And Handford reparteed: "No, idiot—remembered something!"

* * *

There was a bit of a scrap the other evening between Church and Bell. Curious that, when they were at it ding-dong, the neighbouring Church-bell should go "Ding-dong!" too, isn't it?



We have just received an article from Edward Oswald Handforth. He says it contains "food for thought." Well, there's a blob of jam on the first paragraph, a layer of butter on the second, and a few crumbs and some sardine oil on the third, and various other nourishing embellishments. So I should think that Handy's about right so far as "food" goes.

OH, WHAT A SURPRISE!

WHEN Teddy Long passed a keyhole, and didn't apply his ear!
WHEN Reginald Pitt lifted a penalty kick over the bar!
WHEN Handforth was called an ass, and didn't punch the speaker's nose!
WHEN Sommerton was seen mending a hole in his bags!
WHEN Church and McClure were seen eagerly listening to Handforth's conversation!
WHEN Fatty Little was offered a doughnut, and didn't accept it!
WHEN Fullwood remarked that he didn't feel inclined for a smoke!
WHEN Tregellis-West was seen with an ink-smudge on his collar!
WHEN one of the "Rebels" was heard to say "Good old Head!"

AN INTERVIEW WITH LORD DORRIMORE

The Famous Big-Game Hunter, Sportsman and Explorer,
grants ten minutes to our Special Society Interviewer.

Knows Nothing About Politics.

KNOWING Lord Dorrimore as I do, I was not at all nervous when I sought him out for an interview. When I was ushered into his presence I found him examining my card with an amused look on his good-natured face. It quickly vanished, however, and he regarded me sternly and severely.

"Young man," he said, "you've got to realise that I'm doin' you a very special favour. Durin' the past month dozens of interviewers have tried to get near me, but I've successfully dodged 'em all. Seein' that you represent NIPPER'S MAGAZINE, however, I'm willin' to give you a minute or two. But don't ask for my views on the political situation. I don't know what the political situation is. In fact, I don't even know if there is a political situation. Politics bore me stiff—so do interviewers."

A Hair-Raising Adventure.

I grinned, coughed, and tried to remember my prepared questions.

"I rather think politics would bore our readers stiff, too, sir," I said collectedly. "They would be more interested, I believe, in some of your adventures in wild parts of the world. I would like you to give me a few incidents of your career—that is, outstanding incidents, or descriptions of hair-raising adventures."

"The only time I had my hair raised was at the barbers'," said his lordship calmly. "The infernal fellow used a patent circular brush which went by electricity, and it gave me a frightful shock. By gad! I hope you don't think I'm tryin' to make a joke—because I could do much better than that if I tried. Well, go ahead with your bally questions."

His Narrowest Escape.

"What is the narrowest escape you have ever had?" I asked.

"Well, my adventure with the juniors of St. Frank's would want a lot of beatin',"

said Lord Dorrimore thoughtfully. "For sheer peril——"

"Joking apart, sir!" I remonstrated gently.

"Oh, you want to be serious!" said his lordship. "Now, let me see. About the nearest thing I can remember was when old Umlosi an' I were together on the Umsliboogaparooki River. At least, that's what the blacks called it. It's a little stream away back in the unexplored territory in Central Africa, an' it's one of the smaller tributaries of the Congo. Umlosi an' I were making a trip down the river in a dugout—you know, one of those enative boats made out of a big log."

**Captured by Cannibals.**

"You met with an adventure?" I asked, looking up from my notes.

"Exactly," said Lord Dorrimore. "Number one size, an' extra quality. We were shootin' some rapids when the infernal canoe upset; an' we had to swim for it. The current parted us, an' Umlosi swam to one bank, an'

I to the other. An' before I could take a couple of breaths, I found myself surrounded by a yellin' crowd of blacks, in all their war paint an' trimmin's."

"Cannibals?" I asked eagerly.

"Every time!" replied his lordship. "They were the Kagua tribe, an' the eatin' of human flesh was second nature to the beggars. They carted me off to their kraal—that is to say, their village—an' I was given to understand that my number was decidedly up. I couldn't speak their lingo, but I knew what was goin' on. By gad! The idea, I gathered, was to carve me into chunks, an' then stew me up with various native herbs an' edible roots. Now, I have distinct objections to bein' converted into paltry imitation of an Irish stew—although, in my case, I suppose it would be more correct to say English stew. I turned things over in my mind, wonderin' how I could escape. But the blighters had pinched my rifle an' my revolver, an' there were

hundreds of 'em buzzin' round me like wasps round a honeypot."

Saved by the Chief's Daughter.

"You were in a terrible position, sir," I commented, as I looked up.

"Oh, not at all," said Dorrie. "I was quite enjoyin' myself. I thought my final moment had arrived when the blacks hauled me out an' paraded me up an' down the village. I should have been killed on the spot, but a delay was caused by a sudden attack of heart disease on the part of the Chief's daughter. To be more exact, she fell violently in love with my manly beauty, an' put in overtime beggin' of her villainous father to spare me. She was rather anxious to give me a trial as her favourite husband."

"No doubt this Chief's daughter was pretty, sir?" I inquired.

"Bewitchin'!" declared Dorrie. "Just about as pretty as a gargoyle or a door-knocker. Judgin' by her appearance, she must have weighed twenty stone, an' her face closely resembled the frontispiece of a gorilla. Well, in the end, the Chief gave way, an' in doin' so sacrificed his Sunday dinner. Then I was consulted in the matter an' the situation was explained to me."

Umlosi in the Nick of Time.

"Did you really marry the Chief's daughter?"

"My dear idiot, haven't I described her?" asked his lordship languidly. "It took me precisely one second to decide—an', needless to say, I preferred sudden an' violent death to becomin' the Chief's son-in-law. Naturally, this was taken as a frightful insult, an' the cannibals were just preparin' to make a really nasty mess of me when Umlosi arrived."

"Ah!" I said, as I licked my pencil.

"The dear old ruffian blew into the landscape just as the Kaguas were about to carve some choice steaks from my anatomy. Umlosi had brought some pals with him, an' in less than two minutes a gory scrap was in progress. In the end, of course, we won clear an' got into a less excitin' zone. If Umlosi had been two seconds late there would have been no Dorrie left on this earth!"

And his lordship, asking me to excuse him for a minute, left the apartment. After waiting for half an hour, I discovered that my victim had escaped!

(However, our Special Interviewer got hold of his "victim" again some time later,

and to such good advantage that he succeeded in setting down a large number of Lord Dorrimore's narrow-escape adventures in various wild spots of the earth. These will be presented to our readers in the same form as the above interview week by week. The series, I believe, will be welcome.—ED.)

New Year's Greetings to St. Frank's.

By BOB CHRISTINE.

Here's luck to St. Frank's
Through the coming year.
Fill up your glasses
With good ginger beer.
Let's drink a toast
While the year is new.
"Good Luck to St. Frank's
In 1922."

Here's luck to the Head
The finest of men.
As good with the cane
As he is with the pen.
May his "staff" not fall "ard"
The coming year through.
"Good luck to the Head
In 1922."

Here's good wishes to Lee,
The Housemaster-Sleuth.
The best of 'em all
To discover the truth.
To the best of good fortune
May he find the "clue."
"Here's to Nelson Lee
In 1922."

Here's to Nipper and Watson
Sir M. (Montie, you know).
Things are sure to be O.K.
While there is the CO.
And though in study C
You don't see study, true.
Well, here's luck to the Chums
In 1922.

And just one more for Handforth,
And Church and McClure.
If there's any trouble
They'll be "handy," I'm sure.
Now I've got no more room,
So these few lines must do.
"Good luck to St. Frank's
In 1922."

SUGGESTED NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS.

The following resolutions, coming from an unknown source, were received by the Editor early this week.

SIR MONTIE TREGELLIS-WEST.—I propose to give up saying "begad." I shall also sell my trouser-press, as I intend buying a new pair of trousers every week. I mean to design a new School cap of seventeen different colours. And I am not going to write any more stuff for this weekly, as it makes my fingers get covered with ink. Begad!

FATTY LITTLE.—I intend to spend as little money as possible at the tuck shop this year. Of course, if kind friends invite me to food with them it would be unkind to refuse. But I am not going to put temptation in their way by asking them back.



Fatty Refuses to be Tempted.

FULLWOOD.—I am going to be very careful about dropping cigarette ends. In future I shall pick them up and destroy them so that no trace is left. I shall also see that no prefect is near when I have to admonish a junior. I must spare his feelings as much as possible by dealing with him in private where there is no audience.

SOMMERTON.—I am going to have a good look round the neighbourhood for a scarecrow. When I have found one I shall change clothes with him.

TIMOTHY TUCKER.—I am not yet in a position to define accurately the complete form which will embody my New Year Resolutions. I have, so far, only compiled a rough draft comprising a list of two hundred main divisions under which the ultimate schedule will fall. As to the subdivisions— (It seems useless to print any more of the ten pages received from T. T. It is unlikely that his resolutions will be ready for this year.—Ed. N.M.)

HUSSEI RANJIT LAL KAHN.—I have respectfully made up my mind most momentously to preserve some New Year good resolutions. In the ridiculous year about to come I shall use very sparingly simplified phrases. I shall choose to express myself preposterously and at magnitudinous length. And the exhilarating prolixity of my meaning will be inexplicably misunderstood by my hearers. Good resolutions are magnificent and discreditable affairs. I shall keep them very ambiguously.

JOSH CUTTLE.—Was I going to make any New Year Resolutions? Ask me! What was the use of making plans for to-morrow when to-morrow never comes? I may try to smile a little less, and I mean to give up laughter altogether. There was trouble and terror to come. And trouble does a man's heart good. But were good resolutions going to help a man in times of trouble? Ask me!

TEDDY LONG.—In future I am going to be very careful about the size of the keyholes I listen at. Several times last year I suffered from bad attacks of ear-ache. I am also thinking of buying a piece of soap as a better aid to hearing plainly.

HANDFORTH.—There is no need for me to make New Year Resolutions. But I am making out a long list for Church and McClure. And I shall do my best to see that they carry them out. But they are obstinate chaps, and I may have to use a little argument and gentle persuasion.

Our Potted 'Long Complete Serial.



REDSKINS AND RUSTLERS.

By **WALTER CHURCH.**

CHAPTER I. NEWS OF THE RUSTLERS.

GREAT excitement reigned in Buffalo Camp when Dick

Slinger came tearing down its main thoroughfare, shouting: "To your saddles, boys! The rustlers are busy!" Dick was the leader of the cowpunchers on Milligan's Ranch. He was fifteen years of age and rode "Broncho Billy," the fastest and most ferocious mount on the ranch. In a trice, every man in Buffalo Camp was astride, and the party, led by Dick, disappeared like a streak of lightning in a cloud of dust.

CHAPTER 2.—THE PURSUIT.

Dick was a long way ahead of the others. Suddenly he pulled up and searched the landscape with his keen eye. There, away to the left, were a score of horsemen heading a large batch of cattle down Deadman's Hollow. Without waiting for his men, Dick bore down on them.

CHAPTER 3.—TWENTY TO ONE.

The rustlers opened fire on the solitary figure approaching them, causing the cattle to stampede. Dick crouched low on his horse and returned the fire with deadly effect, for Dick was reputed to be the best shot in that part of the country. Six of the rustlers fell dead from their horses, and the remainder turned about and fled.

CHAPTER 4.—HOW DICK ROPED IN THE FLEEING RUSTLERS.

Dick immediately started in pursuit. In his left hand he carried a long coil of rope, in the use of which Dick excelled all other ranchmen. Catching up the first man, he lassoed him, tied him up, and turned his horse round in the direction of Buffalo Camp. He caught the next man in the same way, and the next, until all the rustlers were sent back disarmed and bound.

CHAPTER 5.—THREE CHEERS FOR DICK.

When Dick's followers arrived on the scene of the fight, they could not contain

themselves in admiration for their leader. "Let's give him three cheers!" said Ben Cartwright. After the cheers had subsided, all began to fear that Dick had been carried off a prisoner. Then they set off at a gallop in the direction they thought the rustlers had gone.

CHAPTER 6.—IN QUEST OF THEIR LEADER.

After an hour's riding and no sign of their quarry, the cowboys thought, perhaps, they had lost the trail. They were about to turn off in another direction when they sighted a horseman coming towards them. At first they thought it was Dick, and then they saw that the man was bound.

CHAPTER 7.—ALL BOUND AND DELIVERED BUT NO SIGNS OF DICK.

They could scarcely believe their senses when they discovered the bound horseman to be one of the rustlers. "This is Dick's work, my lads!" exclaimed Big Jim. And while the words were still on his lips another bound horseman came riding towards them. Then they waited for Dick, but instead of their leader, other rustlers arrived bound and helpless until a dozen of them were taken in charge. A couple of hours passed and there were no signs of Dick.

CHAPTER 8.—CAMPING FOR THE NIGHT.

As it was getting dark the party decided to make a camp for the night. They lit a fire, placed a guard over the prisoners, and waited for the morning to scour the country, for they were determined not to return to Buffalo Camp without Dick.

CHAPTER 9.—REDSKINS.

To return to Dick, After he had sent the last rustler back, he tethered his horse, and lay down to enjoy a well-earned rest. He had hardly closed his eyes when his sharp ears detected a sound. Looking up, he saw a redskin in full war-paint and feathers duck behind a rock. Jumping up, his revolver in hand, he made for his horse just as an arrow whizzed past him, grazing his cheek.

CHAPTER 10.—THE GLOW OF THE CAMP FIRE.

Other redskins appeared. He was cut off by these red devils, and he was determined not to be caught alive. Behind him was a wood rising on sloping ground. Into the wood he dashed and dismounted. Then he climbed the loftiest tree he could find, and from here he could get an uninterrupted view right back to the ranch. It was now getting dark, but Dick could just make out the stealthy forms of redskins advancing towards the faint distant glow of a camp fire. He thought of his comrades, and with his teeth clenched he descended the tree.

CHAPTER 11.—ATTACKED BY REDSKINS.

One by one all except the guard over the rustlers fell asleep. Even he began to feel drowsy. Meanwhile, the Redskins had noiselessly surrounded the camp, and, at a given signal from their chief, fell upon the sleeping camp. Completely taken by surprise, the cowboys and rustlers were overpowered without a struggle. The fire was stirred up and fresh logs thrown on, while every white man was trussed up and thrown round the fire. Then they commenced a war dance round their victims, who now realised what had probably happened to Dick, and what their own fate would be.

CHAPTER 12.—THE RESCUE AND CONCLUSION.

They were about to begin torturing their victims when a shot, followed by several



Dick could just make out the stealthy forms of Redskins advancing on the camp.

others in quick succession, interrupted the proceedings. Each shot had found its mark. Thinking that a big force of whites had come to the rescue, the Redskins decamped and rode swiftly away. Dick Slinger, for it was none other than he, speedily rushed in among his comrades and set them free. He was warmly welcomed and carried back shoulder-high to Buffalo Camp, where he was forthwith elected Sheriff. The first act of grace he performed was to pardon the rustlers, whom everyone agreed had suffered enough already.

THE END.

Who's Who at St. Frank's

Study E.

TIMOTHY TUCKER.—Commonly known as "T.T.," or "The Cheerful Lunatic," this most extraordinary boy is permitted on sufferance to share Study E with Pitt and Grey. In appearance, there would be no mistaking him for a crank. He has a big head, covered with thick, tangled black hair, and sheepish looking features, which are made to appear even more ridiculous by a pair of large, green-tinted spectacles. His physique resembles that of a monkey, his limbs being in odd conformity to his body. Tucker is chiefly noted for being a speech-maker. On any and every possible occasion he will be found addressing a group or a large gathering of amused juniors, on some weighty subject of the day. No one takes him seriously, because his ideas are too

advanced and far-fetched for the most extreme socialist. Also, he has a manner of speaking far beyond his years—a kind of mild courtesy and a weakness for long sounding words. Timothy Tucker was introduced into "The Nelson Lee Library" about the middle of December, 1919, and has figured frequently in the paper ever since. The stories in which he has appeared most prominently are "A Shock for St. Frank's," and "The Prisoner of the Island"—Nos. 254 and 255 of the N.L.L. As leader of "The Brotherhood of the Free," he is taking an active part in the revolt against the Head in the present series.

NIPPER HAS JUST BEEN ABLE TO SECURE TWO SPECIAL SERIES OF SCREAMINGLY FUNNY ARTICLES FOR THE MAG!

PARTICULARS WILL BE GIVEN NEXT WEEK!

(Continued from page 16.)

yourselves! Your troubles are only just starting. If this Communist stunt really gets going, you'll soon be tied up into colossal knots!"

Three minutes later a prefect arrived—Morrow, of the Sixth. Morrow came in swishing the cane.

"Now then, what's all this!" he asked grimly. "Mr. Crowell has sent me here to look after you chaps, and——"

"You're not required, thanks," interrupted Armstrong. "Don't you understand that prefects are finished with? You've got no more power than a kid in the Second. If you don't clear out at once, we'll kick you out! By order of the Supreme Council of the Revolution——"

"Supreme piffle of a set of donkeys!" snapped Morrow angrily. "All right—I won't interfere—you can have your fling. You only need enough length of rope, and you'll hang yourselves! I'm not going to perspire over you!"

He stalked out, and the Rebels hardly knew what to do. They had started their wonderful schemes; but, somehow, they were not quite panning out as they had expected. Armstrong pointed out, however, that only a few days would elapse before the masters and prefects grasped the situation. They would then fall into line with the rest, and Communism would go forward smoothly and easily.

Events promised to be very strenuous in the near future!

CHAPTER VI.

NELSON LEE ON THE TRACK!



THE MARINER'S COMPASS was a little inn on the water front of the small seaport town of Twemley.

It was quite a poor establishment, atrociously illuminated at night, and in a ramshackle condition.

It lay just a little back from the promenade, and it was generally frequented by longshoremen, and local characters of a disreputable nature.

Into this unsavoury building walked Nelson Lee. He entered the little tap-room, where a small fire was blazing, and where two men were bending over it, with large pots of beer at their elbows. Only a small light came from the gas-jet in the wall. Nelson Lee himself was disguised.

To all appearances, he was a seafaring man himself—wearing a peak-cap, a shabby blue reefer suit, and his face was adorned by a small goatee beard. A clay pipe stuck out of the corner of his mouth.

And he had not entered this place by mere chance.

The two men over the fire were named Nick Groves and Bill Topman, and they

were strangers in the town, as a matter of fact, they really belonged to Caistowe.

Nelson Lee had been on their track for some little time, and at last he had got his men. They were the pair who had been in charge of the motor launch which had provided a temporary prison for Nelson Lee and me. The incident had happened a few days earlier, when Mr. Trenton's associates had kidnapped us. They had failed to hold us, however, and the motor-launch and its crew had lost no time in getting clear of the neighbourhood, for the affair had occurred near Caistowe.

Nelson Lee was convinced that Trenton and his fellow-plotters were at the foot of the affair, and that Groves and Topman were merely tools. They had been paid to mount guard over us while we were prisoners in the launch.

And now, after a large number of inquiries, Nelson Lee had been successful in tracing the launch. He had run it to earth, so to speak, just outside the little seaport of Twemley; which was fifty or sixty miles along the coast, and was a quiet, sleepy, out-of-the-way place.

Even after his arrival in Twemley, Lee had had some little difficulty in locating the men he was after. But now, in the early evening, he had met with success, and he was fairly certain that his coming interview would not be fruitless. He had no intention, of course, of revealing his real identity to the rascals.

"Evenin', mates!" he said, as he carried a pot of ale to the fire, and sat down near the men. "Turnin' chilly, by the feel o' things, Strangers about here, ain't you?"

They regarded him without favour.

"We're stoppin' here awhile," said one of them gruffly.

"Yes, dodging trouble, eh?" asked Lee softly.

They stared at him with suspicion now.

"What are you tryin' to get at, mate?" asked Bill Topman. "We ain't got no trouble to dodge——"

"Not that little affair of the steam-launch?" asked Lee, in a low voice. "You surely haven't forgotten how you kidnapped Mr. Nelson Lee and Master Nipper and held them by force on your launch?"

The two men started and exchanged significant glances. Real alarm was now apparent in their eyes. Nelson Lee was blunt—he intended to be. He wanted to get his information without any beating about the bush.

"We don't know nothin' about any kidnappin'!" said Nick Groves, with a scowl.

"Bluff, my friends, will not serve you in the least!" said Nelson Lee. "By all appearances I'm a seafaring man like yourselves—but appearances are sometimes deceptive. I happen to be a detective."

"By gosh!" muttered Bill Topman huskily. They had never suspected Lee when he first entered, and now it was too late for

them to dodge him. They hadn't the faintest idea that he was Nelson Lee in person, and they immediately assumed that he was an official detective.

"You're talkin' rubbish!" said Groves, with a growl. "We don't know nothin' about any launch——"

"I have my facts all complete, and the best thing you can do is to tell me the whole truth," interrupted Lee. "I know that you were only paid by others, and that your part of the affair was small. I have no intention of arresting you; but I want the names and addresses of the men who hired your launch?"

Both the rascals brightened up.

"We don't know neither of 'em," said Topman. "Oh, you don't need to glare at me, Nick. This bloomin' guy has got us fairly taped. So what's the good of tryin' to deny it? We'd give you the names, sir, if we knew 'em, but we don't."

"Nevertheless, you will probably give me some very useful information," said Nelson Lee sternly. "I may as well inform you that your arrest will follow unless you do as I demand. I have had considerable trouble in tracing you, and I have no intention of letting you slip through my fingers."

"It's all very well to talk like that, but you'll have a job to arrest us!" said Topman cunningly. "Where's your evidence agin us? It can't be done, mister!"

Nelson Lee was well aware of it, for he had no real evidence—at least, none that would satisfy the law. But he was certain of his own facts, and this little game of bluff was worth while.

"No evidence?" he repeated lightly. "Make no mistake, my man! I can prove the whole affair, and you won't find it so easy to get off. But, I don't want to be unreasonable. I'm not after you—I want to lay my hands on the men who employed you. You were simply paid to obey their orders. Give me their names, or one name, and I'll quit."

Bill Topman grunted.

"We'd give you the names, and welcome, sir," he said. "Them swabs ain't paid us a penny o' what they promised, and I'd just like to see 'em tripped up. But we don't know who the toffs was, or where they come from—— Wait a minute, though! What about that card, Nick?"

"Card?" repeated Groves. "What card?"

"Why, that one you picked up at the bottom of the companion——"

"Oh!" said Nick. "Swab me, you're right! It's more'n likely the gent will be able to get something out of it. But it won't do us no good to have us shoved in the jug! Even if we was hauled up afore the Bench, we'd be dismissed. It wasn't us what got hold o' them two; it was Paxton and the other gent."

"Paxton?" repeated Nelson Lee inquiringly.

"Leastways, I believe one of 'em was Paxton," said Nick Groves. "It was while

this 'ere toff was on board. You see, guy-nor, he happened to slip while he was getting up the stairs. They're a bit steep; y'see. The launch was rockin' a bit, and the gent went right over. His pocket-book dropped out, and he picked it up quick like, and put it back in his pocket. Neither Bill nor me noticed anything at the time, but later on we found a card up a dark corner. Mebbe it's got the gent's name on it, or mebbe it's somebody else's card. Anyways, it's likely you might be able to run 'em down. Bill an' me don't know nothin', and we wouldn't have told you this only we don't want to be mixed up in no business with the coppers. It's the fust time we've done a job like that, and I reckon it'll be the last."

While he was speaking, Nick removed from an inner pocket, a grimy slip of paste-board. He brushed it on his sleeve, and passed it on to Nelson Lee. The famous detective took it with a certain amount of curiosity, and this is what he read on the card: "Roger Paxton, M. D., 59, Cable Street, Bayswater, London, W."

The name was quite unfamiliar to Nelson Lee, but he could see that Paxton was a doctor, and this fact was singularly significant. Trenton himself was a man of science, and it was quite natural that one of his associates should be in the medical profession. Lee intended to lose no time. But he had no intention of showing these men that he was eager.

"I'm afraid this card's no good to me," he said, passing it back. "Mr. Paxton is a West End physician, and hardly the kind of fellow I am looking for. Possibly the card was dropped as a blind, at all events, it is of no value to me."

Lee was speaking the truth. The card was certainly valueless, but the information it contained was extremely welcome. Groves and Topman, however, were completely deluded by his chagrined tone and dejected appearance.

"I'm afraid there's nothing doing," said Nelson Lee, as he finished off his ale. "I shall have to make other inquiries. You fellows needn't be afraid, and I should advise you to stay in this town. I don't suppose you'll be wanted, but if you are we shall easily lay hands upon you."

A few minutes later Nelson Lee was outside, striding at a lumbering gait towards the railway station. There was no necessity for him to walk in that way, but he did so almost automatically. For he had started out in the character of a rough seafaring man, and he kept up the pretence, he acted his part whether observed or unobserved.

"Quite profitable!" he murmured contentedly. "Paxton, Cable Street, Bayswater, a very respectable thoroughfare, I believe. If I am lucky I shall just manage to catch the fast evening train."

He had remembered this while in the tap-room of the Mariner's Compass, and now he hurried his footsteps. The station was on

a par with the rest of the town of Twemley, badly illuminated, gloomy and depressing. By great good fortune Lee was in time. The one fast train to London was due in five minutes.

Thus, long before the evening was actually late, the famous detective stepped out of a compartment at Victoria, and it did not take him long to make his way to Bayswater. He had no difficulty in finding Cable Street.

It proved to be a quiet road, with big houses on either side. The illumination was good, and the night was fairly clear. Lee discovered that No. 59 was a corner house, with a strip of garden on one side, divided off by a medium-sized brick wall.

Lee passed it slouchingly, and did not fail to observe a highly polished brass plate on the gate, bearing the name of Dr. Paxton. There was a little red lamp, too, with an electric light inside, in the porch. And the left-hand front room was a surgery. This was undoubtedly the residence of a practising physician in quite a big way.

Was it possible that Dr. Roger Paxton was in any way connected with Trenton and his evil designs? Was it likely, indeed, that this medical man had gone down to Caistowe and arranged the recent kidnapping affair with Bill Topman and Nick Groves?

On the face of it, the whole thing seemed absurd.

But this did not deter Nelson Lee from pursuing his inquiries. It seemed quite ridiculous to suspect Mr. Hugh Trenton of plotting and villainy, and yet Trenton was steeped very deeply in crime. It was just as logical to assume that Dr. Paxton was associated with him.

Nelson Lee considered for a few brief moments as he passed the house, and he mapped out the course he would adopt. It was after the doctor's usual hours, but this was not a great drawback. Lee decided that he would make a pretence of being attacked with sudden illness. He would go to the door, and ask desperately for the doctor. In his present disguise he would neither be recognised nor suspected. And, while he was with Paxton, he would make references to Caistowe, motor-launches, and so forth. He would instantly be able to tell by the doctor's expression whether he was guilty or innocent. And before taking any decisive action, it was necessary to know exactly how the land lay.

However, Lee's visit to the surgery was unnecessary.

For just as he was preparing to walk to the gate, a taxi came speeding up. It pulled up opposite No. 59, where an electric standard shed a powerful light down upon the pavement.

A man jumped out of the taxi, and Nelson Lee felt his heart beating a trifle faster. At the same time a glow of satisfaction



All was quiet, and Lee gently slid the lower sash up, inch by inch.

warmed him. For he knew, on the instant, that his efforts had been in the right direction.

For the newcomer had been none other than Mr. Trenton himself!

CHAPTER VII.

IN A TIGHT CORNER!



NELSON LEE was standing in deep shadow; just at the corner of the road, a big evergreen tree hung over from Dr. Paxton's garden, and it afforded the disguised detective a very welcome point of vantage. Trenton had no idea that he was being watched as he paid off the taxi and passed in through the gateway.

By raising himself slightly, Lee could just see over the top of the wall into the garden. He had already noticed that all the side windows of the doctor's house were dark. The only light was in the surgery and the hall. Trenton's unexpected arrival completely altered Nelson Lee's plans.

It was no longer necessary for him to go in to see Paxton; the very fact that the science master had come here proved that Paxton was a guilty associate. And it made Lee's task all the easier.

He decided that his best course would be to hang about until Trenton took his departure. He would then either follow Trenton, or make investigations on the spot. He would certainly not leave London until he had definite proofs of the conspiracy against Dr. Stafford.

And while he was thinking in this way he suddenly observed one of the side windows become illuminated. He could even see a shadow against the wall. No attempt was made to pull the blind down.

And on the impulse of the moment, Nelson Lee acted. He glanced up and down, saw that the road was quiet, and then he vaulted lightly to the top of the wall, and let himself down into Dr. Paxton's garden.

There were many bushes and shrubs, and as the night was intensely dark, there was practically no fear of his movements being observed, even supposing that somebody was on the watch, which was improbable. Nelson Lee cautiously approached the window, crouching low. Then he allowed his head to rise until he could just see over the sill, into the apartment.

He was just in time to see a tall man wearing pince-nez switch off the electric-light. The faint sound of a closing door came to him. Just at the first moment, Lee was disappointed, then a quiet satisfaction came to him.

For he realised the truth.

The room was not now in complete darkness, but filled with a reddish glow. And this, as Nelson Lee could plainly see, came from a gas fire. Evidently Dr. Paxton had merely entered the room to light the fire, and had then departed. This seemed to indicate that the room would be used later. For what purpose? Surely to hold a private conference with the visitor, Mr. Trenton?

In any case, this inference was a sound one, and Nelson Lee acted upon it. Trenton, he concluded, must have made this trip up to London because he was finding himself balked at every turn. And now he was seeking the advice of his colleagues as to what his best course should be.

The glow from the gas fire enabled Lee to see into the room clearly. He could make out a big lounge, some easy chairs, a central table with a plush cloth upon it, a comfortable sideboard, carrying an array of decanters and silver, and quite a number of heavily framed pictures.

But the most interesting object of all was a large oak cupboard, which stood across one corner—the corner opposite the door. It was a heavy affair, fully seven feet high, with an ornamental top. It suggested possibilities: A discussion was to take place, and much would be talked of. If Lee could only overhear all that was said, his case would be absolutely complete. The scheme in his mind would be risky, but he was quite capable of taking care of himself, and he had no great respect for these "gentle-

men" conspirators. If he couldn't beat them single-handed, he was prepared to go out of business altogether.

And, having made up his mind, Nelson Lee lost no time in putting his scheme into action. It was not Nelson Lee's habit to hesitate. A decision having been reached, he always went into immediate action.

Slipping a sharp instrument from his pocket, he commenced operations on the window. The catch was an old-fashioned one, and it succumbed to Lee's expert manipulation in less than a minute. He would not have cared if the catch had been of a modern type—his task would have been nearly as simple.

All was quiet, and Lee gently slid the lower sash up, inch by inch. He was glad that it made no sound. Finally, he stepped softly into the room, and closed the sash behind him—but he did not fasten the window. And he noted that there were two little handles by which the sash could be easily raised. This knowledge might come in handy later.

He swiftly crossed the room to the oak cupboard, and he opened the door. A faint gasp came up in his throat, and he half started back, instinctively clutching for his revolver.

The still figure of a man faced him!

It looked horribly deathlike and eerie in the red glow from the fire. But it was only a momentary start. Lee chuckled inwardly, and noted that there was plenty of room for him in the cupboard. It was occupied, at present, by a kind of lay figure—a complete model of a human being. It was a splendid piece of work, and all the limbs were secured together at the joints, and movable. The whole thing was fixed to a solid stand. It was even complete to the face and hair, and there was some excuse for Lee's involuntary start. Apparently the figure was used by Dr. Paxton in the course of his practice. It was not a particularly strange thing to see in a doctor's house.

Lee next examined the door, and he found a key there. He also discovered that the door could be locked from the inside. He quickly shut himself in, and turned the key. He was now locked in the cupboard with his strange companion.

When Paxton and Trenton entered they would suspect nothing—and Lee, within that cupboard, would be able to hear all that passed. He was thankful to the fates for having made things so easy for him.

The minutes passed slowly, and it seemed that nothing would ever disturb the silence. Then came the faint thud of a closing door in another part of the house, and footsteps along the corridor. The door of the apartment opened, and a click sounded as the electric light was switched on. Voices came to Lee with much greater distinctness than he had at first thought possible.

There were one or two chinks in the cupboard at the top, and through this the

electric light filtered, making the inside of his prison almost bright. He could see the lay figure beside him without straining his eyes.

"Exactly as I anticipated—a conference!" murmured Lee. "Splendid! And not merely between Paxton and Trenton, but there are others—two others, at least. Probably the whole gang. This ought to be informative."

The slightest movement he knew, would betray him. And it was therefore necessary to keep absolutely still. Any movement on his part would cause the cupboard to creak, and that would bring immediate investigation—and certain discovery.

So Nelson Lee remained as motionless as the lay figure beside him, and listened. In his hands he held a small notebook and a pencil. He intended making notes in shorthand—he had trained himself to do this with ease in the dark.

"We can talk quite freely here without any danger of being overheard, gentlemen," said one of the men in a deep voice. "Please be seated. Chandler, you might pass those cigars over, if you don't mind. Have one, professor—they're quite good!"

There was a brief lull whilst the four men were seating themselves.

"I understand, Trenton, that things are not going well?" asked another voice.

"They're going badly, Professor Garth," replied Trenton. "It's all the fault of that infernal busybody, Nelson Lee! Whichever way I turn he is always at my elbow. I can never be free of him."

The concealed detective smiled to himself. Trenton would have been surprised if he could have known how near Lee was to him at the moment. Lee recognised the name at once—Professor Garth. Without a doubt, he was the well-known Professor Holroyd Garth, the eminent scientist. Lee recalled certain ugly rumours which had been circulated about the professor a year or two previously. In many quarters he was supposed to be somewhat crazy. He was an extremist—a man with insane political views, and many other cranky ideas.

"Nelson Lee, I understand, is one of the masters at St. Frank's?" asked Chandler. "Surely you can successfully dodge him—"

"I tell you it is impossible!" interrupted Trenton. "While Lee is there my hands are tied. I've been doing the utmost I can, but at last I have come to the conclusion that the whole thing is hopeless until Lee is removed."

"Didn't you arrange to get him out of the way?" asked Professor Garth.

"You know we did," replied Paxton. "But the brute managed to get away. It was all the fault of those two fools who were in charge of the motor-launch. You know the incident—there's no need for me to repeat it. We have to decide now what our next move will be."

"First of all, what have you accomplished, Trenton?" asked Professor Garth. "What—exactly—have you done?"

"Well, I have been successful in treating Dr. Stafford with the Zaxzol solution on several occasions," replied Trenton. "I have graduated the doses, and the effect has been quite satisfactory. But Lee has either stepped in and spoilt all the effect of my work, or he has compelled Dr. Stafford to remain in his own apartment during the period of influence. And at present I am utterly helpless. Lee is away from the school, it is true, but he undoubtedly suspects me."

"Why should you think so?"

"Because he has taken the most stringent precautions," replied Trenton. "The Headmaster is confined to his own bedroom, and Dr. Brett, or somebody else is in constant attendance. It is impossible for me to get anywhere near him. When Lee comes back it will be the same. He is guarding Stafford night and day. And I tell you frankly, gentlemen, the whole position is serious. Lee is doing his utmost to get at the whole truth of this business, and it is quite possible that he is making investigations even at this moment. I am not sure that it would not be a good plan to abandon the whole project, so far as St. Frank's is concerned."

"Not at all—not at all!" said Professor Garth sharply. "Having started, you must continue, Trenton. This Zaxzol solution of yours is the most wonderful discovery of ten centuries, and we are not going to admit ourselves beaten by a mere commonplace detective. We have commenced a great work—we are labouring for the sheer love of our ideals, and we must go forward—always forward. Like all pioneers, we are regarded with suspicion and distrust. If the truth of this matter came out, we should probably find ourselves in prison. It is always the lot of pioneers to be martyred."

"There's no reason why you should talk like that, professor," said Paxton. "If we go carefully, there is no reason why any of us should suffer at all. St. Frank's is the only school where we have met with obstruction. At the three big schools in the Midlands and the North, the Zaxzol has been used with eminent success, and in every case our own men have been installed after the former Headmasters have been dismissed. And our work is going on—our doctrines are being taught to the young mind. If our entire scheme is successful, the young men of the next generation will have all our beliefs and convictions deeply rooted in their minds. It would be a pity to abandon such a big school as St. Frank's. It is the most important case we have tackled, and Trenton went there personally because of its importance. I am surprised, Trenton, that you should be ready to admit defeat."

"Man alive, what else can I do?" snapped Trenton hotly. "You don't know what odds I am fighting against! This Lee—this infernal detective—is like a shadow. I can't



Crash! Trenton struck the ice, and it shivered in every direction. The science master went clean through, and spurts of freezing cold water rose into the air.

get rid of him—I can't move an inch! The whole position is becoming intolerable."

"Well, as far as I can see, the only course is to go on as well as you can for the present," said Professor Garth. "It would be too risky to make a second attempt to get Lee out of the way. If only you can dose the Headmaster once more, your work will be accomplished. I know all the inside facts regarding St. Frank's—since I have made it my business to find out. I know that the majority of the boys are openly opposed to Dr. Stafford. Go back to St. Frank's, and do your best to give one more dose of Zaxzol to—"

Crack!

Without the slightest warning one of the boards of the oaken cupboard gave a sharp crack like a miniature pistol shot. It even startled Lee, for it sounded much louder to him than it did to the others. His muscles grew taut, and he instinctively pulled his revolver out. He had not moved an inch, and the sudden crack in the old oak was none of his doing. The most likely explanation was that the apartment had been left unheated for several days. And now the gas-fire was causing the room to become perceptibly hot. One of the oaken boards had contracted, as old woodwork will. It was the height of misfortune for the concealed detective.

Every man in the room stared at the big cupboard.

"What on earth was that?" asked Chandler, in a startled voice.

"Nothing—merely that old cupboard complaining about the heat," said Trenton. "That fire is burning rather fiercely, Paxton. I'd better turn it down a bit. Gas fires are all very well, but they give out too intense a heat for my liking."

"It's very strange," said Paxton, getting up from his chair, and going over to the cupboard. "Before we entered this room there was a key in this door, and the cupboard was unlocked. I noticed it particularly. The key's gone!"

"You must have taken it out yourself," said Chandler.

The doctor seized the door handle, and wrenched at it.

"Why, good gracious!" he exclaimed sharply. "The door's locked—on the inside! What can it mean? Somebody must have got inside, and locked himself—Hi! Who's there? Who's inside?"

Thump! Thump! Thump!

He hammered on the door fiercely. Lee remained as still as a mouse.

"Don't be a fool, Paxton!" said Professor Garth. "It's impossible for anybody to be in there—"

"Impossible!" shouted Garth hoarsely. "It's the truth, I tell you! Don't you understand? The door's locked on the inside! There must be somebody here—and that somebody has been listening to everything that we have spoken!"

"Good heavens!" muttered Trenton, staggered. "I—I wonder if Lee is at the bottom of this—"

"You've got Lee on the brain!" snapped Paxton. "Most probably one of my servants—they're an inquisitive crowd at the best of times. Who's in here? Answer! If you don't speak within a minute I'll smash the door open."

There was no reply, and Dr. Paxton, beside himself with rage, rushed to the fireplace and seized the heavy poker—which, in this instance, was merely used as an ornament, since a gas-fire needs no poking.

Crash!

Paxton brought the knobbed handle against the top panel of the door with all his strength. The woodwork splintered in every direction. Again the poker was used, and, at length, a fair-sized hole was made.

All the men were crowding round now, hardly knowing what to expect. It was certain, however, that the door would be opened within a few seconds.

Crack!

This time it was the sharp, ringing report of a revolver. And as the crack sounded, the room became plunged into darkness. The bullet had gone upwards, and whether by accident or design it struck the powerful electric-light which was hanging from a pendant in the ceiling. It was probably by design.

The four men fell back, dismayed and confused. A great crash came from the door of the cupboard. After the powerful brilliance in the room, the gloom was now utterly thick.

"Hands up—every man!" rapped out a deep, throaty voice. "At the first movement I'll fire! Hands up, you scum!"

Trenton and his associates flung up their hands on the instant. That voice—absolutely unrecognisable as Nelson Lee's—was determined and grim. There was no mistaking the deadly note.

And now the red glow from the gas-fire was making itself apparent; the four men were just beginning to see the various objects in the room. And there, standing in the smashed doorway of the cupboard, was the figure of the intruder. He was pointing a revolver straight at the quartette.

They stood there, helpless—and thoroughly scared.

"Who in the name of thunder are you?" snarled Dr. Paxton. "Put that gun down, you fool! We're not going to—"

While he was speaking, the window was suddenly flung open. Instinctively, the men turned, and caught a momentary glimpse of a figure leaping out into the night. It vanished.

Trenton dashed to the window, and looked out. There was no sign of the man. He had faded into the blackness like a part of it.

"There must have been two of them!" said Trenton, as he turned. "I don't know what to think—"

While he was speaking Dr. Paxton gave a sudden outcry, and rushed forward to the cupboard. Until that moment he had been standing fixedly, with his hands upraised. He seized the menacing figure of the stranger, and the latter moved stiffly.

"We've been tricked!" panted the doctor hoarsely. "What an infernal fool I was not to see through it at first! Lights—strike a match, somebody!"

Two or three matches were struck and held between shaking fingers. And there, in the flickering light, the menacing stranger was revealed.

It was the lay figure!

Clothed in the big reefer overcoat and peaked cap, it had looked amazingly life-like in the dim light from the fire. And the revolver was held firmly in its grasp, the arm pointing outwards.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Trenton blankly.

The other men used much stronger terms—quite unprintable terms—in fact. They had had the mysterious intruder trapped—positively and hopelessly trapped. And yet he had succeeded in slipping through their fingers. And he had left no clue behind him, for the clothing told them nothing, and the revolver was a standard pattern similar to a thousand others.

In the meantime, Nelson Lee was walking briskly towards Hyde Park.

"Well, that was rather too strenuous to be exactly comfortable," he told himself. "But I think I fooled them rather neatly. A great pity, because I was anxious to hear more. But I rather think I have all the facts I need now."

Less than an hour later Nelson Lee was at his famous rooms in Gray's Inn Road. And, locked up in complete privacy, he wrote his notes up fully, dipped in reference books, and so forth, and fully prepared his case. By the time he turned in, well into the small hours of the morning, he was feeling perfectly satisfied.

His net was growing tight—very, very tight!

CHAPTER VIII.

CARRYING ON!



MR. CROWELL paced the Triangle with short, agitated strides.

The worthy master of the Remove was intensely worried and concerned. The present state of affairs at St. Frank's preyed upon his mind even more than he was ready to admit.

He tried to argue with himself that it was no concern of his. The Headmaster had permitted this disaster to occur, and therefore, any consequences would have to be answered by Dr. Stafford himself. No blame could certainly be attached to Mr. Crowell. So why should he worry?

But the Remove master had the interest of St. Frank's at heart, and it pained him intensely to see disorder rapidly sinking into chaos. It was morning now—early morning—and the second day of Communist rule was about to begin.

As Mr. Crowell had suspected, the position was worse than ever. The Supreme Council of the Revolution had issued orders that no rising bell was to be sounded—and now, when all the boys should have been at breakfast, a large number of them were still in the dormitories. Others were lounging about, and generally doing just as they liked.

At this rate, the present muddle would drift into hopeless confusion long before a week had elapsed. It must be admitted, however, that Armstrong had been doing his best, and if all his instructions had been carried out, something like order would have been maintained.

Unfortunately, the juniors had no thought of obeying Armstrong's instructions. They were their own masters now, and they didn't care a snap of the fingers for the Supreme Council. And the Supreme Council was beginning to realise that it would have to give an exhibition of its power, in order to restore order.

Mr. Crowell was firmly determined to have nothing to do with the Remove until the fellows came to their senses. He was certainly not going to make a fool of himself, and his one hope was that Nelson Lee would return—for Mr. Crowell had the most implicit faith in his Housemaster.

And while he was thinking in this way, he

happened to glance towards the gates. A tall figure had just entered, walking briskly. The Form-master halted in his tracks, and his face flushed slightly. A look of intense relief swept over his features.

"Mr. Lee!" he muttered. "Splendid—oh, splendid!"

He had been half hoping that Lee would return to-day, but he had never expected him to arrive so early in the morning. Mr. Crowell hurried over to him, and grasped his hand. Lee had come down by the earliest possible train, and he could see at once that the Form master was agitated and worried.

"Good morning, Mr. Crowell, I am sorry to see you looking so concerned," he said. "I trust everything is all right?"

"Quite the reverse, Mr. Lee, positively the reverse!"

"You mean the Head—"

"Dr. Stafford is perfectly healthy, to the best of my knowledge," said Mr. Crowell. "He has been constantly in Dr. Brett's care. But dreadful things have happened since your departure, Mr. Lee—appalling changes have taken place!"

"I don't quite understand," said Nelson Lee.

"Either Dr. Stafford has gone out of his mind, or there is some ghastly mistake," said Mr. Mr. Crowell. "And yet that is impossible, since Dr. Stafford's notice is still upon the board. He has given the boys per-

mission to run the school themselves, sir! The insane ideas of Communism are being put into practice!"

Nelson Lee tightened his lips.

"Oh, indeed!" he said smoothly. "I had already noticed that the Ancient House was unbarricaded, and I gathered that some change had come about. Tucker, of the Remove, has had these Communist ideas for some little time, and I have known the Rebels were foolish enough to support him—"

"Yes, yes, Mr. Lee; but the Headmaster has given the boys permission to adopt these schemes!" exclaimed Mr. Crowell impatiently. "They have already converted the entire establishment into chaos. Heaven alone knows what the result will be unless immediate steps are taken to restore order."

While speaking, they had strolled towards the College House, and now they mounted the steps, and entered the lobby. Just as they were doing so, I came out of the Ancient House doorway, and I immediately spotted the gov'nor on the side of the Triangle. Needless to say I crossed over to the College House like a miniature whirlwind.

And when I burst into the lobby I found Mr. Crowell and the gov'nor standing before the notice-board. Nelson Lee was examining

(Continued on page 33)

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the famous announcement of the Head's with somewhat grim amusement. Without a word, he removed the drawing-pins, folded up the notice, and placed it in his pocket.

"Please come to my study, Mr. Crowell, and we will have a little chat about this," he said evenly. "Hallo, Nipper! What part are you playing in this new variety of Communism?"

"I'm just looking on, sir," I replied. "I'm letting the fatheads run their heads into the noose. It's rather interesting to watch, and I've been speculating with Montie and Tommy how long it will be before the Rebels strangle themselves."

Lee made no comment, but went straight to his study, not his own study in the Ancient House, but a temporary apartment in the College House. We entered, and the door was closed. Nelson Lee took the Head's notice out of his pocket, and examined it again.

"This is extremely well done," he said slowly. "The wording is excellent, and the handwriting a very creditable imitation of Dr. Stafford's. It is, of course, a forgery!"

"I thought you'd spot it, sir!" I grinned. "Well done, eh?"

"A—a forgery!" stuttered Mr. Crowell, completely startled. "Did—did you say a forgery, Mr. Lee?"

"I did."

"Good Heavens! Then—then——"

"Somebody with a humorous turn of mind has been playing a practical joke upon the school," said Lee calmly. "Upon the whole, this joke has been eminently successful; since I return to find that everybody has accepted the forgery as a genuine article."

"Hold on, sir," I broke in. "I didn't accept it. I knew all along the thing was a fake. I spotted it the very first minute."

Mr. Crowell looked at me amazedly.

"You—you knew it was a forgery, Nipper?" he repeated. "You knew this, and yet you said nothing? You allowed these young idiots to put their insane ideas into practice?"

"Well, you see, sir, I thought it would be a lesson to 'em," I said. "I reckoned that it would be rather decent to let the fellows have a taste of practical Communism. They've wanted it for a long time, and I know for a fact that it'll be a dismal failure in the end. Give 'em enough rope, and they'll hang themselves. And when it's all over, they'll be more satisfied with the ordinary conditions. I was rather hoping that Mr. Lee wouldn't return until to-morrow. These Communist asses haven't had enough of it yet."

Nelson Lee was looking half grim, half grave, and half amused.

"I think it will be easily understood how this state of affairs came about," he observed. "The Headmaster has been confined to his own suite upstairs, and nobody has been allowed near him. I made arrangements that should Dr. Stafford wish to com-

municate with anybody in the school, he would write letters, and they would be placed upon his desk, downstairs, for Tubbs to deliver."

"Of course," I put in. "It was dead easy, sir. The joker knew that, and he wrote that notice in the Head's handwriting and also a letter to Armstrong, and put them on the desk in the Head's study. Tubbs thought they were genuine, and didn't suspect anything wrong. It's quite possible that the Head doesn't even know what's been going on in the school."

"We will soon make certain of that," said Nelson Lee. "There is not the slightest doubt, however, that this is a forgery. I could detect it at the first glance—although, to a less experienced eye the deception would not be noticeable. The whole thing is excellently done, and it is not at all surprising that masters and boys were hoodwinked."

Mr. Crowell was looking intensely relieved.

"I am thankful to hear this!" he said fervently. "The news is indeed welcome, Mr. Lee. Within an hour you will be able to quash this madness, and restore the school to its former state."

"I am not so sure that it will be easy to do that," said Nelson Lee. "In fact, there is a grave possibility of precipitating a real rebellion. The boys are in an excited state of mind, and to suddenly find that they have been fooled will be a tremendous shock to them. The reaction might prove to be worse than the present state of affairs. Whatever we do, we must go carefully."

"The gov'nor's right, Mr. Crowell," I said. "It'll be silly to do anything suddenly. Before this Communist stunt came into force there were only a few Remove chaps to consider; but now three parts of the school is mad about the idea. The Second and Third are solid for this Communism, although, of course, we could easily deal with the kids. But the Fifth have got the fever bad, too, and quite a number of fellows in the Sixth are putting the rot into practice. If an announcement is abruptly made that the whole business is off—well, there'll be trouble with a large-sized capital T. You'll have to go careful, gov'nor."

"Tell me exactly what has happened," said Nelson Lee.

Between us, Mr. Crowell and I described the various incidents of the previous day. We told the gov'nor how the Rebels had emerged from their stronghold, how the enthusiasm for the new ideas had spread, and how the Communist ideas had been developed and put into operation.

When he had finished, Nelson Lee paced up and down for a few minutes in silence. At last he came to a halt, and turned to us with a peculiar smile on his face. I could see that he had made up his mind.

"I will see the Head at once, and have a talk with him," he exclaimed. "I shall persuade him to let this Communist regime continue——"

"What!" gasped Mr. Crowell blankly.

"It may seem absurd, but I have an idea that it will be the best possible way out of the difficulty," went on the gov'nor. "We will not disclose the fact that the whole affair has come about because of a practical joke. Let the boys have their fling. They will soon be asking us to return to the old system."

"Yes; but what will happen in the meantime?" demanded Mr. Crowell excitedly.

"Nothing very startling," said Nelson Lee drily. "There will be practically no publicity, and the school will soon get tired of this absurdity. They will receive a lesson which will be remembered all their lives. If things become too exaggerated, we shall always be on the spot to step in if necessary. But I certainly think it will be better to give the school a few days more, and see exactly what this Communism will lead to."

"I cannot agree with you, Mr. Lee," said Mr. Crowell stiffly. "If I had my way, the whole absurdity would be squashed at once—"

"And a rebellion would probably follow," interrupted Nelson Lee. "That would be far worse than this Communism. For while a rebellion would lead to violence and increasing chaos, this Communist experiment will simply strangle itself and die out, leaving the boys only too eager to get back to serious work. By the way, Nipper, do you happen to know the author of this excellent piece of forgery?"

"Well, I do!" I said reluctantly.

"You needn't be afraid. I'm not asking for his name," said the gov'nor. "I want you to get in touch with him, and tell him that he had better keep quiet for the present. There must be no mention among the other boys that this affair started as a practical joke."

"At first I thought the gov'nor suspected me—not that I cared much. I soon hurried out, and managed to find Reginald Pitt on his own."

"My son, a miracle's happened!" I said impressively.

"Has Teddy Long washed his neck?" asked Pitt, with a grin.

"Don't rot now!" I said. "The gov'nor's come back, and he spotted that forgery in two ticks!"

"Prison yawns before me!" said Pitt, in a hollow voice. "Exposed as a forger! Away, horrible thought!" He turned, and clutched at my coat. "When will the police come?" he asked hoarsely. "Or, to be more exact, is there any possibility of my catching it in the neck, or elsewhere?"

"None whatever, you funny fathead!" I replied. "I haven't told the gov'nor who did the dreadful deed, of course, and he doesn't want to know—"

"Good old gov'nor!" said Reggie approvingly.

"And what's more, he's going to keep mum!" I went on. "This Communist wheeze is to continue. Mr. Lee's a sport, and he

reckons that the best plan will be to let the fellows have their own giddy way for a few days."

"My only hat!" said Pitt, staring.

"The gov'nor has an idea that practical Communism will strangle its own neck within a very short time," I said. "And the lesson will be more lasting if the chaps find out the truth for themselves. I think the gov'nor's going to put up a second notice to-day, so we can look out for some fun!"

Pitt tapped his chest.

"Alone I did it!" he declared proudly. "Who'd have thought it? I hadn't the faintest idea that the giddy wheeze would come to anything, you know. I thought that forgery would be rumbled in an hour, and now it's going right on until the Communists strangle one another. That's what you said, isn't it?"

Pitt was delighted, and he quite agreed to keep as mum as an oyster. I had suspected him at the first, and a few brief inquiries had told me the truth. Reginald Pitt was a jolly smart chap, and this practical joke was just in his line. But neither he nor I had suspected that it would develop into this.

Nelson Lee, meanwhile, was making his way towards the Head's private suite of rooms. He was just crossing the Triangle when a figure came hurrying out of the Head's doorway. It was the figure of Dr. Brett, and the medical man was plainly perturbed. He broke into a run as he caught sight of Nelson Lee.

"Thank Heaven you've come back!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

"Is anything wrong?" asked Lee sharply.

"Yes, the Head is showing signs of violence—terrible violence!" panted the doctor. "I noticed it twenty minutes ago, and he has been getting worse ever since! I fear he has had another dose of that drug."

"Zaxzol!" said Nelson Lee. "That's the name of the stuff, Brett, although you needn't mention that you haven't heard it. How on earth could the stuff have been administered? Tell me, is Trenton here?"

"Here?" said Brett. "Of course he's here!"

"You've seen him this morning?"

"Yes; he hasn't been away, that I know of."

Nelson Lee compressed his lips. Trenton had obviously slipped away to London by car, and had returned in the small hours so that nobody would know of his absence, and, somehow, he had succeeded in getting past the barriers.

How? Lee questioned Dr. Brett closely, and learned the truth in a few moments. The doctor had already interviewed Mrs. Poulter, and had learned that she had carried up a cup of coffee to the Head's rooms an hour earlier. And Mrs. Poulter had admitted that she had left the coffee on the hall table for a moment while she went back to get the sugar, which had been forgotten from the tray.

"I don't think we need inquire further!" said Lee grimly. "Trenton was obviously on the alert, and he slipped his infernal stuff into that coffee while he had the chance."

"Only for a second or two was our vigilance relaxed, and this is the result!" said Brett bitterly. "I'm to blame, Lee, I ought to have foreseen—"

The doctor broke off, and stared, horrified, at the Head's doorway. For, at that moment, Dr. Stafford emerged into the Triangle. And he was no longer like a human being. He was converted into something closely resembling a savage wild animal!

CHAPTER IX.

THE BREWING OF THE STORM!



"OH!"
Dozens of fellows were in the Triangle at the moment, and they all uttered exclamations of diemay as they caught sight of the Head. There was something in his appearance which struck terror into them.

"We must get him back into the House at once!" muttered Lee. "It will be difficult, Brett—but we must do our best. What a pity you didn't lock him in!"

"Man alive, I did!" exclaimed Brett huskily. "He must have smashed the door open! Good heavens! I never dreamed it possible that such a change should come about! You told me what to expect, but this—this—"

Words failed him, and he stared at Dr. Stafford with horror. And, certainly, there was every reason why he should. The Head was leaping about like some fantastic gorilla. His teeth were bared, his eyes were gleaming in a horrible way, and his hands clutched at the air like claws.

Nelson Lee and Dr. Brett hurried over to his side. Lee knew well enough that an ordeal was coming, and he was half afraid of it. Not because he feared for his personal safety, but all the boys were watching this incident, and the effect upon them would be great. They would never have the slightest amount of respect for the Head again. The last shreds would be dispersed.

"Come, Dr. Stafford, this won't do—this won't do!" said Lee sternly, as he seized the Head's arm. "Please come back with me—"

The Head turned with a snarl, and the next second he sprang upon Nelson Lee like a tiger. The detective had been expecting an attack, but nothing like this. The Head literally fell upon him, and as Lee went over, the Head's left fist crashed into his face. Shouts of consternation went up from all the fellows who were watching. Dr. Brett vainly attempted to drag the Head off.

But he was now kneeling upon Nelson Lee

—scratching, clawing, kicking. He was like a mad dog in his violent ferocity.

Dr. Brett, at last, succeeded in getting his grip round the Head's neck, and he pulled him off by sheer force. Nelson Lee scrambled to his feet, breathless, dishevelled, and more grim than ever. But before he could make any second attempt to quell the Head, the latter dashed off in a series of beast-like leaps.

As it happened, Fullwood had ventured rather near, and, as was characteristic of the cad of Study A, he had been openly jeering.

"Look at him!" he shouted contemptuously. "The Headmaster of St. Frank's! Are we going to stand him, you chaps? The first duty of the Supreme Council ought to be to kick Dr. Stafford out—"

"Look out, you ass!" shouted Gulliver in alarm.

The Head was making straight in their direction. Gulliver and one or two others raced for safety. But Fullwood tried to make himself look big, and he put his hands in his pockets and merely strolled off. Then his nerves suddenly deserted him, and he fairly bolted.

But it was too late!

Dr. Stafford was already at his heels, and the next second a hand clutched at Fullwood's shoulder, and the junior was pulled backwards with a jerk which jarred every bone in his body. Dr. Stafford had Fullwood in his clutches, and the junior struggled desperately and wildly.

"Help—help!" he shrieked. "Lemme alone! Rescue! Drag him off, you chaps!"

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Handforth gruffly. "It'll do him good, the sneering cad!"

The whole thing was happening so swiftly that there was really no time to take much action. Dr. Stafford whirled Fullwood round in spite of the junior's struggles, and he crashed his fist again and again into Fullwood's face. He pulled at his hair, he twisted his ears, and kicked him violently on the shins. Fullwood collapsed—howling with intense agony, and nearly on the point of fainting. Really and truly, he was in a bad way—there was no pretence about this!

"By George!" roared Handforth. "This is too much! Come on!"

The fellows only needed somebody to lead them. And at precisely the same moment Handforth and I dashed forward from different directions. A whole crowd of fellows rushed up, and threw the Head over by sheer force. He went crashing to the ground. Fullwood was picked up, and dragged into safety. He was moaning, and his face was in a sorry plight.

Two teeth were loosened, his nose was bleeding, his eyes blackened and swollen, and both his ears were highly inflamed. And his shins were cruelly hacked. Ralph Leslie Fullwood had received drastic punishment. Somehow, those who act like cads generally

suffer sooner or later, either directly or indirectly.

The Headmaster made no attempt to follow, but picked himself up, and rushed away towards the Ancient House. He was more violent now than he had ever been before, and it was quite obvious that this dose was the strongest he had had.

Just as he got to the Ancient House doorway a figure appeared. What the Head intended nobody knew, but in his present mood he was capable of murder. The figure was that of Mr. Hugh Trenton—the author of all this mischief. Before he could dodge, the Head was upon him. The science master was taken by surprise.

He certainly made an attempt to turn tail and flee, but he was unfortunate enough to slip on the stonework. Before he recovered his balance, the Head grasped him round the waist from the rear.

"Let me go—let me go!" screamed Mr. Trenton wildly.

But the Head did not let him go, and although Nelson Lee and Dr. Brett hastened up, they were too late to prevent the next incident.

Trenton was lifted up high, and carried across the Triangle as though he were no heavier than a baby. The Head was a strong man—he always had been—and in his present frenzy his strength was apparently greater. In spite of Trenton's struggles, he could not free himself from that clutching grasp.

In a few moments the big fountain was reached. The pool—usually wide and deep—was now frozen over, and the ice was so thick that some of the fags had been walking all over it.

Trenton was raised, and then sent hurtling down, his legs and arms waving wildly.

Crash!

He struck the ice, and it shivered in every direction. The science master went clean through, and spurts of freezingly cold water rose into the air. Mr. Trenton completely disappeared in a smother of churned-up foam and broken ice.

Nelson Lee and I watched this with a peculiar kind of satisfaction. It was strangely fitting that Trenton should be so treated by the victim of his villainy. It was just retribution.

But, of course, all the other fellows were not acquainted with the inner truth. They regarded the whole affair with horror, for Mr. Trenton was popular, and to see him thus treated was a shock.

The Head gave vent to a fiendish outburst of laughter. Then he turned, and tore away across the Triangle to his own doorway. He disappeared inside, and Nelson Lee breathed a sharp sigh of relief. He and Dr. Brett hurried off after the Head.

The instant they had gone the juniors surrounded the fountain, and assisted Mr. Trenton out. The science master was numb with cold, and nearly frightened to death. His face was like a sheet of paper—but the

fellows put this down to his immersion, and not to fright.

"Thank you, boys—thank you!" shivered Mr. Trenton, with chattering teeth. "Has—has he gone?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I—I had no chance—in his frenzy he had the strength of a madman!" panted Trenton. "Thank you! I can walk unassisted, I believe!"

But he couldn't. His limbs were so numbed by the icy water that they would not answer their rightful functions. He was helped into the College House by many willing and sympathetic hands.

And now a wave of anger was sweeping through the school. This terrible exhibition on the Head's part had a big effect, and it was to lead to dramatic consequences. Already St. Frank's was in a state of disorder, but the chaos was likely to be even greater.

Armstrong was the fellow who started the trouble.

While the excitement was at its height in the Triangle, he mounted the Ancient House steps, and flung up his hand.

"Listen, you chaps!" he bellowed excitedly. "You've just seen what's happened—you've just witnessed what kind of a man Dr. Stafford is. Are we going to allow him to rule over us any longer?"

"No!" yelled a dozen voices.

"We've finished with him—for good!" roared Armstrong. "He gave us permission to run the school ourselves, but he still remained the Head. We're not going to put up with him a minute longer. We don't recognise him—and I suggest that we form ourselves into a separate party—now, at once!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good idea!"

"We're the Communists!" shouted Armstrong. "We're stronger now than we ever were before. If we let things go on in the same way, Dr. Stafford will remain the Headmaster over us!"

"We won't allow it."

"Rather not!"

"There's only one thing to be done!" yelled Armstrong, above the din. "I call for supporters. I appeal to you chaps to rally round me!"

"Hurrah!"

"We're with you!"

"We've got to seize the Ancient House again!" roared Armstrong. "It's the only safe way. There are still a number of fellows who don't believe in this new system. We don't want 'em!"

"Kick 'em out!"

"That's what I suggest!" shouted Armstrong grimly. "There's Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson and Handforth—and some others—and quite a number in the Fifth and Sixth. We can't carry things on properly while these blacklegs are in our midst. So I vote we pitch every one of these out of the Ancient House, and take full possession!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's a jolly good wheeze!" roared Chambers, of the Fifth. "We'll hold the Ancient House, and we'll admit all the College House fellows who support our cause. How's that, you kids? I'm willing to be the leader—"

"Yah, dry up!"

"Fade away, Chambers!"

"You—you young sweeps—"

"Steady on, he's right!" bellowed Armstrong. "That's a good suggestion of Chambers'. We'll kick out every fellow from the Ancient House who isn't a Communist—and we'll admit every College House fellow who is. It's far better than being mixed up like this. We shall be all under one roof, and we can defy everybody, including the Head! Rally round—back me up!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We're with you all along, old son!"

Armstrong got supporters in shoals. Dozens of fellows, who had supported me hitherto, dropped away. Juniors like Owen major and Graham, and Singleton, and Conroy, and the Trotwood twins—they all deserted me and went under Armstrong's banner.

I couldn't blame them. How could they possibly continue to support the Head after what they had seen? I was rather surprised that Handforth and Co. remained aloof. They were certainly bitter against the Head, and Church and McClure were quite ready to go over to the Rebels. But Handforth was obstinate—he wasn't willing to follow anybody's lead. And so he did everything he possibly could to persuade the juniors to remain out of the whole affair.

But, after all, these efforts were as nothing.

Three parts of the school swarmed into the Ancient House—seniors and juniors. Under ordinary circumstances, the Ancient House contained about two-thirds of the whole number at St. Frank's, so even now it wasn't particularly overcrowded.

But the order of things had changed.

I was chucked out of my study, and Handforth was chucked out of his. For the immediate future we should have to go back to the College House again. And the Rebel forces—now terming themselves the Communists—were in full and undisputed possession of their former stronghold.

Barricades and defence works were no longer necessary.

The party was so strong that they were capable of withstanding any attack, even if an attack had been thought of.

Lessons that morning were not thought of, and the Supreme Council of the Revolu-

tion was formed, and many other Communist principles were mapped out. The Supreme Council now consisted of six fellows—two from the Sixth, two from the Fifth, and two from the Remove. The fags were not represented.

In the meantime, Nelson Lee and Dr. Brett were alone with the Head.

He was slowly recovering—pale, wan, and utterly spent. The spasm brought on by the Zaxzol had worn itself out and Dr. Stafford was once more himself. But great damage had been caused by that outburst.

Mr. Trenton, wrapped in blankets in front of his own fire, found some consolation in the thought that his mission was nearly accomplished. He told himself that the Head would never be able to retain his post after what had occurred.

Nelson Lee, however, was grim.

"We'll carry on!" he declared. "At last I have my facts complete, and now the moment is arriving when I shall be able to strike—when I shall be able to expose this conspiracy completely."

"Can't you do it at once?" asked Dr. Brett.

"I fancy it would be better to let this storm die down a bit," said Nelson Lee. "The boys are very excited just now, and this Communist scheme must be allowed to work itself out. It is something like a slow disease. The only cure is to let it develop, and then die away. It must take its course before a permanent cure can be effected."

"There's something in that," admitted Dr. Brett.

"I am convinced it will be the better course," said Nelson Lee. "In the meantime, I shall be constantly on the spot, and Dr. Stafford will have an opportunity to thoroughly recuperate. I should not like to bring the whole case to a climax with the Head in his present condition. Waiting may seem irritating, but there are times when delay is all for the best."

And so the Communists of St. Frank's were allowed to hold sway.

And the next few days at the old school promised to be days packed with unusual excitement and adventures. The Communists were wildly enthusiastic about their cause. But how long would this enthusiasm last?

Somehow, I had an idea at the back of my head that the fellows would soon discover that Communism, as a road to freedom, was decidedly crooked! This particular brand of freedom was likely to become closely akin to slavery.

But time would show—and only a very short time, too!

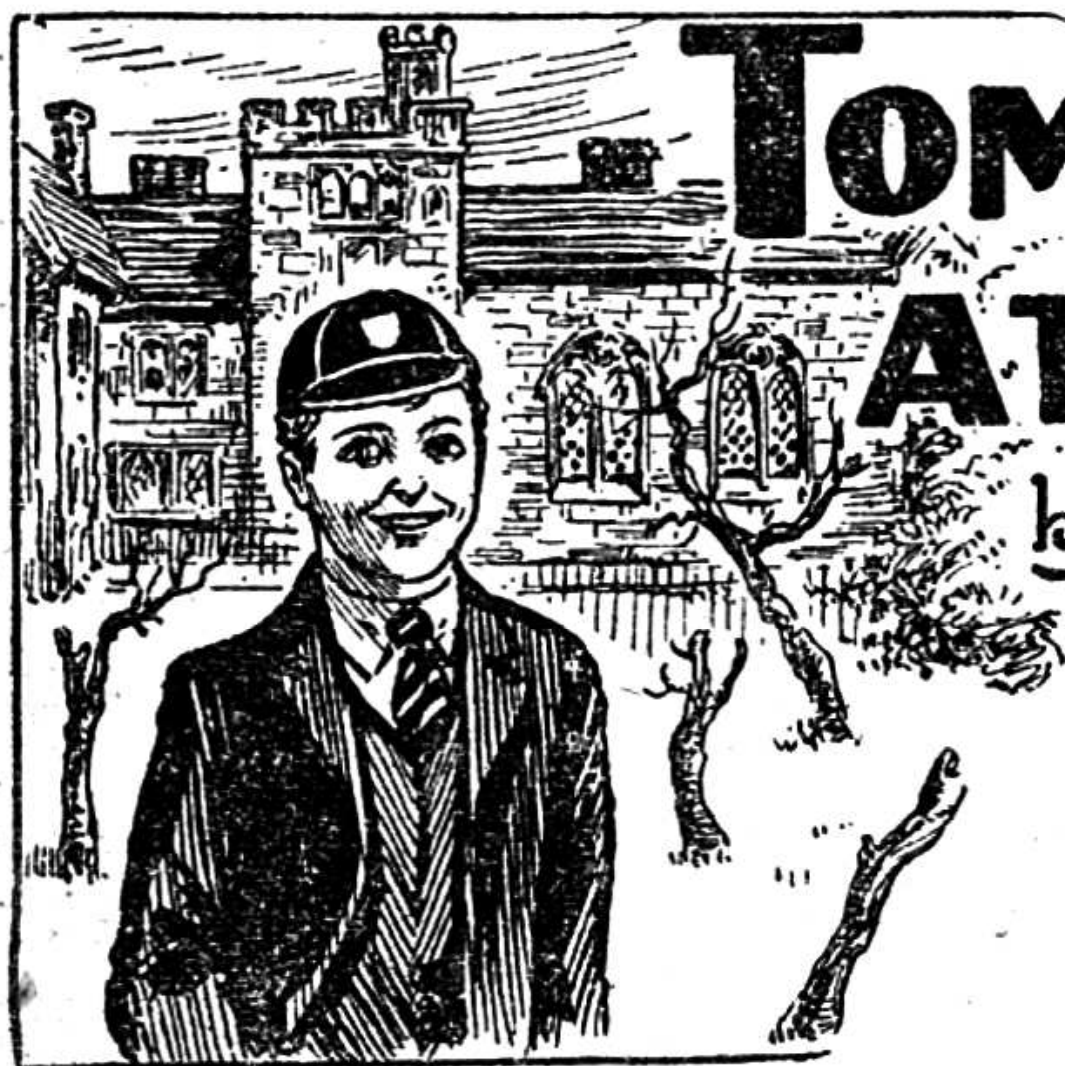
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THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Tom Tartar arrives at Mr. Wrasper's school, where discipline is maintained by moral force only. Tom makes several friends and a few enemies. He is initiated into the "Eagles," a party opposed to the "Cuckoos," or the rotters of the school. Our hero is introduced to some pupils of Miss Smatterly's school.

(Now read on.)

CHAPTER X.

Jonah Worrey Bites the Dust—Where is Pubsey Wrasper?

THAT evening, when the boys were at supper, with Foster Moore sitting gloomily at the head of the table, Mr. Wrasper came in.

He had a few words to say to the boys. It was to the effect that a highly-respected neighbour of his, Mr. Durdles, farmer, had called to lodge a complaint against one of the boys of the school.

"It appears," said the schoolmaster, "that one of you committed a violent and unprovoked assault upon him."

"Can he point out the culprit?" asked Foster Moore.

"He is not able to identify him," said Mr. Wrasper, looking straight at Tom, "beyond the fact that he was respectably attired. My object in speaking now is to warn the offender against a repetition of the outrage."

He then left the room, and Sam said to Tom in an undertone:

"What's come to him? He knows you were it, and yet he lets it go. He has smoothed old Durdles over. I don't understand it."

Nor did Tom just then, although by and by he got an inkling of the matter.

For the time nothing more was heard of Durdles and the outrage. Between then and Saturday little else but the football match was talked about.

As for the affair in the grove, a faint whisper of it did reach the school, but it was not of a nature to compromise anybody there.

Some boy had scared Miss Smatterly with a cock-and-bull story of a murder in the wood, and Diggles, the gardener, had been sent for the police.

Officers being scarce in those parts the old gardener had to go a long way to find one, but when he had done so, neither he nor the policeman could find any sign of a murdered man.

Old Diggles just wanted to set eyes on that boy—that was all!

Saturday morning came and opened sufficiently bright, although there were patches of cloud in the sky.

The boys were in the playground watching those clouds very anxiously.

"Don't be alarmed," said Tom, "it will be a splendid day. Look at that patch there. Can't you see it is getting smaller and smaller. That's a sign it will be fine. If it got larger we should have rain as sure as eggs are eggs."

"Who made you weather-wise?" sneered Jonah Worrey.

"I might as well ask who made you a fool?" returned Tom. "Don't ask silly questions!"

At this, many boys, both Eagles and Cuckoos, laughed, and Jonah ground his teeth with fury.

Every day he hated Tom more and more. The match was arranged to begin at two o'clock. Between breakfast and then the boys were free to do as they pleased.

Some went into the football field to practise, but Tom and Sam strolled into the village to get a few things they wanted.

It was a day of liberty. The boys could go where they liked.

"Shall we have a look round the school?" Sam suggested. "We can go along Love Lane, that runs down the side of it."

By the school, he of course meant the girls' school, and Tom and Turrell assented.

There was a by-way into the lane about half-way down the village, and by this they entered it.

The lane was narrow and well shaded with trees.

They had gone about half-way along it when a scream suddenly reached their ears, coming from a little distance ahead.

"Sounded like a girl!" remarked Tom. "Frightened by a tramp, perhaps."

He broke into a run, and, rounding a bend, came in sight of a scene that roused him to fury.

Lottie Fenn—one of the three pretty girls to whom Tom had been introduced by Sam Smith—was struggling in the grasp of Jonah Worrey, who was trying to kiss her.

"You rotten cad!" exclaimed Tom, as he bounded forward and sent him sprawling to the ground with a well-aimed blow.

"Oh, is it you?" said Lottie Fenn faintly. "I'm so glad you came in time to save me from that horrid boy! No, don't hold me, please—I'm quite all right. Miss Smatterly will be along in a minute. I went with her to the village, and she sent me on in front. I can't stop—indeed, I can't! Thank you again so much!"

And Lottie hurried away.

Jonah Worrey still lay on the ground, writhing and moaning, as if in mortal pain. But he was shamming. The blow had done him no real injury. He simply wanted an excuse for not rising to his feet, in case he should be knocked down again.

"Don't lie snivelling there!" said Tom contemptuously. "Get up and fight me, if you've got the pluck!"

"I—I'm too much injured to fight!" whined Jonah.

"All right, then, roll about in the dust if you prefer it!" said Tom, and turned back towards the village with his chums.

Before they had gone far they met Miss Smatterly pounding along with mannish strides. The boys lifted their caps politely, but the schoolmistress merely glared at them suspiciously, and passed on.

Presently they met Pubsey Wrasper, looking very wrathful, and holding a football-boot in his hand.

"Look here!" he growled, exhibiting a long slit in the side of the boot. "I'd like to know which of you fellows did this! I'd make you suffer for it! I've got to go all the way to Lower Peddleton to get it stitched up!"

The three did not trouble to answer him and Pubsey hurried on, growling to himself. Lower Peddleton was a cluster of cottages about a mile down the river, and there the one and only cobbler of the district lived.

Half an hour before the match was due to begin, most of the boys were assembled on the football field. Mr. and Mrs. Wrasper

were there, too, and so was Foster Moore. Mr. Wrasper glanced anxiously at his watch.

"Pubsey should soon be back," he remarked. "It would be terrible to play the match without him, for the quarry boys might then win!"

"Pubsey was in an exceedingly violent temper about his cut boot," said Foster Moore. "He declared that he had a good mind not to play at all."

"Naturally my son was angry," replied Mr. Wrasper. "Some malicious boy must have made that slit in his boot."

"I don't see Tartar," said Foster Moore, nor his three satellites, either. Ah, here comes Gray; he may have seen them. I will ask him."

Gray had just come from the house. Yes, he had seen Tom Tartar and his friends. They were changing into their football clothes, and would soon be here.

But Tom, Sam Smith, Turrell, and McLara did not appear for some considerable time. All four seemed to be in the highest spirits.

"A troublesome lot!" muttered Foster Moore, with a scowl. "But they shall be tamed!"

Gray was ordered to return to the house and find out if Pubsey Wrasper had yet returned. While he was away on this errand the boys composing the quarry team came on to the field.

They were a sturdy lot, and Rosy Ralph accompanied them, marching in front like a Major Domo.

"Where on earth is Pubsey?" exclaimed Mr. Wrasper irritably. "It is time the match started."

Gray returned from the house at that moment with the tidings that nothing had been seen of the missing youth.

"It is utterly impossible to play without my son!" declared Mr. Wrasper, in a loud voice. "Gray, run down to the village, and if you meet Pubsey hurry him up!"

"Poor Gray!" whispered Sam Smith to Tom. "Wrasper makes him run about like some errand-boy!"

"Why?" asked Tom.

"Goodness knows! Gray won't talk about his people—if he has any. Wrasper seems to do just as he likes with him."

While the teams were waiting, Tom and his chums talked to the quarry boys' captain. He was a well set-up lad of about fifteen, and he was known as Noddy BerriH. He was very proud of the fact that his father was the strongest man in the quarry.

"And are you the strongest boy?" Tom asked, with a laugh.

"Mebbe!" was Noddy's laconic reply.

Another quarter of an hour passed, and the quarry boys began to grow impatient.

"What are we waitin' for?" demanded one.

"Oh," grinned Sam Smith, "we're waiting for the Head's son—Pubsey Wrasper. He's our crack player—anyway, he thinks

so, and so does his father! Ha, here comes Gray—without Pubsey!”

Gray had returned from the village without any news of the missing one.

“He is sulking somewhere, I expect,” remarked Foster Moore, in an undertone. “Being your only son, you pamper him far too much. The game had better start without him.”

Mr. Wrasper was wrath, but he managed to preserve a calm exterior.

Beckoning to Jonah Worrey, he said:

“In the regretted absence of my son, Worrey, you will captain the school team. We can wait no longer. Let the match begin!”

A crony of Worrey's, named Necker, having been hastily called upon to fill the place rendered vacant by Pubsey Wrasper's non-arrival, the two captains tossed up for choice of ends, and the game started.

Over the details of that match it were kinder to draw a veil! The play was altogether of too poor a quality to merit serious description. With two or three exceptions (and, happily, Tom Tartar was one of them), the members of both teams were the rankest of rank duffers. They couldn't play football for nuts! All that most of them did was rush madly about the field, and, when the ball came near their toes, kick it as hard as they could. In what direction they kicked it didn't concern them in the least. So long as they kicked it somewhere, they were quite satisfied.

In such inferior company as this, Tom Tartar had no difficulty in shining. As a matter of fact, he was really a pretty useful forward, and if only some of his colleagues had backed him up, he could have scored practically as many goals as he pleased. But he wasn't backed up; he had to depend entirely on himself. Under these circumstances, it was a highly creditable performance on his part to net the ball three times in the first half of the wild, rough-and-tumble game, and four times in the second half.

Eventually, the match resulted in a win for the school, they having nine goals to their credit, as against four scored by the quarry boys.

When the whistle blew, Tom turned to Turrell with a sarcastic twinkle in his eye.

“A brilliant display!” he grinned. “Why, a team of gutter kids, who never get a chance of playing with anything but a ball of brown-paper and string, could smother us for science!”

“Well, what can you expect?” returned Turrell, with a shrug. “Games aren't taken seriously at Wrasper's School. The chaps never get any coaching; they simply have to pick up football and cricket as best as they can.”

“So do the slum kids,” answered Tom. “But they manage to pick 'em up, all the same!”

They made their way off the field to the
(Continued on page iii of Cover.)



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(Continued from page 40.)

small, shed-like structure which was grandiloquently styled the "pavilion."

And there, to his surprise, Tom saw Sir Claude Freshly and his son—Cecil—conversing with Mr. and Mrs. Wrasper.

The baronet at once broke off his conversation, and greeted Tom cordially.

"Cecil and I arrived just after the second half of the match started," he explained. "You distinguished yourself mightily by scoring those goals."

"Ah, Sir Claude," hastily put in Mrs. Wrasper, "have you ever seen my son Pubsey play?"

"Er—no; I don't think I have, madam," answered the baronet.

"He is considered the finest player in the school," said Mrs. Wrasper.

"Indeed—then I have lost something by his absence. Why is he not here?"

This question was a bit of a poser for Mrs. Wrasper. She hardly knew what to say.

"He is not very well," she replied, after a pause.

"Sorry to hear it," Sir Claude said. "By the way"—turning to Mr. Wrasper—"tomorrow is Sunday—you have no lessons that day?"

"Oh, no, Sir Claude—no!"

"Well, that being so, you can spare my friend Tartar. My dog-cart will be here directly, and he can go back with us. I will see that he returns on Monday morning in time for school."

Mr. Wrasper was white with furious envy.

Oh, if Pubsey had been there and had distinguished himself as Tom had done, he might have been invited, too!

It was galling.

He could not say nay, so Tom was sent away to change his clothes, and put a few necessaries into a bag.

Mrs. Wrasper, accompanied by Foster Moore, walked towards the house, the latter not in the best of humours.

"You will have to put a tighter hand on Pubsey," said the tutor. "These little tricks of temper ought not to be allowed."

"I do not allow them," said Mrs. Wrasper curtly.

"You do not check them."

"Mr. Moore, if my husband permits you to take all sorts of liberties with him, I do not feel inclined to put up with your impertinence."

"Mind what you say," he said, "or you may be sorry for it."

"Mr. Moore!"

"Mrs. Wrasper, you are mistress here, but who do you think is master?"

"Master!" she exclaimed. "Why, my husband, of course!"

"Oh, dear no, Mrs. Wrasper," said the tutor smoothly. "I am!"

"You master!"

"Yes; and if you doubt me, ask your husband. Now, mind this, you have got to keep that boy of yours in hand. He has a most objectionable temper."

He turned away, and Mrs. Wrasper stared after him for a moment in bewilderment.

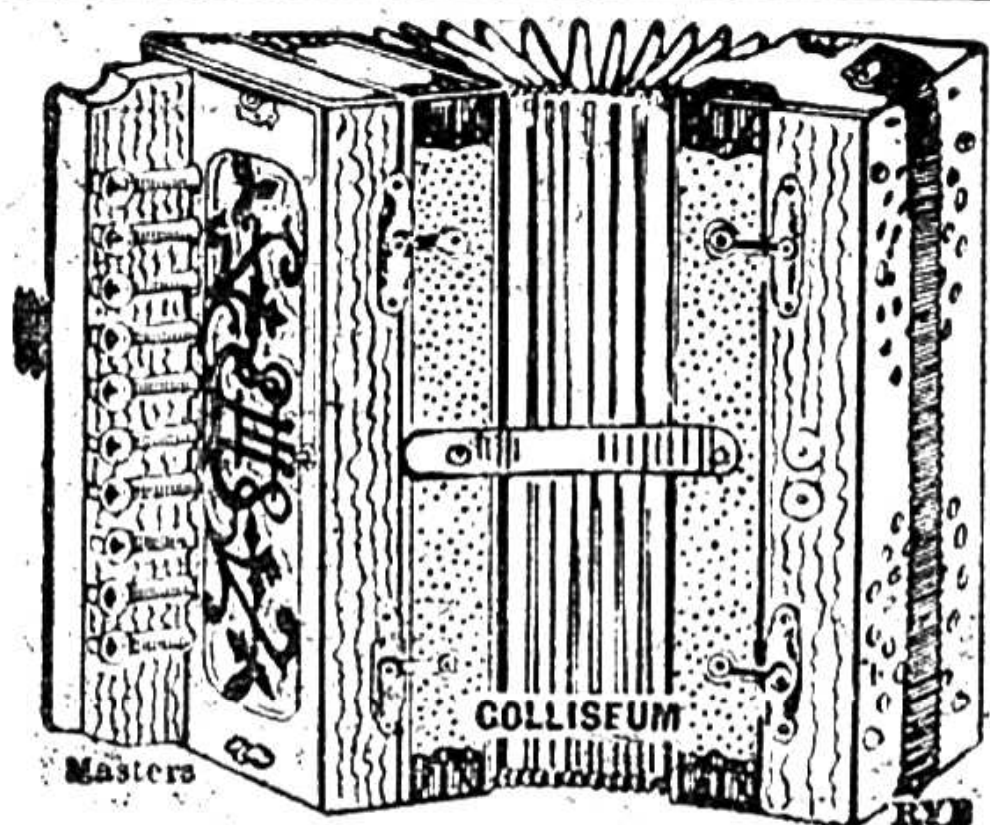
Then she hurried into the house hot and angry.

The front door stood open, and within there was a sound of voices.

She hurried in, and a scene met her gaze that almost caused her to shriek with horrified amazement.

(To be continued.)

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