

SUPERB PEN DRAWING of the HEAD'S GARDEN—See Inside!

THE **NELSON LEE** **LIBRARY** **PRICE 2d**

No. 357

EVERY WEDNESDAY

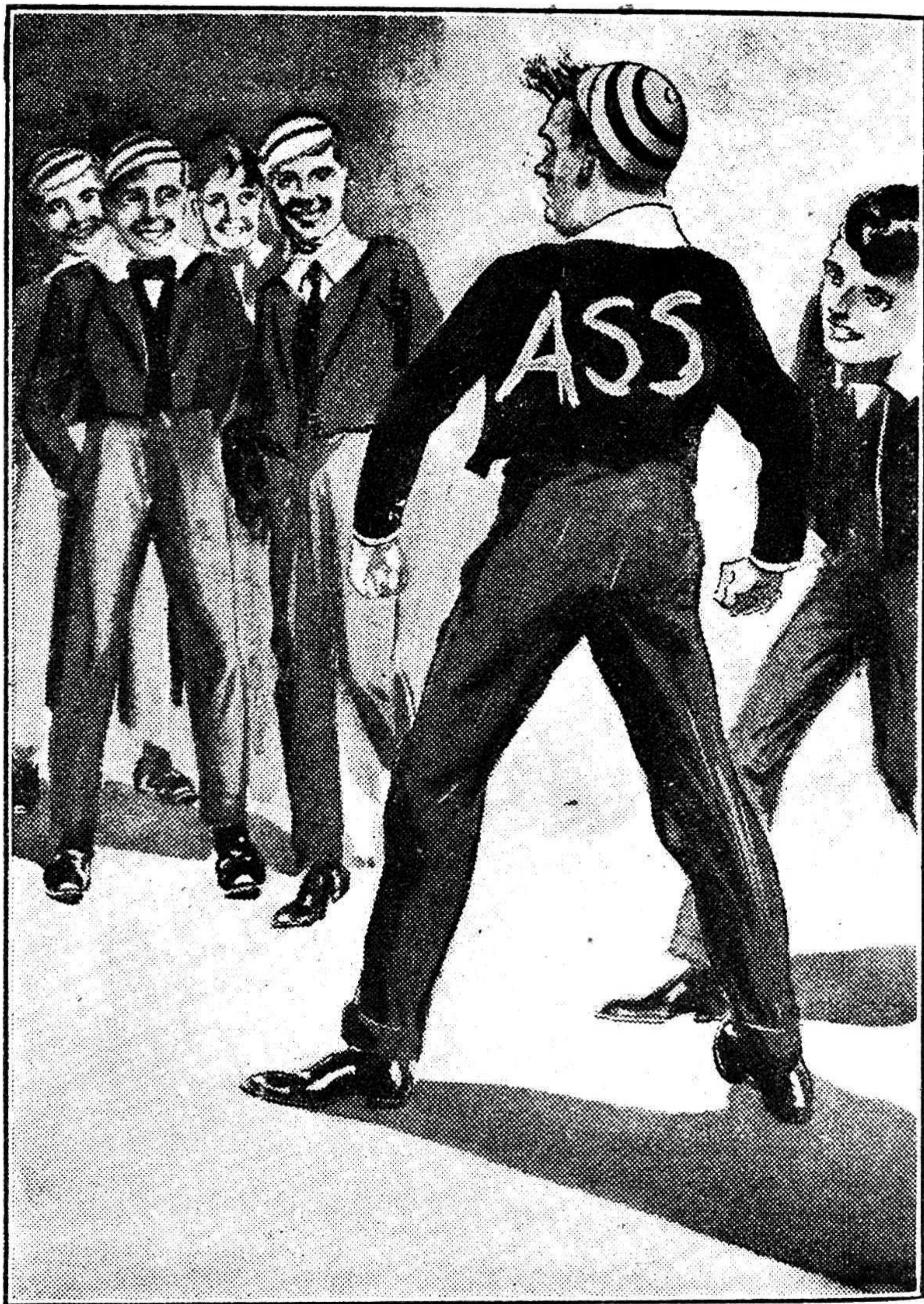
April 8, 1922



THE FOOLING OF ARCHIE.

**A CAPITAL STORY OF APRIL THE FIRST.
CANNOT FAIL TO MAKE YOU LAUGH FROM BEGINNING
TO END.**

ST. FRANK'S IN THIRTY YEARS' TIME!
See Special Article in NIPPER'S MAGAZINE in this number.



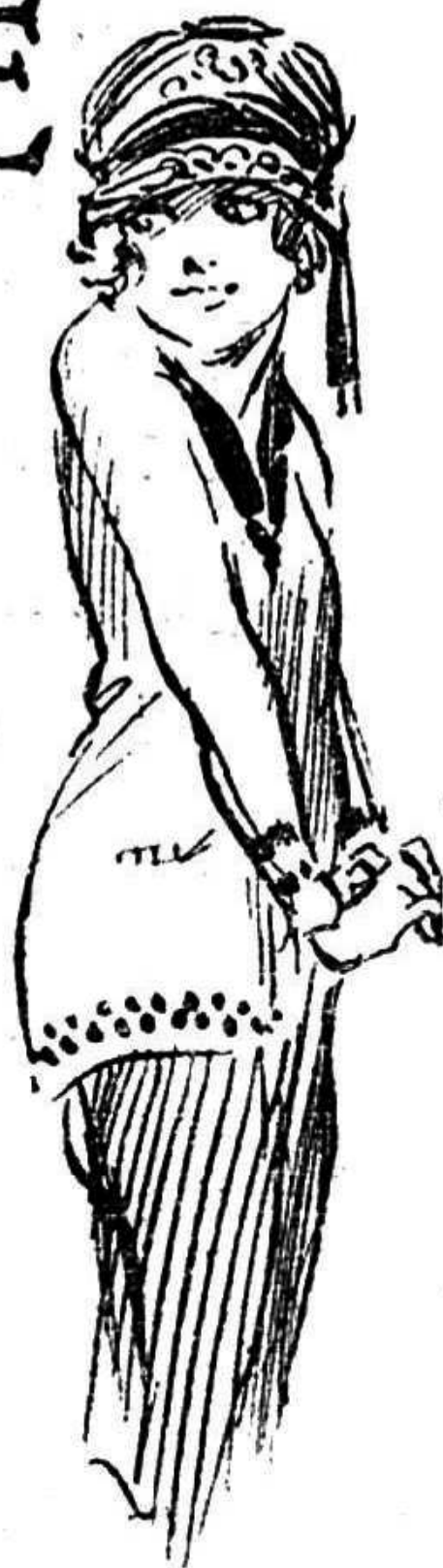
"If any other idiot tries that game on me I'll punch his nose!" bellowed Handforth. "I'm fed up! All this piffle about something on my back! Do you think you can fool me again?"

THE FOOLING OF ARCHIE

A STORY OF
APRIL THE FIRST.



Like all big schools, St. Frank's has had its full share of fun on April Fool's Day, as the following story will show. Handy, of course, is made a victim very early in the day. But that is merely the beginning of more elaborate plots, which only the ingenuity of a schoolboy can perpetrate. For sheer humour, and the delight of unexpected situations, "The Fooling of Archie" would be difficult to surpass. By the Author of "The Amazing Inheritance," "The Lost Schoolboys," "The New Page Boy," and many other Stirring Tales.—
The EDITOR.



(THE STORY RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER)

CHAPTER I.

VERY FOOLISH!

SIR MONTIE TREGELLIS-WEST gazed out into the sunny Triangle from the window of the Remove dormitory. Sir Montie gazed with approval, for the spring morning was certainly a particularly brilliant one.

"Rippin' day, dear old boys!" said Sir Montie. "Absolutely toppin' for the footer this afternoon."

I strolled over to Montie's side, and stood looking out. St. Frank's was a cheerful place on this Saturday morning, with the Ancient House looking picturesque and attractive with its ivy covered walls.

"Hallo!" I exclaimed. "What's Sir Edward doing here?"

"Sir Edward?" repeated Montie, adjusting

his pince-nez. "I must confess, dear old boy, that I cannot——"

"Can't you see him?" I asked. "Down there, look!"

"Begad!"

"Sir Edward who?" demanded Pitt, from the rear.

"Why, Handy's pater, of course—Sir Edward Handforth!" I replied. "I wonder what he's doing at St. Frank's to-day—and as early as this, too? Looks rather queer, to my mind."

Edward Oswald Handforth leapt out of bed. "What's that?" he roared. "My pater here?"

"Come and look!" I said, turning. "Oh, rats! He's not in view now!"

Handforth commenced throwing his clothes on at lightning speed.

"The pater here!" he grinned. "I say,

this is pretty good! I shall be able to touch him for some cash—just when funds are short, too! Chuck those socks over, Church! Buck up!”

Handforth performed a record. He dressed with astonishing speed, and was out of the dormitory before anybody else. Whether he was delighted at the prospect of seeing his father, or delighted at the prospect of “touching” him, was something of a question.

“Lazy lot of slackers!” said Handforth, as he hurried out. “I’ve shown you the way to hustle, anyway!”

He rushed downstairs, and in the lobby he met Morrow, of the Sixth.

“What’s this—a miracle?” asked the prefect. “It’s the first time you’ve got down in decent time this term, Handforth!”

“Oh, don’t rot!” said Handforth. “Where’s my pater?”

“I haven’t got him!” retorted Morrow.

“But you’ve seen him, haven’t you?”

“Yes, once!” said Morrow. “I heard him, too. He’s got a voice like yours, only it’s somewhat more so—”

“You—you silly fathead—”

“What?”

“No offence, Morrow, but what’s the good of messing about?” growled Handforth.

“Have you seen my pater this morning?”

“No, of course I haven’t!”

Handforth stalked away, and then ran into Tubbs, the page boy. Tubbs had recently arrived back at St. Frank’s, after taking a brief holiday—mainly owing to the little affair of Clarence FitzGibbon. Archie Glen-thorne’s pal still caused a grin among the fellows when he was mentioned.

“Oh, hallo, Tubbs!” said Handforth briskly. “Just the chap I wanted! Where’s Sir Edward?”

“Beggin’ your pardon, Master ‘Andforth?” said Tubbs.

“Ass! Where’s my pater?”

“Which I ain’t never seen ‘im!” said Tubbs stoutly.

“But isn’t he here—didn’t he come this morning?”

“Nobody ain’t come!” said Tubbs. “That I’m sure of, young gent. We ain’t ‘ad no visitors this mornin’ at all. You can go and ask old Cuttle. Nobody couldn’t get in without passing ‘im!”

“Well, that’s queer!” said Handforth. “Nipper saw my pater out in the Triangle!”

“Master Nipper must ‘ave saw twice!” remarked Tubbs.

Handforth snorted, and stalked away once more. He went out into the Triangle, marched round the fountain, and then went through the great arch under the clock-tower and had a look at the Head’s garden. But there was no sign of Sir Edward.

Finally, after passing through the cloisters, and making a circuit of the chapel, Handforth returned into the Ancient House. He hurried upstairs to the Remove dormitory, and found the fellows almost ready to come down.

“I can’t find my pater anywhere!” growled Handforth. “Where was he when you saw him, Nipper?”

“Eh?” I said. “Your pater?”

“Didn’t you see him this morning?”

“No!”

“Not out in the Triangle?” roared Handforth.

“Of course not!”

Handforth stared blankly.

“But—but you said—”

“My dear chap, I simply asked Montie if he could see Sir Edward. I didn’t say that Sir Edward was there! As a matter of fact, I don’t think he’s here at all!”

Handforth went purple.

“You—you funny lunatic!” he hooted.

“You babbling fathead! What’s the idea?”

“To-day’s Saturday!” I said vaguely.

“Saturday!” stuttered Handforth. “You—you—you—”

“The first of the month!” I added casually.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

The whole crowd of juniors burst into a roar.

“First of the month!” said Handforth dazedly. “But—but—”

“And the month is April!” I grinned.

“Caught you, Handy! April fool!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Jolly good!” chuckled Pitt. “I’d forgotten all about it! Poor old Handy! Dashing out of bed like a two-year-old, chucking his clothes on, and searching for his pater! Hard lines, old son! No tip—no cash—”

Handforth let himself go. He simply charged forward at me, with the fixed intention of slaughtering me on the spot. But, somehow, it didn’t happen. Handforth was pulled up by a dozen hands. And then he suddenly calmed down, and regarded me coldly.

“Well, after all, it’s not worth sloshing you!” he said. “I suppose that’s what you call a joke? If I couldn’t make a better joke than that I’d boil myself! Huh! Cackling idiots!”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

The cackling idiots roared, and Handforth beat a dignified retreat. One glance had told him that Church and McClure were not present. He was anxious to find them. The unfortunate pair would probably have to suffer for my sins.

They were down in the lobby, and they looked innocent enough as Handforth joined them. But before he could say anything, Church happened to glance at Handforth’s back. He grinned.

“Better let me brush your back Handy,” he said.

“What for?” barked Handforth.

“There’s some chalk marks—”

“Chalk marks, eh?” sneered Handforth.

“You don’t catch me again! That fathead of a Nipper acted the giddy goat, but I’m not being spoofed any more! It won’t work! You needn’t think I’m an April fool!”

“But, my dear chap—”

“If you say anything more, I’ll punch your nose!”

Church grinned weakly.

“We were a bit too late, Clurey!” he said. “Rotten! We thought we’d cop old Handy nicely. The fact is, Handy, you’re too smart for us!”

"My dear asses, if you think you can trip me up, you've made a fearful bloomer!" said Handforth. "Eh? What's that?"

"Your back!" said Pitt, as he touched Handforth's arm.

"My back?"

"Chalk marks on it!" said Pitt briefly.

Handforth glared.

"So you're trying the game, too?" he snapped. "Go and eat coke!"

Pitt grinned, and walked away. Before Handforth could continue his conversation with Church and McClure, Cecil De Valerie lounged up.

"Just a word!" he said softly. "Better brush your jacket, Handy——"

"You—you madman!" roared Handforth violently.

De Valerie backed away.

"What on earth——" he began.

"If any other idiot tries that game on me, I'll punch his nose!" bellowed Handforth.

"I'm fed up! All this piffle about something on my back! Do you think you can fool me again?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled De Valerie.

A crowd of other juniors came by. They went behind Handforth, halted, and their faces broke into wide grins. Handforth looked at them ferociously—when it came to a practical joke, he very seldom saw the point.

"Ass!" said Owen major, with a giggle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass!" yelled Hubbard.

"By George!" snorted Handforth. "By George! I'll make you suffer for this, you blithering fatheads! Stand still, Hubbard, and I'll punch your nose!"

But Hubbard did not stand still. He bolted. And the crowd of fellows yelled more than ever. And then, in the middle of it, Morrow of the Sixth hove into view. He grinned.

"Some ass has been writing his name on your back, Handforth!" he suggested.

Handforth reeled back.

"What, are you trying the same game?" he snapped. "Look here, Morrow, it's a bit rotten for a prefect to try and play a sloppy April-first joke on a chap! You know jolly well there's nothing on my back!"

Morrow grinned wider than ever.

"We can't spoof you, Handy, eh?" he said. "Clever chap!"

Morrow walked on, and Handforth looked round in triumph.

"Well, that's finished you!" he said. "Even Morrow admits that you can't diddle me! I'm sick of this mad April Fool business! And it won't be long before you find that I'm pretty good at the game, too! I'll fool somebody before the morning's out!"

"Look out—here's old Crowell!" whispered De Valerie.

"Oh, my hat!"

Handforth had his back to the oncoming Form-master, and he stuck his hands in his pockets and lounged away down the corridor. The other fellows waited, meek and expectant.

"Handforth!" said Mr. Crowell.

"Calling me, sir?" asked Edward Oswald, turning round.

"I think you had better brush your jacket, my boy," said Mr. Crowell, mildly.

"What?" gasped Handforth. "You, too?"

"What do you mean, Handforth?" asked the Form-master. "I seem to remember that it is the first day of April, and therefore I shall make no enquiries concerning this little affair. Brush your coat at once, Handforth!"

"You—you funny fathead!" exploded Handforth.

"Good gracious!" gasped Mr. Crowell.

"How dare you? Handforth, you will come with me immediately to the Headmaster's study——"

"I—I didn't mean you, sir!" panted Handforth, controlling himself with an effort.

"That is, I—I apologise, sir! Quite a slip, sir! But these idiots have been pestering me for hours about something on my back, and I'm fed up with it! They think they're funny, but they can't fool me! I know jolly well there's nothing on my back!"

"So you imagine, Handforth, that I have attempted to fool you, too?" demanded Mr. Crowell, curtly.

"It can't be done, sir!" said Handforth. "I'm too wide!"

"Indeed!" said the Form-master, his eyes twinkling. "Under the circumstances, Handforth, I will accept your apology, and overlook the grave nature of your insult. You may be interested to know, however, that far from being wide, as you term it, you are really quite the opposite."

"Yes, sir," said Handforth, thickly.

"You have been—ahem—fooled very completely, by what I can see," continued Mr. Crowell. "Remove your coat, Handforth!"

"Remove it, sir?"

"Yes."

"But—but——. It's all rot, sir!"

"Remove your jacket at once!" barked Mr. Crowell.

Handforth reluctantly wrenched his Eton jacket off, and turned it over. He nearly fell down. Upon the black cloth at the back was a single word, roughly but clearly chalked: "Ass!" Handforth gazed at it in a kind of trance. Realisation came to him in a great flood.

"Great pip!" he gasped faintly. "I've been dished all the time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The passage fairly rang with roars of laughter.

"Please refrain from making use of such absurd expressions, Handforth!" said Mr. Crowell. "Obstinate as usual, you thoroughly deserve to be tricked in this way. I hope it will be a lesson to you, my boy."

Mr. Crowell walked away, leaving Handforth staring dazedly down the passage. But, strangely enough, he was now utterly alone. The audience had faded away, but, somewhere in the distance, the faint echo of laughter could be heard.

Edward Oswald Handforth had been fooled twice. He felt crushed—but only for the minute—a fierce determination awoke within him to

avenge the dreadful insult. Something had to be done!

But it would be rather a difficult matter to fool the juniors now—for they were all on their guard. After all, All Fools' Day at St. Frank's only came once a year, and the day was just beginning.

Some rather surprising events were in store.

CHAPTER II.

POOR OLD ARCHIE!



WHAT-HO! What-ho! So here we are, laddie!" said Archie Glenthorne, languidly stretching himself. "Perfectly priceless morning! Chunks of sunshine, what?"

"A very brilliant morning, sir!" said Phipps.

Archie sat up in bed, and gazed out of the window upon the sunny landscape. Phipps, his man, placed a small tray upon the table near the bed—a tray containing a steaming cup of tea.

"The good old brew!" said Archie. "Distinctly the stuff, Phipps. Makes a chappie feel bright and vig., what? Takes away the old languid sensation, and all that sort of rot!"

"You feel well this morning, sir?" asked Phipps.

"Sprightly, old tulip—positively sprightly!" declared Archie. "Nine hours of the good old dreamless have restored the tissues. I mean to say, we're ready for another day, don't you know! Labour and strife, and all that. Well, Phipps, what about it? What about the stirring business?"

"I was about to suggest, sir, that you were not looking quite yourself," said Phipps. "Not quite the usual colour, sir."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Archie. "I mean to say, by Jove! Dash it all, Phipps! Not looking up to the old standard, what? Quantities of paleness, and so forth? That's deucedly serious!"

"I hardly think so, sir," said Phipps. "A trifle more exercise, I think, would be more beneficial."

"Exercise?" repeated Archie, blankly.

"Yes, sir."

"But, I say! Dashed fag, and all that!" protested Archie. "A chappie can't be exercising all day, don't you know! It's a frightful bore to stagger downstairs and do the old necessary by attending meals, and what not. Well, Phipps, on with the good work! How about the old heather mixture?"

"I should suggest the blue serge for to-day, sir," said Phipps.

"You really would?" said Archie. "And the green tie with the red spots?"

"Not at all tasteful, sir," said Phipps. "Decidedly wrong, if you'll pardon me saying so. The grey silken tie would be much more artistic, sir."

"Dash it all, I can't wear my own bally things now!" said Archie. "You'll have to top this, Phipps. I mean to say, a chappie

gets peeved. Positively obtains the pip, as it were! There's no doubt that you're a brainy lad, but I simply must assert myself now and again, Phipps!"

"Yes, sir."

"So trot out the heather mixture and the green-and-red cravat."

"I strongly advise you, sir, to refrain!" said Phipps. "The heather mixture suit is somewhat thick—quite a winter suit, sir. Most uncomfortable on a warm spring day such as this."

Archie adjusted his monocle, and sipped his tea.

"Well, don't you know," he said, "that's frightfully brainy! I shouldn't have thought of that, Phipps! A warm day, what? You're right, laddie—absolutely! We'll wear the good old serge."

Archie condescended to get out of bed, and he was soon dressing with the assistance of Phipps. For a Remove junior to have a separate bedroom and a valet was something unprecedented in the history of the school.

But Archie was so different from everybody else that the other fellows were quite content to make him an exception. They raised no fuss over this special arrangement. Archie was immensely popular. He was a Knut—a genial ass—and the juniors regarded him as their own particular property.

Of course, Colonel Glenthorne—Archie's father—had to pay special fees, to say nothing of Phipp's wages. But he was glad that Archie had consented to come to a public school. It was far better than being under a private tutor.

Phipps was a man of many parts—an invaluable servant. In addition to looking after Archie—dry-nursing him, as some of the fellows put it—he fulfilled the duties of a butler to Dr. Stafford. Phipps' time was occupied from morning till night.

"I think we look all right now, sir," he said. "Take a glance, sir."

Archie surveyed himself in the pier glass, and nodded.

"Topping, old onion—quite topping!" he said. "Somewhat calculated to impress the populace, what?"

"Yes, sir," said Phipps. "I think our blue serge is looking very neat."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "And now to trickle forth! I don't suppose I shall need you, Phipps, until breakfast is over. But be on hand if the young master calls. Be ready to fly to his side!"

"Quite so, sir!" said Phipps.

"Open the door, old lad, and we'll stream out!"

Archie lounged elegantly through the open door, passed down the passage, and was just about to descend the stairs into the lobby when I met him at the top. He nodded genially.

"Greetings, and all that!" he said. "How goes it, darling?"

"I'm all right!" I replied. "I feel fine, Archie. But what's the matter with you?"

"The matter?" repeated Archie. "I mean to say——"

"Pale cheeks, and hollow eyes!" I said gravely.

"Dash it all!" exclaimed Archie. "Not really, fruity one? Pale cheeks? Hollow optics, and so forth? But, I say! Deucedly disturbing, old chappie! I thought I was feeling quite priceless!"

"It's not only what you feel like," I said. "A chap's got to look well in addition, Archie. Didn't you see yourself in the glass before you came out?"

"Absolutely!"

"And didn't you notice anything?"

"Absolutely twice!" said Archie. "I mean to say, I thought the old colour was blooming, and all that kind of thing! I had a distinct impress., in fact, that the health business was flourishing!"

I shook my head.

"You mustn't make any mistake!" I said.

"One minute a chap may be pale, and the next minute flushed and healthy looking. But sometimes that flush is caused by a fever——"

"But dash it!" said Archie. "That is to say, dash it! Fever, don't you know! Quite ridie., old son! Horrid, in fact! To be quite candid, I don't feel quite as sprightly as I might. The old bones appear to be deucedly stiff."

"Ah!" I said. "That's a bad sign! Take my advice, Archie, and go easily. When a chap's in delicate health, he can't be too careful! I'll probably see you later!"

I nodded, and passed on. And Archie stood staring after me with a worried frown upon his brow. He shivered slightly, and pulled himself up straight.

"Deucedly rotten!" he murmured. "The chappie was serious, too! Put me off my stroke, and all that!"

He passed down the stairs, and just got to the bottom when Reginald Pitt and Jack Grey strolled up. They paused as they saw Archie, and stared at him curiously. It was not an ordinary glance—but quite a stare.

"Good heavens!" said Pitt softly.

"Something wrong, old bean?" asked Archie. "I mean to say, the tie, or the old collar? I shall have to talk to Phipps——"

"You're dressed beautifully, Archie—it's not that!" said Pitt. "But don't you think you ought to have stayed in bed?"

"In bed?" repeated Archie faintly. "But, my dear old sportsman, what priceless rot, don't you know! That is to say, rather! In bed, as it were! But a fellow simply must trickle down——"

"Not when he's ill!" said Pitt.

"Almost dying!" added Jack Grey, shaking his head.

"Dying!" breathed Archie. "Great gad-zooks! But—but—it's impos., my dear lads! I'm feeling topping, and—and—— At least, I was. I mean to say, it seems that there's something wrong with me!"

"Wrong!" echoed Jack Grey. "Do you mean to say you don't feel awful?"

"Dash it all, hardly awful!" said Archie. "Somewhat pipped, if you know what I mean, but nothing more. Tell me, old tulip, what's wrong? What's the old trouble?"

"Well, if you don't know, it's no good saying anything!" said Pitt. "How on earth do you

manage to walk about? Jolly plucky of you to get up, Archie!"

"I mean, plucky?"

"Rather!" said Pitt. "Of course, you've sent for the doctor?"

"By Jove! The doctor!" said Archie. "Deucedly forgetful, and all that! The fact is, old lad, not at all! The brainy cove who shoves surgical knives into the old carcase knows nothing! Absolutely!"

"You'd better send for him at once!" said Pitt gravely. "Why, some chaps peg out through not sending for the doctor in time! Take my advice, Archie, and go straight to bed and lay quiet until the crisis is over!"

"Crisis!" said Archie feebly. "I mean to say—— By Jove, you're not going? Not oozing away, as it were? Don't desert a chappie who's waltzing round the jolly old crisis!"

"Sorry, Archie—we can't stop!" said Pitt. "I hope I shall see you again!"

"That's dashed queer!" said Archie. "See me again, what?"

"Alive, I mean!" said Pitt, as he strolled off.

"This is positively foul!" murmured Archie, clutching at the balustrade. "By Jove! The old legs are becoming shaky, and all that! Phipps! I say, kindly release the S.O.S. for Phipps! The young master is sinking!"

"What's that?" demanded Handforth, bustling up with Church and McClure. "Great pip! Look at Archie! Well, I'm jiggered!"

"Awful!" said Church.

"Ghastly!" agreed McClure. "Is it Archie, or his ghost?"

Archie breathed faintly, and clutched at his heart.

"I mean to say, ghost!" he panted.

"Rather frightful, what? Makes a chappie see visions of the next old hemisphere, as it were. Kindly rally round and extend a few dozen paws! The old tissues are feeling somewhat groggy!"

"Groggy isn't the word!" said Handforth. "Why, my dear chap, you don't know how horrible you look!"

"Dash it all—horrible!" moaned Archie. "Somewhat terse, as it were. Not exactly horrible, old chappie?"

"I remember seeing my uncle, just before he departed!" said Church. "Anybody could tell that he was going fast! You can't mistake it! And Archie looks just the same—the same colour in his cheeks, and the same look in his eyes!"

Archie seemed to have difficulty in breathing.

"This, I mean to say, is positively wretched!" he murmured. "It's most frightfully deuced, in fact! Dear old lads, please be good enough to skate off and grab old Phipps. Bring the dear boy to my side——"

"That'll be no good!" said Handforth.

"Why not, old top?"

"It'll be too late!" said Handforth.

"Oh! Oh! That is to say, oh!" breathed Archie desperately. "Too late, and all that? But what about the pater? I should say, what about the old family, and all that rot? No time to gather them up at the bedside?"

Handforth shook his head sadly.

"Poor old Archie!" he said. "What a beastly shame! And just after you'd become so popular, too! Jolly rough luck to go off in this way!"

"Of course, he's not the only one," remarked McClure. "Plenty of chaps do it. I once knew a fellow who was as right as ninepence one hour—and the next hour he——"

"Don't!" groaned Archie. "Dear lad, it simply makes the agony worse, don't you know! Piling on the old pain. Frightfully strange, too! I thought I was feeling in the good old pink. Fit, and so forth."

"Self-deception—that's what it is!" said Church. "We'd love to do something for you, Archie, but we're in a bit of a hurry. Besides, you know, it might be something catching!"

"Catching!" gasped Archie. "Gadzooks! That's dashed fearful! I mean to say, catching!"

Handforth & Co. marched off, leaving Archie drooping and dismal. Rather to his surprise, he found that his legs managed to bear the weight of his body, and he staggered uncertainly along the Remove passage.

A study door opened, and De Valerie came out. But the instant he caught sight of Archie, he backed away, holding up his hand.

"Don't come near me!" he said hoarsely.

"My dear chappie, I mean——"

"Go away—go away!" exclaimed De Valerie. "That glassy stare! Those pasty cheeks! I can't bear to look at you, Archie! Poor old chap—poor old fellow! I'd better say good-bye now!"

De Valerie re-entered the study, slammed the door, and locked it.

Archie clutched at his throat, and staggered dazedly along the corridor. He never exactly knew how he arrived at Study No. 13. But he got there somehow, closed the door, staggered across and pushed the bell, and then sank like a limp rag into one of the easy chairs.

Archie's study had an electric bell connecting it with the butler's pantry, some distance away in the domestic quarters. Phipps presided over this apartment. And within a few minutes Phipps answered the call.

He looked at Archie curiously.

"You rang, sir?" he asked, in his usual even voice.

"Phipps!" whispered Archie. "I mean to say, dear old chappie! You've got to promise me that you won't wear black!"

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"Frightful expense, and so forth!" moaned Archie. "Flowers not required, Phipps. I'm going, old tulip—sinking with a priceless show of speed! Too late for the medicine merchant! Too late for the gathering of the clans! Hold my hand, Phipps, and smile sweetly!"

Phipps walked across, and looked down at Archie.

"Is anything the matter, sir?" he asked.

"Matter!" breathed Archie. "I'm dying, don't you know!"

"Dying, sir?"

"Absolutely!"

"I hardly think so, sir," said Phipps.

"Dash it all, old chap!" said Archie.

"That is to say, dash it all! I'm the cove to

know, surely? All the lads of the village have been buzzing round, pointing out the glassiness!"

"Glassiness, sir?"

"The old eyes!" explained Archie. "Signs of sinking, and all that. Rally round, Phipps; be a sportsman, you know. By Jove, and by the way. I mean, as it were, by the way! The old suits, Phipps—the wearing material! Yours, old lad! Do what you like with them!"

Phipps nearly smiled.

"I understand, sir, that the young gentlemen have been informing you that your eyes look somewhat glassy?" he asked.

"Absolutely."

"And that you probably look very pale, sir?"

"Absolutely!"

"And that you appear to be in a low state of health?"

"That, dear one, is precisely it!" said Archie feebly. "The end is coming, Phipps. I am, as you might observe, dashed low! That is to say, practically at the bottom of the old descent."

Phipps coughed.

"But you felt quite all right when you arose, sir?"

"Out of the old cot, you mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "I felt sprightly, Phipps—quite nippy, in fact."

"Then, begging your pardon, sir, I fancy the young gentlemen have been playing a trick," said Phipps. "Actually, you are in a perfect state of health, and you have been made to believe that the very opposite is the case."

"But, I mean, so to speak—I mean," said Archie, sitting up. "That's frightfully awful, Phipps! You mean to imply, laddie, that the dear fellows have been having a somewhat strenuous pull at the old leg?"

"Precisely, sir."

"But, really!" exclaimed Archie helplessly. "Really, Phipps! Fearfully ridic., and all that! Why? I mean to say, what's the scheme?"

"To-day, sir, is the First of April."

"The First——Gadzooks!" gasped Archie. "The First of April, what? The day when the lads get fooling, and that sort of stuff?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then—then there's nothing wrong?" asked Archie. "I mean to say, no glassiness?"

"Not a trace, sir."

"The cheeks are blooming with youth, and so forth?"

"They appear to be very healthy, sir."

"This, as you will notice, is dashed rotten!" said Archie, with dignity. "The young master has been fooled, Phipps—literally messed about, and all that. The lads, in fact, have been playing the merry old deuce with Archie! Decidedly thick, what? Don't you think so, lad?"

"Merely a joke, sir——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The door had opened, and a number of grinning faces could be seen gazing in. The grinning faces emitted various sounds of hilarity.

"Poor old Archie!" grinned Reginald Pitt.

"At his last gasp!" chuckled Church.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie rose, and languidly clapped his hands.

"Bally good!" he observed. "I mean to say, several yards of laughter! A perfectly priceless joke, don't you know!"

"You were nicely fooled, anyhow!" said Handforth. "I'm not the only one."

"Fooled?" asked Archie. "Oh, rather! Absolutely dished, and positively diddled! Dear old lads, it was topping—that is to say, absolutely! Kindly proceed with the loud and long!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors proceeded with it.

CHAPTER III.

FAIR VISITORS.



"**H** ALLO! Hallo! What have we here?" said Reginald Pitt. "Two damsels fair have entered the portals!"

"Christine's sister, by Jove!" I said. "You remember her, don't you? Agnes Christine? She came with us on a Summer holiday trip once, in Lord Dorrimore's yacht. Quite a nice girl."

"Rather!" said Tommy Watson. "She and my sister Vi were great chums—they are now, I suppose. Let's go and offer greetings."

"As Archie would say, absolutely!" exclaimed Pitt.

Dinner was just over, and the early afternoon of the spring day was fine and brilliant. It was more like May than the first of April. Most of the juniors were making plans for spending the half-holiday out of doors.

On this particular Saturday there was no junior football—mainly because the Senior Eleven had a very important fixture. Quite a number of fellows had decided to stand round the ropes of Big Side, watching.

We looked with interest at the two girls as we approached them. They had entered the gateway only a few minutes earlier, escorted by Bob Christine, and they were now strolling over to the centre of the triangle.

Agnes Christine, of course, was well known to us. She was not radiantly pretty, but very pleasant and exceedingly good-natured. She was tall, dressed in a blue serge costume, and a neat hat trimmed with bunches of cherries.

Her companion was slightly smaller, and very dainty in appearance. She was dressed in a very trim coat-frock trimmed with braid. The dress reached just below her knees, and she wore silk stockings.

Her ankles were neat, and her feet were encased in a pair of patent leather shoes, cut in a pretty openwork pattern. A particularly exquisite hat covered her head, coming low over her face in a most bewitching manner. And her hair fell in a number of long ringlets.

"Jolly pretty girl!" murmured Watson.

"Rather!" I agreed.

"Hallo, you chaps!" said Bob Christine.



"Groggy isn't the word!" said Handforth. "Why, my dear chap, you don't know how horrible you look!"

"You've met my sister, haven't you? She was in Bannington with some friends, so I brought her over for an hour or two. Let me introduce you to her friend, Miss Doris Langton."

We all shook hands.

"It seems ages since I saw you all!" said Agnes Christine. "I simply had to come over this afternoon. You don't mind my bringing Doris, do you?"

"Rather not!" said Pitt. "Delighted!"

"You bet!" said Tommy Watson.

"It's very nice of you!" said Doris, smiling prettily. "I was awfully curious to see St. Frank's; and, of course, I couldn't possibly come over by myself. I was ever so glad when Agnes said she'd bring me."

"I suppose you come from London, too, Miss Langton?" I asked.

"Oh, no!" she replied. "I live in this neighbourhood; but I've always had a longing to see this wonderful old school at close quarters. Isn't it glorious? Such beautiful buildings! I've never seen anything so picturesque."

Tommy Watson glanced at the magnificent old pile.

"Not so dusty!" he said. "Of course, we're used to it!"

"Come on, Doris; we'll make Bob show us round!" said Miss Christine. "You've got

to see the Chapel, and the old cloisters, and the monastery ruins. There are ever so many pots of interest here."

"They went off, and Reginald Pitt grinned.

"Decidedly a ripper!" he remarked. "A jolly fine girl, eh?"

"Rather!" said Tommy Watson. "Miss Langton beats Christine's sister to fits!"

"We'd try and fix up a tea for the girls in Study C, but it's hopeless," I said. "Christine will keep 'em in the College House. Well, come on—we might as well put in a bit of time on Little Side!"

While we went there, Bob Christine proudly escorted his fair charges towards the chapel. Everything was quiet here, for the juniors did not often spend much time in this quarter.

The cloisters, too, were silent and deserted.

"Look here, sis, just look after Doris for a few minutes," said Christine. "I want to rush off and tell my chums that you're here. I'm mapping out a big programme for this afternoon, and we mustn't waste any time."

"Don't be long, Bob!" said Agnes.

Christine promised he wouldn't be long, and hurried off. But he had only gone a few yards when he ran into Archie Glenthorne. The latter was strolling elegantly along, surveying the buildings.

"What ho! What ho!" said Archie. "Just taking the old air, laddie! Admiring the priceless architecture, and what not!"

Christine jumped at him.

"This is good, Archie," he said. "I particularly wanted you to meet my sister. Come on! There's another ripping girl with her, too. You can look after them while I gather the crowd together."

Archie looked dismayed.

"I mean to say, deucedly embarrassing, and all that!" he said. "Girls, don't you know!"

"Not afraid of them, are you?"

"Dashed unexpected!" exclaimed Archie. "I mean to say, 'I'm not respectable, laddie! Observe the ancient suit. I've got to go in and collect Phipps, and do the old changing stuff. Put on the glad rags——'"

"You ass!" grinned Christine. "You're as neat as a new pin—smartest chap in the school. You don't need to change your clothes. Come on!"

Archie protested for a moment, but he was unable to resist Bob Christine's insistence. The College House fellow was keen upon leaving somebody reliable to look after his sister and her friend. Archie was just the fellow.

Having made the introduction, Christine hurried off again—leaving the unfortunate Archie alone with the two girls. He was looking somewhat nervous and ill at ease. In the presence of the fair sex Archie was rather at sea.

"Well, what about it?" he asked genially, trying to be chatty. "Topping day! Spring, and all that! Birds singing, and what not! How about the old architecture? Somewhat ripping, eh?"

"It's perfectly lovely!" said Miss Doris.

"Oh, absolutely!"

"Don't you admire it awfully, Archie?"

"By Jove! That is to say—I mean—Archie,

don't you know!" murmured Glenthorne, turning slightly red. "I mean to say, we're getting on, what? Pally, and all that sort of rot. Oh, rather!"

Doris smiled.

"Oh, what does it matter?" she asked sweetly. "We can't call you Master Glenthorne, can we? It sounds so horrid. So formal and stiff."

"Oh, absolutely!" said Archie. "Stiff, and rotten, and so forth! By the way, I think I'll trickle round, and gather up the lads——"

"Oh, you mustn't go, Archie!" said Agnes quickly.

"Absolutely not!" said Archie hastily. "Just a suggestion, don't you know. I'll remain on the old spot—and assist in the honours. Oh, good! The dear old chappies are coming. They're positively staggering into the scene!"

Bob Christine had appeared, accompanied by several other College House fellows. Most of them were almost strangers to Archie. He never had much to do with the Monks. He was immensely relieved to see them, however.

"Getting on all right, Archie?" asked Christine. "How do you like my sister?"

"Oh, topping—priceless, and all that!" said Archie. "A sister a chappie could be proud of, old fruit! Absolutely!"

"Good!" said Christine.

He joined Agnes, and the other fellows collected round, laughing and chatting. Archie gazed about him carelessly for a few moments, and then gradually edged away. He had high hopes of slipping off unseen.

He was, in fact, just getting into the cloisters, where everything was quiet and still, when he felt a light touch on his arm. He halted, and looked round in some surprise.

"I hope you won't mind!" said a soft voice.

Archie felt his heart beating quickly. Doris Langton was facing him, and they were quite alone. Archie looked round helplessly, and sought in vain for something to say. At last he found his voice.

"Oh, absolutely!" he exclaimed, confusedly.

"You mean you do mind?"

"Rather!" said Archie. "That is to say, absolutely not. Ripping of you to gather round, darling. By Jove! I—I mean——"

Archie paused, as red as a beetroot. It was quite a habit of his to address the fellows as "dear one," or "darling." Archie's expressions, in fact, were decidedly novel and unusual. But he felt that he had put his foot right into it now.

"I beg your pardon," said Doris softly.

"Yards of apology!" exclaimed Archie. "Pray accept large quantities of sorrow. Quite a slip, old carrot! That—that is to say, I—I mean—— By Jove! This is simply deuced, don't you know!"

The girl kept herself from laughing with difficulty.

"It's quite all right—you needn't be nervous," she said. "I just took this opportunity to have a word with you. You don't mind, do you?"

"Not a bit—absolutely not."

"That's splendid!" said Doris. "Oh, look!

"There's quite a nice seat here. We can go and sit down, can't we?"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie, helplessly.

He felt that all hope was lost now. It had been bad enough to be left alone with the two girls. But this was rather beyond the limit. To find himself absolutely in solitude with this charming damsel was a bit too much for him. He felt that he couldn't string three words together in a correct sequence.

Archie was not usually so nervous. But the way in which this little affair had come about had taken him by surprise. And he hadn't had time to pull himself thoroughly together.

"Oh, this is splendid!" said Doris, as they sat down. "Now, you don't think this is awfully forward of me, do you?"

"Forward!" said Archie. "Dash it all! Forward, what? I mean to say, not at all. Not a bit. Not, in fact, a bally trifle. Carry on, old fruit—— Er—I—I mean Miss——Miss—— By Jove! How dashed awkward!"

"Miss Langton," smiled Doris. "I wanted to speak to you because I believe you are related to the famous Glenthorne's, of Glenthorne Manor. Isn't Col. Glenthorne connected with you?"

"Connected!" said Archie. "Dash it—I mean, well, rather! The jolly old pater. As you might say, the dear old dad!"

Doris looked eager.

"Oh, Col. Glenthorne is your father?" she asked.

"Absolutely!"

"How splendid—how wonderful!" said the girl delightedly.

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "I mean, wonderful. Not absolutely—not really. The pater is a ripping sort, of course, but he has his faults, don't you know. Somewhat peppery, and all that sort of rot. The old temper is rather rapid——"

"Yes, I know," said Doris. "Then there's a man named Mr. Giddy, isn't there. I think he's the manager of your father's estate?"

"The very bounder," agreed Archie, feeling rather more at ease, now that the conversation had taken a definite turn. "Giddy, in fact, is a blot, as you might say. A bally nuisance to the landscape, and what not! A clever chappie, and all that, but most dencedly unpleasant!"

"Oh, he's cruel!" said Doris, feelingly. "Mr. Giddy is harsh and cruel!"

"I mean to say——"

"That's why I wanted to speak to you," went on the girl. "Is Mr. Giddy in sole charge? I mean, does he possess full authority to do anything he likes on the estate?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, exactly," replied Archie. "During the time when the pater is jazzing somewhere abroad, the old lad—that is, Giddy—hurls himself about, and so forth. Makes the populace know that he's It, if you grasp my meaning. A decidedly foul cove, in fact."

"But your father is at home now, isn't he?"

"Absolutely!"

"Then—then it's wicked!" said Doris, indignantly. "It's shameful!"

Archie dropped his monocle.

"Somewhat severe, and all that?" he asked.

"I mean, the pater can be at home if he likes, what?"

"I don't mean that," said the girl. "It's wicked of Mr. Giddy to be so harsh when Col. Glenthorne is at home. I'm quite sure your father wouldn't agree if he knew all the facts. I want you to help me, Archie."

"To—to help you?" faltered Archie. "Oh, rather! I—I mean——"

"What would you say if a poor old lady was to be turned out of her little cottage just because she was a week behind with her rent?" asked Doris, her pretty face expressive of deep indignation. "What would you say if Mr. Giddy had threatened to evict her and her belongings into the road?"

Archie swelled with wrath.

"That, as it were, would be quite frightful!" he said. "I should say, absolutely beastly! But surely even old Giddy——"

"Oh, you must help me!" said Doris. "You see, my old nurse is such a sweet thing. She's a dear creature, and she lives in a lovely little cottage all by herself. It's not fair that she should be turned out, is it?"

"Absolutely not."

"Mr. Giddy is ever such a nasty man!" went on the girl. "Supposing he carried out his threat this afternoon? I want you to come with me to Edgemore—it's only a little way from here——"

"But I mean, rather imposs., what?" put in Archie, in dismay. "A frightful fog, walking, and all that."

"Oh, but Agnes and I have our bicycles here," said Doris. "You can ride a bicycle, can't you?"

"In a way of speaking, absolutely," replied Archie. "Fearfully strenuous, and so forth; but I have pushed the jolly old pedals at different times, you know. But I mean to say, about this old lady——"

"We mustn't waste any more time!" said the girl. "Mr. Giddy might act while we're talking. Of course, Agnes will come with us, and perhaps Bob will come, too. But do promise, Archie!"

"Er—that is, you see, I—I——"

"You do promise, don't you?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "That is to say——"

"Oh, thank you ever so much!" said Doris quickly. "I knew you were a nice boy directly I saw you! It's so generous of you, Archie! I'll run off now and arrange it with Agnes."

Before Archie could say any more, the girl left her seat, and tripped off. Archie lay back, gazed glassily in front of him, and sighed.

"By Jove!" he murmured. "This, as you might say, is the limit! I need assistance. I must stagger round and dig out old Phipps. He'll know what to do. He'll bring up the old advice."

Then he saw that Doris was running back towards him. He collected himself, and waited.

"Back again, what?" he said cheerfully.

"That is to say, changed the jolly old mind? Not going, and all that?"

"Oh, of course I'm going!" said the girl.

"But I've just remembered something. I want you to promise me that you won't tell anybody

about this. I shouldn't like the other boys to know. You won't say a word, will you, Archie?"

"Rather not!" said Archie. "Trust me, dear old thing! Trust me, don't you know. The old secret is locked in the bosom!"

She hurried off again, and Archie realised that this time he had positively done it. By giving this promise he had made it impossible to even approach Phipps. Things were getting worse and worse.

He was still sitting limply there, trying to gather his thoughts together, when Bob Christine came hurrying along with the two girls.

"Decent of you, Archie, to take Agnes and Doris along to the cottage," he said briskly. "Thanks very much. By the time you get back, I'll have a ripping tea ready, and you'll have to join us."

"Frightfully decent!" said Archie. "Thanks, old tulip!"

"You'll be starting off at once, I suppose?" asked Christine.

"Well, as a matter of fact, no!" said Archie. "That is to say, yes!" he added, as he caught sight of Doris looking at him in an anxious kind of way. "Oh, rather! Right on the spot, as it were. We're trickling off at once, old top!"

"That's splendid!" said Agnes. "Come along!"

"And I'll lend you my bike, Archie," said Christine. "In a matter of this kind it's impossible for anybody else but you to do the business. Be as quick as you can, of course. We're the only people who know about this little affair of Doris', so you'll keep mum, won't you?"

"Oysters, laddie, are not in the same street with it!"

"Good!" said Christine. "You're a brick!"

"I mean to say, a chappie must rally round," said Archie. "Rather!"

They all went back into the Triangle, and found it rather deserted. For the majority of the fellows were on the playing fields. And those that were not had gone off for bicycle spins, or rambles on foot. Such a glorious afternoon as this could not be wasted.

The girls' bicycles were just inside the main gates, where Bob Christine had placed them. Christine's machine was there, too. He took hold of it, and passed it over to Archie.

"Just about your size," he said.

"Rather!" agreed Archie. "But, dear old lad! Quite impos., don't you know. A chappie can't ride the old bike dressed like this. I've got to wander indoors and change."

"No time for that!" said Christine promptly.

"But, I mean, really——"

"Why, you'd take an hour, Archie!"

"Dash it all! A chappie can't change his bally clothes in less!" said Archie. "Even with Phipps waltzing round, it would take me at least an hour. But I won't be longer——"

"You won't be a minute!" interrupted Christine. "My dear ass, it's impossible to change! You've got to go off at once. Hasn't he, Doris?"

"Yes, you must come now, Archie!" said Doris, touching his arm.

Archie shook slightly.

"Oh, yes, rather!" he said. "Now? Absolutely! Any old thing you like, as it were! But I'm frightfully worried. I don't quite know what to do with the old—— That is to say——"

He paused, rather helpless, and gazed down at his trousers.

"Oh, you mean your trucks will get mixed up in the chain?" asked Christine, with a grin. "If you used your eyes, my son, you'd see that my bicycle's got a gear-case. There's no mud to-day, and you'll be able to ride without getting yourself messed up in the slightest degree."

Archie nodded vaguely.

"The fact is, I'm feeling quite hot and bothered," he confessed. "But it's no good grumbling, what? The thing's got to be done. I mean to say, the old ride must really be started on, and all that. Right-ho! Right-ho! We'll trickle away."

They wheeled their bicycles out into the lane, and mounted. Archie hung slightly behind—not because he was afraid of making an ass of himself on the bicycle—he was quite a good rider—but he felt that it was better to let the young ladies go first.

"Now we're off, old things!" he observed. "Fairly, as you might say, started on the old job. Hallo! Hallo! Something appears to be wrong!"

Bob Christine was running behind, and shouting.

"Half a minute, Agnes!" he called out. "Just a minute, sis!"

"We have, so to speak, got to stop," said Archie. "Pray allow me——"

"Oh, we'll be riding on!" exclaimed Doris, who was gliding by Archie's side. "Agnes can easily catch us up."

Archie wobbled slightly.

"Oh, absolutely!" he said. "Quite so, dear old fruit! I—I mean to say, old sportsman."

They cycled on—alone.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE LITTLE COTTAGE.



DORIS LANGTON was evidently an excellent cyclist.

She pedalled quite hard, and Archie was compelled to exert a great deal of energy in order to keep up the pace. He was, as he would have described it, in a frightfully difficult posish.

He couldn't very well complain—it was impossible for a fellow to admit himself whacked by a mere girl. The only thing, therefore, was to keep it up and say nothing.

And this required a lot of doing.

Just before they reached the village, however, Archie considered that it would be just as well to make a slight hint.

"Pardon the old suggestion; but don't you

think—— That is, wouldn't it be as well—— What?" he remarked. "I mean to say, Miss Christine, don't you know! Deucedly difficult for her to catch up, and all that! I really think it would be better if we made the pace somewhat less speedy."

"Oh, it doesn't matter!" said Doris. "Agnes can easily catch us up. She's a first-class cyclist. Come on, Archie—put some beef into it, you know, and get a hustle on!"

Archie felt rather queer.

"Oh, rather!" he said weakly.

Miss Doris was somewhat more free and easy now, and Archie's nerves began to be rather on edge. It was bad enough to be left alone with the young lady in the school precincts.

But here, out in the open country, it was rather fearful. She practically had him at her mercy. He felt that something dreadful was going to happen. He knew very well that he would never be able to keep his own end up against this sprightly young lady.

"This way, Archie—there's no need to go into the village," said Doris. "If we bear round here, we just go along this lane, and we shall soon come to Edgemore. It won't take us long."

"There appears to be some frightful hurry," said Archie. "I don't mean to suggest, old thing, that the bally case isn't urgent. Of course, it's fearfully so. Old Giddy is a bounder once he gets on the trail. But don't you think we might drop into second speed, as it were?"

"No, Archie; we must go on."

"Of course—oh, of course!" said Archie. "You mean get on? Well, to tell the truth, we're doing it all the bally time! But I really think we ought to slacken down somewhat. Miss Christine——"

"Oh, it doesn't matter about her," interrupted the girl. "After all, she was only coming just to keep us company. And it's really much better to be alone with you, Archie!"

"I mean to say!" gasped Archie. "I——"

"I think you're awfully nice!"

"By Jove! That is to say, gadzooks!"

"Don't you like me, Archie?" asked Doris, smiling at him.

Archie narrowly missed running into the ditch.

"This—this is somewhat speedy—swift, as you might say!" he said desperately. "Oh, rather! Like you? I really think you're quite priceless, Miss Doris! Stunning, and all that! You make a chappie feel most frightfully frightful! I mean, I'm an awful chump—a most blithering ass, to be quite frank!"

"Yes, of course!" said Doris sweetly.

"Dash it all!" protested Archie. "I mean to say, don't you know! As it were, dash it all! Somewhat frank and candid, and so forth! The jolly old truth, but a cove hardly likes it whizzed at him!"

"But you're a dear, all the same!" said Doris, as they rode along.

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "I should say, pray desist! What priceless rot! I'm bothered if I know what I'm saying, old onion! Good gracious! These words simply flow out

unbidden, don't you know. I just think a bit, and then—zing! There you are!"

Doris laughed, and pedalled with all her strength. They were just going up a little rise, and Archie was left yards behind. It was as much as he could possibly do to pedal to the top without falling off. And this was probably the most strenuous exercise he had undertake for many a long day.

Nobody else on earth but a member of the fair sex could have persuaded him to undertake such an ordeal. But he couldn't get out of it. Whichever way he looked, there was no way of escape.

And he was filled with humiliation by the time he topped the rise. Doris had got there long since, and was now standing beside her machine, looking particularly attractive.

Archie gave her a sickly smile.

"The bally old chain, or something!" he mumbled. "The brakes, don't you know—or something! Anyhow, the old jigger wouldn't buzz! Something frightfully wrong! Sorrow, old dear!"

"Well, we're nearly there now, Archie," said Doris, as she remounted. "And then you'll be ever so glad that you came with me. Let's hurry on."

"I was thinking——"

"Well?"

"Perhaps you needed just a little rest, and all that sort of rot?" asked Archie breathlessly. "I mean to say, a breather, and so forth? What about it? Do we linger, and admire the old scenery?"

"Oh, I'm all right, thank you," said Doris. "You needn't worry about me!"

"Oh, good!" said Archie. "Absolutely!"

But his heart sank. He had been hoping against hope that he might be able to have a little respite. Miss Doris, however, seemed determined to keep going without any pause.

They free-wheeled down a small hill, and then came to a rather lonely part of the road where there were no houses or cottages in sight. The little hamlet of Edgemore lay further on, round a number of bends.

This part of the country was quite new to Archie—he had never been here before. And he hadn't the faintest idea where the girl was leading him to. He felt quite helpless. And there was a kind of sensation within him that all this was wrong—that he ought never to have started.

"Round this way, Archie!" said Doris suddenly.

She went shooting round a sharp bend—down into a much narrower lane than the one they had been following. Archie nearly went full tilt into the hedge, endeavouring to turn quickly. By a rare piece of luck he managed to keep his balance, and got round all right.

And now he saw, just in front, a little tumble-down cottage set a short distance from the road. The very appearance of the place did not strike Archie as being picturesque.

And as Doris dismounted at the gate, Archie followed her example. The cottage seemed to be something of a wreck. The upper windows were boarded up, and the lower windows had the outside shutters closed.

"By Jove!" said Archie, adjusting his monocle. "I mean, rather fearful, what? Hardly what the old mind pictured——?"

"Isn't it terrible?" asked Doris concernedly. "This is all the fault of that horrid man, Mr. Giddy!"

"Really, I fail to gather the old trend!" said Archie. "In other words, kindly repeat the observation. I didn't quite gather the drift!"

"It was Mr. Giddy who caused these shutters to be put up, I expect," said Doris. "The poor old lady must have been nervous—perhaps she thought that the man would break into the cottage."

Archie nodded.

"Brainy! Deucedly brainy!" he said. "Absolutely! Now, do you know, I shouldn't have thought of that? The old barricade, what! Keeping out the enemy, and all that kind of stuff?"

"Of course!" said the girl. "Come along!" She pushed open the ramshackle gate, and they entered. The short garden path was smothered in weeds, and the whole place was in a fearfully untidy state. Archie noticed all this, and he thought that it looked very queer. But there was no time for him to have any real suspicions.

Just as they reached the front door, it opened wide. Doris passed inside, and Archie followed. It seemed very dim in there. Strong hands grasped him from the rear, and he was pushed violently into the centre of the room. At the same moment the door closed with a slam.

Doris Langton uttered a soft, mocking laugh. "You pitiful idiot!" she said, her soft tones vanishing. "I didn't think it would be half so easy to trick you!"

"This is somewhat staggering!" said Archie, as he suddenly went limp. "The old brain fails to keep pace, don't you know! This, in fact, is where I need Phipps! I mean to say, where are we? What's happened? What's the tremendous idea? In other words, the whole scheme appears to be deucedly frightful!"

"Better keep quiet, young 'un, and try no tricks!" said a gruff voice in his ear. "That's right, Bill! Bring that rope! We'll soon have the brainless brat bound up!"

Archie started.

"I mean to say, what?" he exclaimed severely. "I say—brainless brat! Decidedly insulting, and so forth? Rather near the old edge! In other words, somewhat close to the knuckle!"

"Silence!" commanded the voice.

"All this is most decidedly rotten!" said Archie. "I don't catch on to the scheme. Pray explain, and ——"

"Don't you understand?" asked Doris, standing in front of Archie, and laughing at him. "I've trapped you—I've decoyed you here so that you'll be held a prisoner! It was all part of a plan!"

"Imposs.!" said Archie blankly. "I mean to say, quite ridic. I don't believe it, dear old thing! I mean, I can't think that you—a girl, don't you know—should be so shockingly treacherous!"

Doris laughed again.

And then Archie could see that the other people in the cottage were four ill-dressed ruffians. They wore rough clothes, and chokers round their necks. Their faces were half hidden by means of black masks. And their caps were pulled over their eyes.

Archie could see this now that his own eyes were growing accustomed to the gloom. And almost before he realised it, he was bound hand and foot, and laid down upon a heap of straw.

The girl who had led him into this trap stood looking on with obvious amusement. She had no regrets—she had done the thing deliberately, and was openly gloating over the result.

"It was all a plan!" she said. "I worked it all out with the help of my friends here. I came with you alone, Archie, because it was important that nobody else should know where you had got to. And now we're going to hold you a prisoner!"

"Oh, absolutely!" said Archie. "That certainly appears to be the scheme. Ropes, and gags, and all that? Reminds me of a bally thing I saw at the old theatre. Frightfully exciting, and what not!"

"Look here, young 'un, it won't help you to keep up that talk!" said one of the men. "This gal is in with us—see? We're a gang workin' together, an' we mean to get a whole pile out of your father before we 'and you over."

"The pater!" said Archie. "But, dash it all, that's out of the ques. The old boy won't hear of it, you know! The dear old lad will positively jib! In other words, there'll be nothing doing!"

"You'll see about that!" growled the man. "Unless your father pays up, you won't leave this 'ere place at all!"

"I mean to say—that'll be frightfully awkward!" said Archie. "A chappie can't stay here all the time, you know. Hardly comfortable, what? Not exactly what you might call playing the game?"

It was rather exasperating to Archie's captors to see him taking the whole thing so coolly. He may have been several kinds of an ass, but there was no doubt that he was game enough. It was quite possible, on the other hand, that he was too languid to take much heed. His strenuous cycle ride had fagged him out, and the heap of straw was by no means uncomfortable.

Archie closed his eyes, and lay back at ease.

"Carry on, old things!" he murmured. "Kindly proceed with the chat. If you don't mind, I'll partake of a few winks. The old forty, to be exact. Gives a fellow a bit of a buck."

"You won't 'ave much sleep, my fine young spark," said the man. "Afore long you've got to sign a paper, and we'll bring it in to you. If you try any games, we'll make it 'ot for you, too!"

The man passed out through a door at the rear, and entered a small, dilapidated scullery which overlooked the back garden. The rear door was open, and the afternoon sunshine streamed in.

And here, in this full light, the ruffians did not look so convincing. They removed their

masks, and surveyed one another. And Miss Doris laughed with great amusement.

But, before any of them could speak, a crackling sounded in the garden, and a figure came into view. It approached, and resolved itself into the well-known form of Bob Christine, the leader of the Monks.

"All serene?" he asked softly as he entered.

"Right as ninepence," said one of the ruffians.

"Good!" grinned Christine. "This, my sons, is where we smile. Later on we shall cackle; and, after that, the whole giddy College House will roar."

CHAPTER V.

QUITE UNEXPECTED.



"GORGEOUS — absolutely great!" chuckled Talmadge. "Poor old Archie has been fooled up to the giddy neck! We've got him on toast! And it'll be the jape of the

term against the Ancient House."

"Rather," repeated Bob Christine. "We've worked for it, my sons, and this is where we get our reward. It's high time the Fossils were japed, and this time we'll make the bounders realise that we're the real goods at St. Frank's."

The four ruffians had resolved themselves into Talmadge, Yorke, Clapson, and Nation. They removed their masks and chokers, and, in the strong daylight, it was obvious that they were disguised.

It had been very different in the gloomy front room of the cottage, where the window was boarded up, and only a faint glimmer of light was allowed to penetrate. It had been quite impossible to detect the true state of affairs.

"I reckon we ought to hug ourselves," went on Bob Christine. "As for you, Oldy, you've covered yourself with glory. Even Pitt, of the Ancient House, couldn't have done better."

Oldfield grinned.

"Oh, sir, you are flattering me," he simpered.

And with one sweep of his hand he removed his wig and bowed. And the dainty Doris grinned all over an extremely boyish face. This apparently sweet young thing was no less a person than Harry Oldfield of Study Z.

Without a doubt, it was an exceedingly clever impersonation. Nature, of course, assisted Oldfield to a certain extent—for he was small, fair, and had a fresh complexion. And he possessed considerable ability as an amateur actor. Christine, in fact, had been quite right in stating that even Reginald Pitt couldn't have done better. And Pitt was the champion impersonator of St. Frank's.

The College House juniors had gone into this "stunt" thoroughly, and had spent quite a lot of their pocket-money, too. Oldfield had gone to the little establishment in Bannington High Street, kept by Mr. Isadore Morris. This gentleman supplied wigs, make-up, and so

forth, and was a kind of local Clarkson. He always did a big trade whenever there was a fancy-dress carnival at the Town Hall.

Old Morris had rigged out Oldfield to perfection. So clever was his work, in fact, that even the fellows at St. Frank's had not seen through the deception. But even Oldfield himself would not have dared to take too many chances.

For example, his delightful curls concealed most of his head, and he wore his hat right down over his face in a bewitching manner. It also served as a shield in case he came in contact with fellows who were particularly sharp-eyed. By judicious avoidance of these chaps, Oldfield had succeeded in playing his part without a hint of detection.

He had purposely gone into the cloisters, in order to be free from unwelcome attention. And it had been by pure luck that Archie had dropped into the trap so easily. Everything, in fact, had gone smoothly from the start.

Archie had never seen Oldfield before except at a distance, and it was quite impossible that he should know anything of the truth. And the College junior's disguise was so excellent that Archie could not be blamed in any way for falling into the plot.

"So far everything is all serene," said Bob Christine. "We six chaps are the only fellows who know anything about the game, but the whole school will be yelling over it by the evening."

"Rather," grinned Talmadge. "And then we shall do a bit of crowing. Those blessed Fossils have had things their own way too long. It's high time that Nipper & Co. were made to sing small."

"And it's All Fool's Day," remarked Yorke. "Just the very time for a spoofing game of this sort. But I must say that Archie is acting like a good 'un. He doesn't seem to care a ha'penny about it, and I'll bet he's fast asleep on that pile of straw."

Christine laughed.

"Rather!" he said. "Archie is game enough, by all that I can see. By the way, how did you get on, Oldfield?"

"Miss Doris" chuckled.

"It was as easy as falling off a form," he replied. "Simply nothing in it. I led Archie a gorgeous dance, puffed the beggar out in no time. And he was spoofed up to his collar. Even now he doesn't know who I am."

"Well, you mustn't tell him," said Christine. "We've got to keep the game up, don't forget, and do it thoroughly. Archie's got to sign a paper, and all sorts of things. And we'll finish off the jape in style."

"How?" asked Clapson.

"Leave it to your uncle," said Bob Christine. "I've got all sorts of ideas, and we'll work 'em out to the best advantage."

"I can't quite understand how you got your sister into it," said Nation.

"Can't understand?"

"Well, not exactly."

"You ass! It made it ten times as good," said Christine. "If Oldfield had simply rolled up as a dainty young damsel—without an escort—the chaps would have been suspicious

in a minute. It's the first of April, don't forget, and they're all on the alert."

"That's quite right," said Talmadge. "And, some of 'em—chaps like Nipper, for example—might have suspected things even if the sweet young thing had been escorted by one of us."

"Of course," said Christine. "In fact, I don't suppose I should have thought of the idea if my sister hadn't been in the district. But, you see, she came down with some girl friends of hers to a big house just on the other side of Bannington. That gave me the wheeze."

"Jolly good, too," said Yorke.

"Well, it's not so bad," admitted Bob modestly. "You see, if my sister came with this other girl—well, there wouldn't be anything to suspect. Most of the chaps know this, and they'd never dream that her companion would be a chap in disguise. She caught on to the scheme in a tick, and entered into it with great enthusiasm. I arranged it all beforehand."

"Of course."

"It was dead easy," said Bob Christine. "I simply fixed up the time when we should meet, and she came over to Bannington. Then we picked up Oldfield at old Morris's. And we cycled to St. Frank's without delay. Nobody had a chance of taking a good look at Oldy on the road."

"Jolly smart," said Talmadge. "And now we've got to think about the next move. It wouldn't be a bad idea to——"

"I say," interrupted Clapson suddenly. "I believe there's somebody prowling about outside."

"What!"

Clapson was staring out of the little window, and he was looking alarmed.

"I just saw somebody behind those bushes," he said. "He seems to have gone now."

The other juniors peered out through the window.

"Rats!" said Christine. "There's nobody."

"But I saw——"

"Imagination," put in Yorke. "Who the dickens would be prowling about here, anyhow? This cottage is all by itself, and there aren't any other houses for a long way."

"My hat!" gasped Talmadge. "It might be one of the chaps!"

"What do you mean, you ass?"

"Fossils," breathed Talmadge. "Perhaps they've got on to the wheeze, and are buzzing round to rescue Archie."

"Oh, rot!" said Christine. "They couldn't have got on to the wheeze. It's absolutely impossible. Nobody had the slightest suspicion, and, in any case, how can they find their way here?"

"They might have followed Oldfield and Archie."

"I'll bet they jolly well didn't!" put in Oldfield. "I was looking behind all the time, and there wasn't a soul. Don't be an ass, Clapson! There's nobody within a mile of this place!"

"Well, we'll just buzz out and have a look, anyhow," said Christine. "Can't be too sure, you know."

They cautiously made their way out through

the back door, into a tiny patch of garden. It was full of bushes and weeds, and there was a high hedge at the bottom, and big trees growing near by.

"Not a soul!" said Bob, looking round. "Not a sign of—— Why, hallo! Scoot back—quick!"

"What the dickens——"

"There's somebody behind that hedge!" hissed Christine. "If you're spotted in that get-up, the whole game will be ruined."

The five juniors scuttled back into cover, Christine with them. The latter was looking rather grim.

"My hat!" he muttered. "If those beastly Fossils have followed us out here I'll say all sorts of sweet things. You chaps keep in here, and I'll buzz out and have a look round."

Christine, of course, was able to do this, for he was wearing ordinary Etons. He was the general in command of the operations, and, as such, took no actual part in them.

And now he was very anxious, for it would be a great pity if the little plot was brought to an untimely end. He looked out through the window, but could see no sign of anybody.

"You chaps remain here, and I'll do a bit of scouting," he said. "We'll continue discussing the plans afterwards."

"Buzz off then!" said Talmadge.

Christine passed outside, and cautiously made his way through the weeds and bushes until he arrived at the rear hedge. He pushed through a small gap, and looked up and down.

A ploughed field lay in front of him, with an old farmhouse right away in the distance, nestling peacefully in a hollow. In the further distance a few specks could be seen in a meadow. Christine took them to be cows.

In the immediate vicinity there was one solitary individual to be seen. He was a rough, ill-clad individual with a slouch hat and a red scarf round his throat. He looked like a gipsy.

Once he glanced round, and Christine caught sight of his face—swarthy, with a big, drooping moustache. Then the man passed on, and disappeared through a hedge. He had made no attempt to conceal himself.

Bob Christine grinned.

"O.K.!" he murmured. "Nothing to get the wind up about, after all!"

He returned almost at once to the cottage—after making certain that there was no sign of the gipsy's return.

"Well?" asked Talmadge, as Bob entered.

"All serene!" said Christine. "Only a giddy gipsy chap going along that footpath. I don't suppose he even saw us, or knew that we were here. And now to get to business. We've got to spoof old Archie a bit more!"

"Shall I have a shot?" grinned Oldfield.

"No—you've had your turn!" replied Christine. "You've been spoofing Archie all the time—like the villainess in the play, you lured him into the trap. Now it's somebody else's turn!"

It was decided that Yorke and Talmadge should go in, as they looked rather more villainous than the others. At first Yorke and Talmadge were somewhat inclined to resent

this remark of Christine's. But, as he pointed out, it was really a compliment to their disguise.

So, adjusting their masks, they went into the dim front room of the cottage. All was still and silent. And there, on the pile of straw, lay Archie Glenthorne—as sound asleep as a baby.

"Well, I'm blessed!" muttered Yorke under his breath.

Talmadge heard the murmur, and nudged his companion.

"Now then, my fine young feller!" said Talmadge, producing the gruffest voice he could manage. "Wake up! You darned young whipper-snapper! You've got to do wot we says!"

Archie remained serenely asleep.

Talmadge strode across, took the prisoner's shoulder, and shook him vigorously. And Archie opened his eyes, blinked, and yawned. Being bound up, he couldn't very well move—but the ropes were not tight, and he was in no way hurt.

"Hallo! Hallo! What's all this?" he asked mildly. "I mean to say, frightfully rotten! The fact is, old fruit, I was just in the middle of a priceless dream! One of the real ones, don't you know!"

"Never mind your dream, young shaver!" snapped Talmadge.

"Oh, not at all!" said Archie. "Quite unimportant—absolutely! About a chappie diving off the bally old pier at Brighton. Most deucedly exciting, and all that rot! The chappie, you see, was just doing the old dive in order to rescue a beastly black cat! Frightfully absurd things, dreams, what?"

"You've got a nerve, you 'ave!" growled Talmadge. "Going off to sleep now! We want you to sign a blamed paper!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Anything you like, old darling! The fact is, I'm most fearfully comfortable. Rolling in luxury, and so forth. Queer things, but a fellow doesn't realise the ripping comfort of straw until he tries the jolly old stuff! Pricelessly easing to the old bones!"

Talmadge nearly gave himself away.

"You young rip!" he roared. "Why can't you show a bit of spirit? Taking it calmly like this!"

Archie, as a matter of fact, was showing the very kind of spirit that Christine & Co. disliked. He had no idea that the whole game was a spoof, and yet he was taking it all as calmly as if such events were of everyday occurrence. In a way the whole jape was ruined.

"Well, I mean to say, nothing to yell about, what?" observed Archie. "In fact, I'm frightfully obliged to you for being so pally. All sorts of comfort on hand, as it were. But I must confess—that is to say, I've simply got to admit—that the old brain is worrying feverishly over the young lady!"

"You don't need to concern yourself about her——"

"Absolutely not!" put in Archie. "At the same time, old haricot, a chappie can't very well rest content. A sweet young damsel, so to speak, in the hands of a bally gang of rotters! Somewhat awful, what? I'm not saying that she doesn't deserve telling off for treating me

as she did. Absolutely! And when she comes in here again, it's going to be done—absolutely twice! The ticking off stunt, and all that kind of stuff!"

"She was engaged by us on purpose to get you to this 'ere cottage!" said Talmadge. "But about this paper——"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "The jolly old paper, what?"

"You've got to sign it——"

"Shove down the old sig., and all that?" asked Archie. "I've got you, old bean! I've gathered the trend of the arg. A deucedly big demand for several cartloads of doubloons. And this, I presume, is to be bunged over to the old pater?"

"Yes, it is!" said Talmadge gruffly.

"One dozen fits, don't you know!" said Archie. "The pater, let me tell you, is one of those cheery old buffers with a most jazzy temper. You just look at him, and there you are! The fiery eye, and what not! Followed, probably, by the hefty old boot. Large amounts of caution necessary!"

"Never you mind about that!" said Talmadge. "You've got to sign this 'ere paper, wot we'll bring in soon. Do you understand?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "I mean to say, absolutely not!"

"Wot?"

"In other words, old onion, there's nothing doing!"

"Do you refuse to sign it?" bellowed Talmadge.

"Twice!" said Archie. "That is to say, every time!"

"You—you durned young piece of scum——"

"Great Scott, and all that!" protested Archie. "I might even say, gadzooks, and my sainted aunt! Scum, what? Deucedly rotten stuff, if you grasp the old suggestion! Hardly the material to hand out!"

"We'll go and tell the chief about this 'cre!" snapped Talmadge.

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "But which one, dear old lad?"

"Which one?"

"I gather that you were referring to the old flappers—the hearing apparatus?" said Archie. "That is to say, the ears. You mentioned something to the effect that you'd tell the chief 'about this 'ear'——"

Yorke made a fearful gurgling noise. He was almost on the point of exploding—for, in spite of himself, he had nearly burst out into open laughter on several occasions. The one and only Archie was the limit. Nothing could perturb him. The calm way he sat there, on his pile of straw, was rather more than Yorke could stand. He fled out of the room. Talmadge followed him.

"You—you blithering fathead!" muttered Talmadge fiercely.

"How the dickens could I help it?" grinned Yorke, holding his sides. "That chap ought to be put under a glass case. You simply couldn't put the wind up him, Tally. He refused to bite!"

The other juniors listened while Talmadge explained what had occurred. But they already

knew most of it, for they had had their ears at the crack of the door.

"Well, this isn't exactly what we expected, but we shall have to make the best of it," said Bob Christine. "You weren't brutal enough with him. You ought to have started knocking him about—not really, but pretending to."

"But he's bound up!" protested Yorke.

"Well, you're supposed to be ruffians, and you can't have any scruples like that," said Christine. "Don't hurt the ass; you can easily do the trick without actually damaging him."

"He simply doesn't care," said Talmadge. "He just lolls on that straw and moons at us! I don't think it matters to Archie whether he is rescued or not. The fathead is indifferent. And our ripping jape is on the verge of petering out."

"Rats!" said Christine. "We'll soon think of something. And there's no hurry, anyhow. The best thing we can do with Archie is to leave him alone for about an hour, so that he can ponder over the position."

"He'll do a fat lot of pondering!" said Yorke. "The fathead will go to sleep, and forget all about his troubles."

"We won't let him," declared Bob.

And so, for the next hour, the plan was put into execution. The four fearsome-looking ruffians continually pestered Archie with threats, and didn't give him a moment's peace.

But Archie remained serene and calm all the time. Christine & Co. realised, at length, that as long as Archie wasn't bodily disturbed, he would keep on until the patience of his captors was exhausted.

And so at length the conspirators held a consultation.

At least, they collected together in the little back scullery for that purpose. But just as they had got started, Nation suddenly dashed to the window, and peered out through the dirty glass.

"There's somebody prowling round again!" he said excitedly.

The other juniors gazed out of the window, too. And for a moment they caught sight of a ragged figure, with a swarthy face, between two bushes. Christine uttered an exclamation.

"My hat!" he said. "It's that same chap—the gipsy!"

"I say, this looks a bit queer!" said Talmadge. "I'm pretty certain that I was right at first. Nipper and his crowd have got on to the wheeze, and they're trying to work off some game on us."

"Don't be an ass!" said Christine. "Haven't I told you that the Fossils can't know anything about it? It's absolutely impossible! I'm going out to have another look at this chap. He may be a farm labourer."

Christine was rather irritated by this second interruption. And the great jape with regard to Archie had not gone off so wonderfully well, either. Bob Christine had expected something better.

He passed out into the little garden, and pushed his way through the rear hedge. Then he gave a little gasp. For, standing quite close to him, were two grimy-looking individuals,

attired in ragged clothing. They were gipsies, without question.

Christine had not expected to see them at such close quarters, and he had no time to draw back. He rose to his feet, determined to ask these men what they were doing there.

As he assumed an upright position—for he had crawled through the gap—he noticed that a little gipsy encampment lay away to the left, in a slight hollow. It had not been there earlier.

And now, of course, Christine understood the reason for that solitary gipsy's first appearance near the cottage. He had obviously come on ahead of his crowd in order to locate a suitable camping spot. The thing, after all, was perfectly natural.

And Bob gritted his teeth as he realised that he had been altogether too rash. The chances were that these gipsies had had no idea that the cottage was occupied, and they would never have given any attention to it.

But now they regarded the junior queerly and rather suspiciously. Christine looked at them, hardly knowing what to say. The encampment just in the distance consisted of a ramshackle-looking caravan, and one or two ragged tents. A fire of brushwood was burning, with an old hag busying herself in its vicinity. Three or four tiny mites of children were racing about in the grass.

"Er—good afternoon!" said Christine. "Ripping day! Just camping near here, I suppose? Just the right spot for it, I should think."

"We got permission," said one of the men roughly. "Wot are you doin' 'ere, anyway, young gent? Mebbe you've got a copper or two to spare? These are 'ard times nowa-days—"

"The young gent won't mind givin' us a bit o' silver," put in the other man.

Bob Christine felt in his pocket.

"Yes, of course!" he said readily. "Here's a bob between the two of you."

Rather unwisely, he produced a handful of silver, and picked a shilling out of it. The two gipsies looked at the money greedily. Bob was quite certain that they were a couple of thieving rogues, undeserving of any charity. But he considered that it would be diplomatic to tip them.

"A tanner each!" said one of the men. "Wot's the good o' that? A tanner won't buy a 'air cut these 'ere times! Come on, young gent. You can spare more than a blinkin' bob. Five is wot we want—an' sharp! Shell out, young 'un! Ain't that right, Bill?"

"Yus!" said the other gipsy grimly.

Christine looked at them, and glared.

"You rotters!" he snapped. "If you think I'm going to put up with this, you've made a bloomer! I'm jolly sorry I gave you the first shilling. You won't get any more, I can tell you!"

The two men looked at one another significantly.

And then, before Bob Christine could dodge, they suddenly sprang upon him, apparently believing that he was quite alone, and away

(Continued on page 25.)

ST. FRANK'S IN THIRTY YEARS' TIME—SPECIAL
ARTICLE

NIPPER'S MAGAZINE

No. 20.

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

April 8,
1922.



THE HEAD'S GARDEN AT ST. FRANK'S.
(Showing back view of Head's house.)



THE ELOPEMENT.

I **BROKE** of ruther abruptly las' night 'cause a mouse come out of a hole in my bedroom, so I tride to catch it. I broke my wash-bowle throing my shoe at it, but I didn't get the mouse.

Well, the breaksman an' I we had a reel good talk. I tole him 'bout my sisters, an' Aunt Betsey, an' everything. He was sorry for me; he wouldn't take money for my fare; he said, wen he was my age he use to be whipt evry night reglar, an' I must get use to it and not mind it.

"The frog gets used to bein' skinned," sez he, "but don't brake off your sister's matches agane if you can help it, for beaus is scarce this year; the war in Europe has maid a corner in the market."

He love that breaksman till my dyin' day, he was so good to me. It was about nine a.m. wen we got to the plaice where I was to get off, so we shook hans and said good-by, like we was ole frens.

I b'lieve I'll give up bein' a Buflo Bill, and be a breakman wen I gro up. Such a jolly life! You can ride for nothing all you want to.

There were some boys around the depot wich was surprised to see me alite from a frate car. They introduced theirselves, so I thought Ide stop an' play a spell 'fore I let Aunt Betsy kno Ide come to live with her.

They proofed to be very wicked, bad boys, wich had no bringing up. They stole my bank, an' tore my new jacket, an' thru mud that I wasn't fit to be seen. I thought wot it said in one o' my books — "Bewair of strange dogs."

It was noon wen I got to Aunt Betsys. I didn't reelize I was hungry till I smelt those apple pies. She was eating dinner all by herself wen I come in.



They stole my bank, and tore my new jacket.

"Mersy sakes alive! George Hackett!" she screemed, lettin' her knife drop on her plate so hard it broke a peace out of the edge. "Whare did you come from? Wot's happened to your close? Who sketched your face?"

"Aunt Betsy," sez I, "I never told a lie. I've run away."

"Run away!—run away from your buchiful home, your good papa, you dere mamma, your lovin' sis——"

Thare she stopped as if she'd bin chopped off an' kinder choked. You sea she rekolected 'bout how they didn't want her to the party.

"I don't wunder," she ads, "those girls were enuff to drive ennybuddy a way. Tell me all about it, my poor child."

I explained the hole affaire to her. I showed her my bleeding scars, because Ide made her mad when she was to our house.

Wen I confessed about the fotografs her eyes sparkled, she was so pleased to think my sisters were in a scrape.

"'Twant rite for you to do that, George," sez she, "but boys will be boys. Ime glad you cum to me. Go rite in the kitchen an' wash, an hurry back to dinner fore the chickun gets cold."

"Will you promise, aunt, not to let 'em kno where I am?"

"If they don't find out till I tell 'em," she sorter snapped, "you'll stay with me till your groan up."

You sea, she had a spite 'ganst our folks 'cause I tole her they didn't want her to stay to the party.

She stuffed me that I couldn't hold no more, I had to leive my third slice o' apple pie an' mended my jacket, an' was as good to me as ever was.

Long 'bout fore o'clock thare came a telegram from papa:

"Is Georgie thare?"

Aunt telegraphed back:

"What do you mene?"

So of coarse they thought I wasn't.

I forgot to say I brought my diry tide up in a handkerchief with a clene shirt an' a pare of stockings.

It was Aunt Betsy's wash bole wich I broke a tryin' to hit the mouse. It was funny ole blue china—the wash bole not the mouse—an' aunt felt awful bad. I was afrade she'd send me home.

I've been here two days now, she kepes me jus to spite my folks, but O! she makes me wurk like a perfeck slave. I'm gettin' wery of it.

I've had to pick up chips an' even string benes—a perfeck shame! Cook duz such things at home. She will not let me play with other boys.

Twict I've stolen down to the depo to look fur my breaksman to take me back. He'll do it, I am sure. Homesickness is a fearful thing.

Fore wery, wery days an' nites! How slo time crepes, at a snale's pace. Ime desperut, no money, no frens, the breaksman I never get a chance to sea.

To-day I had to pick twelfe quarts of huckle berrys, a deggeradation my proud spirit does not freeze to. Oh! could I sea my childhood's home onest more Ide be a moddul boy.

Vane are these sad refleeshuns! Stay! hold on! I have a thought! I will not rite in my diry 'cause I believe Aunt Betsy reads it in my absunee.

O, happy boy! at home onet more! Teres blind my eyes wen I think of the seen wen my father brought me home in triumph; my mother's sobs, my sister's kisses, even cook was blubberin', and Betty's apurn to her eyes. The hull town has made a fuss over me. Thare was a grate crowd to the depo to meet me; such a time!

Papa's so angry with my aunt he never spoke to her wen he come to take me home, 'cause everybuddy said I must be dead or stolen.

The way I got the money to telegraph was this—she sent me to pick huckel berrys to dry but I sold 'em an' went to the depot, and telegrafed:

"Ime at Aunt Bettsy's—plese, plese com and take me home. Your son, George."

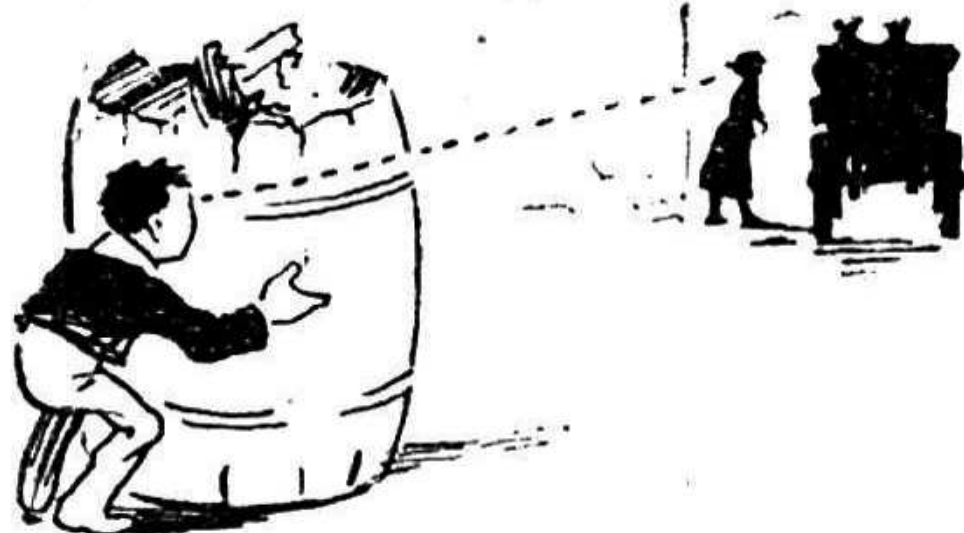
My sisters are awful nice girls. I never never will do anything to teaze 'em long as I live. I am furnly resolved to take the Father of his Country for my moddul, an' gro up to be grate an' good.

The gnu minister came to our house to tea to-nite. His name is Revrund Nebneezer Slocum. He is 26 years old, he said so hisself. He is pail, wares a white muffler, an' is fond of girls an' sweet-cake, so I juge.

He patted me on the head—I hate to be patted on the head, that will do for boys of three or fore. I think he's sweet on Lil, but she won't have him. The only sole on earth Lil cares for is Montagu De Jones. I carried a letter to him this afternoon.

She gave me a penny if Ide prommus not to tell ennybuddy. He wrote one back, an' he give me another penny. Lil was out in the yard waiteing wen I got back. She put his letter in her pocket an' went upstairs. Wot duz this mene?

When tea was et we all went in the parlor. Mr. Slocum ast me was I fond of gum drops, 'cause I was eating some. We was by ourselfs in the winder; he wanted to be pleasant. I tole him yes, I liked 'em; when Mr. De Jones



I doged behind a barrel. Sure enuff a carriage stoped at the corner.

give me money for bringin' letters to my sister Lilly I allus bought gum drops.

What could a made him turn so green when I said that? At last he ast me how often do you buy 'em? and I said every day. He gave a little kind o' mone like he had et too much. Pritty soon he sed he must go back to his bording-house and write a sermon.

Oh, such a time! Fur onest they didn't scold little Georgie, nor whip him, nor send him to bed by dalite. Pa says he's going to get me a scooter next week.

It seems I've bin of a good dele of use if I am only ait yeres old. Las' night wen I had writ in my diry I wasn't a bit sleepy, so I went into Lily's room to put on one of her rappers to scare Betty, and I felt suthin' in the pocket wich was a letter that I read. It said:

"The carridge will be at the corner at nine to-nite—slip out quitely, all will go well; do not fale. me deerest Lily."

"Wot's up?" sez I; "it's most nine now. I'll go and see."

I hung the rapper back in the clost, krept down the back stares, an' reched the street. I doged behind a ash barrel; sure enuff a carridge stoped at the corner. 'Bout a minit after I see my sister Lily come along rapped in a watterproof, carrying a satchel.

Mister De Jones jumped out of the carridge, helped her in, shut the door, un' off they went; the driver he licked the horses like he was in a orful hurry.

I run home with all my mite an' mane, burst in were the folks were sitting, an' gasped:

"You better hurry up if you want to catch 'em. I think somebuddy ought to arest that driver for lickin' his horses."

"Wot are you talking about?" sez mamma.

"Oh, nuthing. Why, Lily's run away with him in a carridge. They're goin' to Plattville to get marrid. I see 'em start."

Then papa said a very bad word. Bess she flue up to Lil's room to see if I tole the truth. I was whisked off to bed, like I allers am when there's fun goin' on, an' wen I woke up this mornin' an' come down to brekiast, there was Miss Lily at the table with the rest, an' after brekfast she sez to me:

"Oh, Geordie, how could you tell on us?" an' burst rite out a cryin'.

I wish I hadn't.

IN THIRTY YEARS' TIME

A Glimpse Into The Future As Imagined By
JACK GREY

VISITOR'S DAY, 1952.

ST. FRANK'S looked splendid in the glorious sunlight of the May afternoon. Fellows were moving about leisurely. The old walls of the Ancient House and the College House were ivy covered and picturesque. The new Modern House, nearly as large as the old school itself, reared itself up in great masses of white stone architecture, surmounted by the great glass dome. This was the school observatory. A little further afield towered the tremendous aerials of the St. Frank's wireless.

It was visitors' day, and a great number of Old Boys had come down to watch the sports. The chief event of the day would be the Flying Race, between the Lower School and the Upper School. Twenty of the man-power aeroplanes were being used for this race. Engined machines were not allowed.

A luxurious limousine aeroplane came into sight, dropped like a feather, and alighted vertically in the old Triangle. The chauffeur jumped down, opened the door, and three Old Boys stepped out.

One was big, rugged, and aggressive. This was Edward Oswald Handforth, the world-famous fight promoter. Prosperity had made him somewhat stout, but all his old power remained. He glared round, and sniffed.

"Huh! Nothing new!" he said, sticking his hands into his pockets. "Almost the same as when we were here as boys. Remember the time when we were all in Study D together, Church?"

Mr. Walter Church, staid and slightly grey, nodded.

"I do!" he replied. "Good old days, Handforth, although you were somewhat self-willed in those times. Eh, McClure?"

Mr. Arnold McClure, the celebrated engineer, smiled.

"I don't think Handforth has changed

much," he said. "We meet fairly often nowadays, and he always strikes me as being the same. Personally, I think the old school has altered a good deal——"

"Nonsense!" snapped Mr. Handforth. "Utter nonsense!"

"But, really——"

"Don't argue!" broke in Mr. Handforth. "Why, don't I know? All you can do is to argue. Hallo! Who's that coming along? Why, I'm hanged if it isn't Mr. Levi! Looking more prosperous than ever, isn't he?"

Mr. Solomon Levi, the great City financier, was chatting with Professor Timothy Tucker, the great authority on anthropology. Professor Tucker had long hair, a decided stoop, a wispy beard, and he was attired in a rusty black suit and a wide-brimmed hat. The professor was very poor. His walk in life was not a lucrative one. Mr. Levi was very different in contrast. Stout, well dressed, with a great diamond sparkling in his neck-tie, and a fat cigar between his teeth.

"Why, hallo, Handforth!" said Mr. Levi cheerfully. "Looking as well as ever, believe me! Just having a chat with Tucker. He's dropped all his old-fashioned Communist nonsense. That sort of thing is dead nowadays."

"And so are all the Communists!" said Mr. Handforth.

Before they could say anything further, **E. O. Handforth, Esq.**



a huge, mountainous man waddled into sight. He was enormous, and could easily be recognised as Mr. James Little, the owner of the luxurious Hotel Superbe, in Piccadilly. This was the greatest hotel in Europe, towering higher than any New York skyscraper, and containing thousands of rooms.

A little way behind Mr. Little came Lord Pittacre, chatting with Sir Cecil De Valerie, M.P. The latter was a member of Lord Pittacre's Cabinet.

Few would have realised that the Prime Minister had been one of the most mischievous boys in the Remove of St. Frank's—he was then known as Reginald Pitt. He had progressed wonderfully after taking up a political career.

Major-General Thomas Watson was talking earnestly with Sir Montgomery Tregellis-West, Bart., the well-known big game hunter.

They all collected together in a group and talked about old times, when they were all at St. Frank's together. Those times seemed far off now. Lord Christine, the great judge, appeared with Sir Charles Talmadge, K.C.

And, standing quite alone, were two weedy, miserable looking men, prematurely aged, who could have been recognised as Mr. Edward Long and Mr. Enoch Snipe. They were seedy, too, for they had never succeeded in life. Growing older, they were both ill-tempered and sour.

And it was just at this point, when Mr. Richard Goodwin and Lord Glenthorne were entering the main gateway, that everything seemed to grow dark. Mr. Justin B. Farman, the American millionaire, faded out as he was approaching Sir Edgar Fenton, the great Harley Street physician.

And then I discovered that that silly ass, Reginald Pitt, was shaking my shoulder. And I woke up to find that I was in Study E, and that the year was still 1922 after all.

It was a tremendous pity, because I had wanted to see a few other fellows as they would be in thirty years time. But, unfortunately, you can't doze off again and finish a dream—particularly if it's an interesting one.

MY HAT!

By BOB CHRISTINE.

With apologies to the Author of the well-known song: "My Word!"
Dedicated to E. O. HANDFORTH.

I'm splendid at footer, at footer I'm splendid,

In goal I am simply first-rate.

I can say without boasting I save goals by the hundred,

And my kicking is really quite great.

Why, Chelsea have asked me to captain their first team,

So I needn't say more as to that.

I'm a wonder, a hustler, a winner, a hustler,

A tipper, a ripper—my hat!

I'm an expert at boxing, at boxing an expert,

And Joe Beckett I'd face without fear.

I can say without swanking, if things could be managed,

I could easily beat Carpentier!

Why only last winter I knocked out Jack Dempsey,

So I needn't say more as to that.

I'm a dreadnought, a spiffer, a bruiser, a biffer,

A crasher, a smasher—my hat!

I'm first-class at cricket, at cricket I'm first-class,

I hit sixes off every ball.

While as for the batsmen when I begin bowling,

They simply can't face me at all.

Why the papers last season nicknamed me Armstrong,

So I needn't say more as to that.

I'm a scorcher, a fighter, a hitter, a smiter.

A battler, a rattler—my hat!

I'm hot stuff at billiards, at billiards I'm hot stuff,

I make breaks of a thousand or more.

I beat Smith and Inman the first time I played them,

Though I'd never played billiards before.

Why I beat them together with one hand behind me,

So I needn't say more as to that.

I'm a wizard, a whopper, a marvel, a topper,

A razzler, a dazzler—my hat!

Next Week's Magazine.

MORE LEAVES FROM THE
BAD BOY'S DIARY.
TRACKETT GRIM, &c., &c.



SCHOOLBOY HOWLERS.

Being a series of humorous stories about scholars of various schools throughout the country.

Kindness to Animals

In many schools the teaching of "kindness to animals" has been introduced, either in the form of reading lessons, or as specially prepared lectures.

It was at one of these schools that a teacher—on the return of the children after a short holiday—said to one of the second standard lads, as he patted his head:

"I hope, Tommy, that during your holiday you have remembered to be kind to all dumb animals, as I have so often impressed upon you. Have you, my boy?"

"Oh, yes, sir," replied Tommy. "I think I have. It was only yesterday, sir, that I let my aunt's poor little canary out of its cage, for I see that it wanted its liberty; and when a cruel cat got hold of it, sir, I set the bulldog at her—so I did!"

Heard at an Evening School.

And in connection with evening schools, I am reminded of another amusing incident. It should be explained that in such schools the schoolmaster does not expect or attempt to maintain the same strict order and discipline as he does in his day school. He knows full well that he would not get it if he tried; and, accordingly, he lets the pupils talk now and then, so long as they do not disturb the work of the majority of the class.

During an arithmetic lesson, a schoolmaster, whilst walking about the pupils' desks looking at the work, overheard two big lads speaking to each other as follows:

"I tell thee what, Bill," said one, evidently disgusted with the whole business of sums and accounts, "I'm just getting about sick on it!"

"Oh?" said his mate curtly, and keeping on steadily with his work.

"Aye, Bill," continued the other, "I tell thee I were a fool ever to come to this bloomin' institooshion!"

"Aye," responded Bill, now quite angry at being thus interrupted, "aye, so thou wert; and, what's more, thou'st remained one ever since!"

Father Ain't No Good at Makin' Excuses!

Teachers attach great importance to a child attending school regularly and punctually. Indeed, some of them treat an absence as an actual offence or breach of discipline unless the child brings a written excuse from the parent.

At a certain Board School in Southwark the teacher, whilst calling the morning roll or register, noticed that one of the lads had been marked absent the previous afternoon.

Calling the scholar out, the master said:

"I see you were absent yesterday afternoon, Higgins. Where is your note?"

"I didn't know as I had to bring one, sir," answered the lad.

The master then recollected that the scholar was a comparatively "new boy," and hence might not know the rules of the school in this respect. So he said to him:

"Well, I believe you. However, when you come this afternoon you must bring the written excuse with you."

"Who from?" asked the lad.

"Why, from your father," said the master.

"Oh," responded the youngster, "my father ain't no good at making excuses, sir; why, mother catches him every time!"

"Catches him?" exclaimed the master. "Whatever do you mean?"

"Why, finds him out, sir, soon as he opens his mouth!"

"Who has ever seen a leopard skin?" asked the master.

"Me, sir!" answered one lad.

"Where?"

"On the leopard, sir, at the menagiry!"

IMPOSSIBILITIES

By CECIL De VALERIE.

I WANDERED into the Ancient House lobby, and Handforth happened to be coming in at the moment. Just then young Chubby Heath of the Third marched up and confronted the leader of Study D.



"You babbling fathead!" said Heath. "You trod on my pocket knife just now, and smashed it to bits! Take that!"

Biff!

Chubby Heath's fist crashed into Handforth's face, and Edward Oswald went down with a howl. He scrambled to his feet, blubbing.

"It—it was only an accident!" he muttered. "I'm awfully sorry, Heath."

"Well, don't do it again!" said the Third Former curtly.

* * *



I wandered further on, and came across the Hon. Douglas Singleton having a chat with the Duke of Somerton. Somerton was looking perfect. His Eton suit was elegant from top to toe, without a crease, and absolutely spotless. His boots glittered, his collar was as white as snow. He was wearing a necktie which could not hope to be surpassed for taste and quality. And upon his head rested a topper which fairly gleamed.

I passed on.

* * *

I wandered back into the Ancient House, and Archie Glenthorne shuffled towards me. His clothing was untidy and grubby. His collar was smothered with ink, and horribly crumpled, and his neck badly needed a wash.

"Going out, Archie?" I asked.

"You bet!" said Archie. "You've never known me slack about, have you? I'm just off for a ten-mile run across country, and it'll put me in form for my boxing contest with Christine to-night. So long!"

Archie walked briskly on, and passed out into the Triangle, whistling cheerily.

* * *

I wandered into the tuck shop next, and found Sir Montie Tregellis-West, dirty and untidy, gorging as hard as he could go. He was stuffing himself with doughnuts and jam tarts and cakes, and swilling it down with ginger-beer.

Then Fatty Little came in, dressed in running-shorts. He went straight up to the counter, and put a bag of sweets on it.

"You might look after these for me, Mrs. Hake," he said. "I'm just going with Archie for a ten-mile run, and I sha'n't have time to eat sweets."

"Have some tuck with me, Fatty," I said invitingly. "I'm pretty flush just now. Order what you want—patties, sausage-rolls, cakes, buns——"

"Sorry, but I can't stop!" said Fatty, as he went out. "Besides that, I'm full up. I only had dinner three hours ago, and a chap can't be eating all the time!"

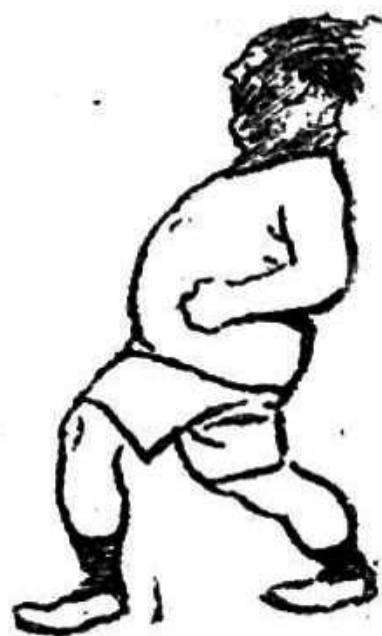
* * *

I wandered, finally, into the Remove passage. Handforth & Co. were standing just outside their study door, whispering together. They spoke in hushed voices, and were obviously talking secrets.

The door of the next Study happened to be open, and Teddy Long suddenly came out.

"I say, you chaps, clear off!" he exclaimed. "I'm just waiting for Pitt—I promised to lend him ten bob this afternoon, and I'm making it a quid. And all you can do is to jaw out here—secrets, too! I don't want to overhear what you're saying! I detest listening to something that's not meant for my ears!"

Of course, I had just been imagining these things. And I grinned as I realised how impossible they were.



THE BOOK-TITLE FIEND

By Reginald Pitt.

AS it happened, I was particularly busy that evening. I'd finished my prep., and I was writing a couple of important letters home. To be exact, funds were short, and times in Study E were somewhat lean.

Jack Grey was writing home, too. We thought we might as well have two strings to our bow, so to speak. Then the door opened, and Cecil De Valerie looked in. He nodded cheerily.

"Read the latest book?" he asked, as he advanced into the study. "A ripping yarn, called 'The Knock-Out Blow.'"

"Who's it by?" asked Jack innocently.

"Handforth A. Punch!" grinned De Valerie.

Jack Grey fainted, and I reached for the inkpot. De Valerie yelled in the peculiarly inane way that this particular type of fiend does yell. He grinned at us with his face about a yard wide, and looked terrifically pleased with himself.

"See the joke?" he gurgled. "Handforth A. Punch—easy! *Hand forth a punch!* Pretty good, eh?"

"You—you funny fathead!" I said. "I've read all sorts of things like that—they're stale! 'Starvation,' by Norah Bone, and all that sort of thing. Chaps who make those jokes ought to be put in the county asylum!"

"But these are different, you ass!" said De Valerie. "I've got a whole list—I invented the lot! Of course, the usual way is to take a Christian name and wangle it about. But mine's more original. I've been using surnames. You see, Handforth—"

"Will you leave quietly, or shall we use the poker?" asked Grey.

"Don't be a fathead!" said De Valerie. "I've got some good ones—you'll simply roar. 'The Lover's Squeeze' isn't bad."

"Who's it by?" I asked grimly.

"Nipper Hand?" cackled De Valerie. "Then there's another—'Ships on the Ocean,' by Watson Water. And you've got to read 'The Borrower,' by Owen Cash. And how about that little thing 'Where to Get Wed,' by Marriott Church?"

"Stop!" I said faintly. "This is simply awful!"

"Rats! They're jolly good!" said the book-title fiend. "I've got a lot more to tell you yet. 'The Kidnapped Mother-in-Law,' by

Tucker A. Broad. See? *Took her abroad!* You catch on?"

"My only hat!" I breathed. "They need explaining! Of all the horrible, ghastly jokes —"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted the fiend.

"This one's particularly rich. 'The Salmon Profiteer,' by Canham Quick. And 'Expectations,' by Levi A. Legacy. Here's a good one! 'The Heavy Hand,' by Clapson Back. I caught Singleton beautifully on that one.

"Hints on Manners," by Grayson Charm is pretty decent too. Then there's—"

I rose feebly to my feet, and Jack Grey followed my example. Together we advanced upon the book-title fiend, who was grinning like a Tom Webster cartoon. He backed away hastily towards the door.

"Get outside!" I said hoarsely. "We can't stand any more of it!"

The visitor opened the door and scooted out. But he turned back, and shoved his face into the study.

"You must have read that one called 'The Fisherman's Slacks,'" he said. "It's by Hitchen M. Up. And I simply must tell you another one—it came to me just now. 'The Diligent Reader,' by Turner Page—"

Crash!

Jack Grey, in desperation, had flung a book with unerring aim. The title caught the book-title fiend squarely on the nose, and he staggered back into the passage, howling. But this time he was using quite a different tune.

I happened to pass him in the passage an hour later. He had quite recovered, and he looked very innocent as he caught hold of my sleeve.

"Read that book called 'The Gripping Fist'?" he asked blandly.

"No, I haven't!" I snapped. "And I don't want to know the author!"

THIS WEEK'S LIMERICK.

There's an unpleasant bounder named
S . . . e,
Just to look at him gives you the g . . . e.
If he dislikes this verse—
Which is certainly terse—
Well, we dare him to give us a swipe!



(Continued from page 16.)

from all help. This little lane was a very lonely one.

Christine fought desperately to get free. But he was tripped with extreme neatness, flung on his face, and held down. But, so far, he was still capable of using his voice. And this was obviously an occasion to use it.

"Help!" he roared loudly. "Rescue, St. Frank's!"

"It ain't no good you hollerin'!" snapped Bill. "There ain't nobody near 'ere wot can 'elp you! That's right, mate; go through 'is pockets."

This was robbery with violence, and Christine forgot everything in the excitement of the moment. He shouted again and again. In the meantime, his pockets had been rifled, and he was still held a prisoner.

In the little cottage, the other juniors heard their leader's cries quite clearly. They were alarmed.

"What the dickens has happened to the ass?" asked Talmadge anxiously. "Dash it all, we can't go out like this! These disguises may be all right for a dark room, but they're no good in the daylight——"

"Listen!" said Yorke.

Christine was calling out again, and this time his shouts were even more urgent. And, peering through the windows, the juniors caught a glimpse of struggling figures through the gap in the bottom hedge.

"Come on!" said Talmadge grimly. "Bob's in danger by the look of it."

They rushed out, careless of their appearance and pelted across the little patch of garden, like a whirlwind they burst through the hedge, and found their leader struggling desperately with the two gipsies.

"Chuck these rotters off!" gasped Christine. "They've pinched all my money, and—— Yow!"

Christine was silenced by a jab in the back. By now it seemed that the affair was destined to grow to considerable proportions. Just because Christine had refused to "dub up," the gipsies were getting dangerous.

And, having once gone into this scrap, they couldn't withdraw.

The two men shouted at the top of their voices. And from the caravan three others appeared, and stared across at the commotion. Then, with one accord, they rushed to join in the fight.

By now the battle was assuming big proportions. Christine & Co. nearly got the better of the first two gipsies. But before they could reap the reward of their advantage, the reinforcements arrived.

And then the fur began to fly.

There were five gipsies against the five schoolboys, and at one time it almost seemed that Christine & Co. would succeed in gaining the upper hand. But just then Christine met with a misfortune. He caught his foot in a tuft of grass, and tripped. In falling, he cannoned into Talmadge, who met Christine's head with his waistcoat.

As a direct result, Talmadge doubled up and

collapsed. He was winded. Christine hurt his ankle, and was floored with comparative ease. This proved the turning point of the fight.

Two of the gipsies from the caravan had brought ropes with them. And now, seizing the chance, they looped the rope round the ankles of their prisoners. Once bound in this way, Christine & Co. were helpless.

As soon as Talmadge recovered he was ready for further battle—and so was Christine. But it was too late. With their ankles tightly tethered together, they could do nothing.

One by one they were dealt with—roped up, hand and foot. The gipsies seemed excited, and they jabbered together in a foreign language which the juniors could not understand. Their swarthy faces were flushed, and their eyes glittered.

And then Christine & Co. were carried into the caravan.

The April First jape had changed into something of a far more menacing nature. Through that one little act of incaution, Bob Christine had got himself and all his companions into what seemed to be a hopeless tangle. What did these gipsies intend?

And, in the meantime, Archie Glenthorne, serenely indifferent to the position, lay sleeping on the pile of straw within the cottage. The very point of this jape was all against him—but he appeared to be enjoying himself!

CHAPTER VI.

FREEDOM FOR TWO!



THE lane was peaceful and quiet.

The afternoon sun was shining warmly, and the soft breeze stirred the fresh young leaves of the surrounding trees. Not a soul was in sight

and everything seemed at rest.

The little dilapidated cottage looked as though it had never been visited for years, and now there was no sign whatever of the gipsy caravan. The little community of Nomads had passed on. And nothing remained to tell of their recent presence except the warm embers of the wood fire.

A figure appeared.

It was that of a man, and he came rather cautiously down the rutty lane, glancing about him from time to time. He arrived opposite the cottage, looked round once more, and then pushed through the gateway.

He made no attempt to enter by the front door, but slipped quickly round to the back. He was quietly dressed in an ordinary overcoat and a bowler hat. His manner was alert and sharp.

At the back door he paused, and then lifted the latch and passed quickly inside. The tiny scullery was empty. The man listened, but could hear no sounds. He opened the inner door, and found himself in the front room of the cottage—where the window was boarded up, and where the gloom was thick.

A movement came from the pile of straw.

Gazing more closely, the man could see the elegant figure of a youth attired in a lounge suit. He appeared to be bound, but he was reclining back on the straw in ease and comfort.

The man took a step forward, and knelt down. He touched Archie's shoulder, and gently shook him.

"What-ho! What-ho!" murmured Archie. "I mean to say, pray desist, old lad! What, as it were, is the idea of waking a chappie up in the small hours? Dash it all, it's not light yet! The old dawn hasn't shoved in an appearance!"

"Wake up, sir—wake up!"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "But not just yet, surely? Another large supply of the dreamless is required. Why, what's this? I mean to say, what's this? Phipps! How are you, laddie?"

"I think you fail to appreciate the position, sir," said Phipps. "You are, in fact still somewhat sleepy, and unable to grasp the full facts."

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie, opening his eyes again and blinking. "The facts, what? The jolly old truth, and all that? Why, great scott! That is to say, gadzooks! The dashed bed seems to be falling to pieces!"

Archie held up a handful of straw, and eyed it wonderingly. Then he sat up, gazed round, and nodded. He was now fully awake. He regarded Phipps with distinct approval.

"I will explain, sir——"

"Wait, old onion—wait!" interrupted Archie. "Explanations, and so forth, are needless. The old brain has recovered its normal activity! The tissues, in fact, are refreshed and invigorated. In other words, Phipps, the old memory comes back in chunks!"

"I have come here, sir, to release you——"

"Exactly!" said Archie. "The rescue stuff, and what not! Absolutely! This is where you shine, Phipps—this is where you come out, as it were. By the way, what have you done with the bodies?"

"The bodies, sir?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "I mean say, I gather that you were compelled to engage in fearful battle with the kidnapper chappies? I trust you spared the life of the misguided young lady who did the luring act, and all that sort of rot?"

Phipps, for once in a way, allowed himself to smile.

"I do not think you need feel any concern regarding the kidnappers, sir," he said smoothly. "If you will allow me, sir, I will free you from the ropes."

"A sound scheme, Phipps!" agreed Archie. "Proceed, old dear!"

Phipps soon cut through the ropes, and Archie stretched himself. Then he lay back on the straw, and closed his eyes.

"Dashed decent!" he observed. "In fact, Phipps, I'm most beastly comfortable, don't you know. Pray vanish—in other words, fade away! The young master would care to have another supply of winks!"

"I think it would be far better, sir, if you come away at once," said Phipps firmly.

"But, dash it all, I mean to say!" protested Archie. "Give me a chance, Phipps. I must recover, if you know what I mean. I've simply got to recuperate, and all that!"

"Most unwise, sir."

"But, look here——"

"Begging your pardon, sir, but the straw is most unhealthy."

"Rot! That is to say, rubbish!" said Archie. "At times, Phipps, it is necessary to be firm. It is essential to be plain speaking, and so forth. The straw is priceless—absolutely! The most comfortable rest I've had for eons! You grasp the old idea?"

"I insist, sir, that this straw is a most unsuitable couch for a young gentleman such as yourself."

"Hardly the thing, what?"

"No, sir."

"Below the dig. of the Glenthorne's, and all that?"

"Quite so, sir," said Phipps. "Furthermore, there is a possibility that you may develop a cold, or even worse, sir."

"Several yards of 'flu., for example?"

"Exactly, sir!"

"And then, of course, there's that other stuff—I might get what's-it's-name," said Archie vaguely. "That is to say, the old complaint that gets a chappie by the chest, and proceeds to do him in! Pneumonia! That's it—absolutely! Upon the whole, Phipps, I think I'd better arise and trickle forth!"

"It would certainly be more beneficial, sir."

Archie rose, not without reluctance, and stretched himself. Then Phipps proceeded to brush him down, producing the necessary clothes-brush from some mysterious pocket inside. Archie submitted to the treatment without demur.

"A most thoughtful chappie, Phipps—that's what you are!" said Archie. "By the way, you haven't explained yet. You haven't rolled out the yarn. How did you do it, Phipps? How did you, as it were, shove it across the enemy?"

"I have seen no enemy, sir."

"I mean the frightful bounders who pushed me in here," went on Archie. "The young lady, and all that? Dash it all, Phipps, they're knocking about somewhere, don't you know. I saw them. The old optics could never have been mistaken."

"As a matter of fact, sir, the whole thing was a joke," explained Phipps. "You may remember, sir, that to-day is the First of April!"

Archie adjusted his monocle, and nodded.

"Absolutely!" he said. "The jolly old day when chappies get busy fooling about, what? But you're wrong, Phipps—every time! The merchants who lured me into this place were frightful ruffians. Black beards, and masks, and what not! They may spring upon us at any moment!"

"The ruffians, sir, were really nothing more than some of the College House young gentlemen dressed up for occasion," said Phipps.

"The leader, I think, was Master Christine."

"I mean to say!" exclaimed Archie.

"Dash it all! I mean, Phipps! Don't be so dashed ridie! Don't be so prepos! Chappies

from the College House? My dear old lad, they don't wear beards!"

"The beards, sir, were false."

"Ah! Absolutely!" said Archie. "False, what? The lads, as it were, were made up, and acting a bally old part? Deucedly rich! Absolutely! A perfectly priceless stunt! And I didn't suspect! The old bean was quite innocent of any base suspicions. How do you do these things, Phipps?"

"It was quite easy, sir," said Phipps. "I think we might as well be moving now, sir. What do you say?"

"Any old thing you like—do just what you

in this district—and the walk, after all, is not very far. I think you will be equal to the task, sir."

Archie grumbled in a dolorous tone. And then he and Phipps made their way out of the cottage into the bright sunshine. Archie looked about him rather wonderingly, and smiled.

"Somewhat surprising!" he observed. "Warm, and all that, Phipps. I was thinking that night had fallen upon us. This is better—this, I might add, is most dashed better!"

"Quite so, sir," said Phipps. "This way, sir."



"By Jove!" said Archie. "I mean, rather fearful—what? Hardly what the old mind pictured——"

please," said Archie. "But what about the old conveyance home? I presume you have brought something for that purpose? The fact is, Phipps, I can't ride that frightful bicycle again. Never! The exertion was quite appalling!"

"I am sorry, sir, but I am afraid we shall have to walk!"

"Walk?" said Archie, blankly.

"Yes, sir."

"But look here! I mean to say, look here, Phipps," objected Archie. "It can't be done! It simply can't be wangled! The old feet would never be equal to the strain! Kindly stagger forth and locate a taxi. I will remain here, and——"

"But that is quite impossible, sir!" interrupted Phipps. "There is no taxi procurable

They commenced to walk home to St. Frank's—slightly over two miles. Archie, once on the go, was just as active as Phipps himself. It would never do to take Archie at his word.

"Now, about these chappies in disguise," said Archie. "I might say, Phipps, that I am completely bowled! That is to say, I fail to grasp the meaning of it all. It's impos. that those merchants should take all the trouble to lure me into that cottage just for the sake of a joke."

"The young gentlemen have rather quaint ideas, sir, regarding jokes," replied Phipps. "I imagine that they intended carrying the thing even further. But they appear to have been interrupted."

Phipps, to tell the truth, didn't quite know how to go on. He had no idea as to where

Christine & Co. were at the moment. Perhaps he would have been somewhat startled had he known the truth.

For the College House juniors were not exactly in a happy position.

The six of them were bound, and in the interior of the gipsy caravan. The atmosphere within this roomy vehicle was by no means sweet. The whole contrivance jogged along in the most uncomfortable way, and the juniors were jolted about from side to side.

The gipsies, evidently, were of that class who go about the country districts selling wares of their own manufacture. For the caravan was completely covered with all kinds of wicker articles—baskets, chairs, rush marketing bags, and all things of that description.

The horse which drew the caravan was a strong animal, and it went along at a good, steady walk. Two or three of the gipsies rode, and others walked along in advance. Their idea, apparently, was to get out of this district as soon as possible.

Bob Christine was really rather alarmed.

He had given up worrying about the failure of the little practical joke on Archie. Affairs had taken such a turn that drama had set in where comedy had been intended.

The imprisoned juniors had made an attempt at talking to begin with, but the noise caused by the creaking, rumbling caravan was so great that ordinary conversation was impossible.

And so, at last, the juniors were silent.

Christine believed that the idea was to carry them off until they arrived at some quiet place—probably on Bannington Moor—and then the gipsies would try to make profit out of their capture. They might even make an attempt to extort money from the school authorities.

In this dramatic way, in fact, the faked kidnapping had become a real thing. Christine & Co. had played a trick on Archie—but there was no trick about this! The very idea of these gipsies being Ancient House fellows was absurd. Christine had long since given up this theory.

For, in a way, the Monks had been captured by sheer accident. The gipsies had not swooped down on the cottage and carried them off. They had taken their prisoners on the spur of the moment—because they had come to Christine's rescue. Later on, perhaps, the gipsies would be sorry. They would find their captives more trouble than they were worth.

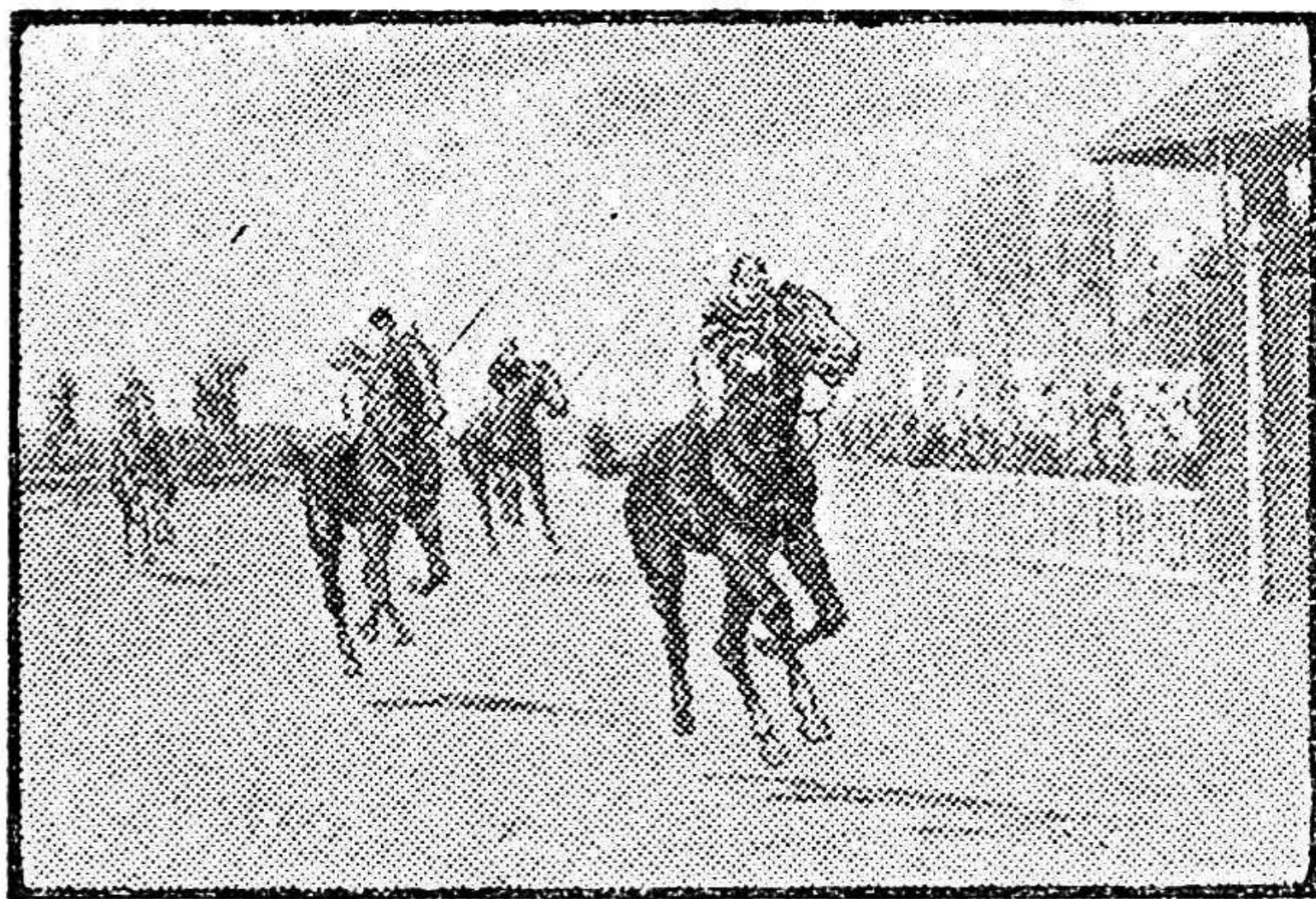
But at the moment the position was serious.

The interior of the caravan was separated from the driving-seat. There was a little door by which the driver could gain admittance, but this was closed. It had a glass top, and was decorated with some grubby curtains. But it was impossible to see through these.

The door at the rear was closed, too. Thus the juniors had the place quite to themselves. Bob Christine was nearest this rear door. It

(Continued on page 29)

FOUGHT TO A FINISH!



A grand tale
of the Turf
and the
Motor-
Racing
Track.

By JOHN
HUNTER.

Starts to-
day in

THE BOYS' REALM, 1¹/₂

Full of bright features, including a yarn of the

ENGLAND-SCOTLAND RUGGER INTERNATIONAL

(Continued from page 28.)

seemed to him that they had been going for hours and hours.

As a matter of fact, the caravan had only been on the road for about half an hour, and the distance covered was negligible—two miles, at the most. And then, just as the clumsy caravan jolted over a heavy rut, the door flew open.

Christine could see outside—he could see the dusty lane, narrow, with high hedges. There were no houses or cottages in sight. And, rather to his surprise, none of the gipsies were at the rear.

So the door remained swinging open.

Bob flushed hotly as a thought came to him. He was right near the door—and by wriggling, he would be able to worm his way out. The fall to the road was nothing—he wouldn't even graze himself, although bound.

And if the gipsies went on, without noticing their loss, Christine would probably be found by some passing farm labourer. Anyhow, it was worth trying—and there was no time to waste.

One of the captors might fall back to the rear at any moment—and then the door would be securely closed on him. And this time it would be fastened thoroughly.

Talmadge was next to Christine.

"Look here, I'm going to drop out!" said Bob, grimly.

"Don't be an ass——"

"If I'm spotted, they can't do much—only shove me back!" interrupted Christine. "And there's a chance they won't notice anything until too late. You fellows remain in here, and keep quiet!"

"Why? Couldn't we all wriggle out?"

"Impossible!" said Christine, quickly. "They'd notice the lightening of the caravan—and, besides, we couldn't all get out without making a noise. The best thing you can do is to stick in here, and I don't suppose they'll notice that I'm missing."

"All right," said Talmadge. "It's a chance."

Bob Christine wasted no further time, but wormed his way towards the open door, feet first. Then, just as the caravan gave another jolt, he pitched out. He landed rather heavily on the road, but only shook himself.

And he lay there, unseen. For the bulk of the caravan hid his figure from the walking gipsies, who were ahead.

But there was a chance that they would turn round. So Christine, with quick shrewdness, rolled over and over until he lay in the thick grass at the side of the lane. Here, stretched at full length, he was practically hidden.

"Good egg!" he breathed. "I've done it!"

And then he made another discovery. Everything seemed to be going well now—to make up for the period of bad luck earlier. The rope which secured his wrists seemed loose—it actually was loose!

Feverishly, Bob Christine worked away at the bonds. And, to his delight, the rope became free almost at once. He threw it aside, and freed his ankles. Then he stood up, his heart beating rapidly.

Excitedly, he thought over the facts. What

was the best course that he could pursue? What was the best thing to be done?

He was rather surprised to see that the sun was still high, and a glance at his watch told him that the time was only a little after four. It was still comparatively early in the afternoon. A great deal had happened since two o'clock—so much that the lapse of time seemed enormous.

Bob commenced running up the lane after the caravan. He didn't exactly know what he could do. And, suddenly, he paused. Single-handed, he was helpless—by rushing up to the caravan he would only get himself recaptured.

Forcing himself to be calm, he recognised the neighbourhood. And he was astonished to find that it was not a great distance from St. Frank's. The caravan, as he had imagined, was making for Bannington Moor. This lane didn't lead anywhere else. And, at a run, he could get to the school easily in just over twenty minutes.

And he could take a short cut, too—through the woods. Christine glowed as he thought of the things that could be done. A crowd of fellows would accompany him back, and the gipsies would be thoroughly beaten.

But, just as he was starting off, he remembered that his bicycle was at the little cottage. This was better. It wasn't very far to the cottage—especially by taking a run across the meadows. Then he would be able to cycle the rest of the distance at full speed.

And so, having decided upon this course, Bob Christine dashed off.

As he had expected, the bicycle was still in the cottage. He was just about to hurry out with it when he remembered Archie. He dashed into the front room, with the intention of releasing the Genial Ass at once.

But Archie was not there!

"Well, I'm blessed!" exclaimed Christine. "I never thought the fathead had enough energy in him to work himself free! Good luck to him! Rats to the April First stunt now. There's something really big on the go!"

He got outside jumped on to his machine, and commenced pedalling for all he was worth. But he had only travelled about half a mile before he caught sight of two figures in the distance ahead.

One was lounging along elegantly, and the other—a man—walked with more sedate stride. And as Christine came up, he recognised the pair.

"Archie and Phipps!" muttered Bob. "Now I understand!"

CHAPTER VII.

ST. FRANK'S TO THE RESCUE!



A

ARCHIE turned and adjusted his monocle as Bob Christine leapt off his machine.

"Dear old laddie!" said Archie. "Such frightful energy, don't you know! I mean to say, what, may I ask, is the dashed hurry? I might mention that several pints of the good old brow juice have oozed forth."

Christine wiped the "brow juice" from his forehead.

"Glad you got out of that place, Archie!" he said. "Something pretty terrific has happened! Talmadge and Yorke and those other chaps have been kidnapped by a band of gipsies!"

"What-ho!" said Archie. "Sauce for the gander, and all that!"

"I don't know about that," said Christine. "We worked the stunt on you, I know, but how the dickens could we suspect that these ruffians would come along and pinch us? I escaped!"

"You got away from the foul bounders?"

"Yes."

"Absolutely!" said Archie approvingly. "That is to say, absolutely good! We all seem to be escaping, what? But Phipps is the lad! Just as I was beginning to think that all hope was dead, Phipps staggered in and started performing the old rescue business. Pretty decent, what?"

"Do I understand, sir, that your young companions have met with some trouble?" asked Phipps.

"Trouble!" echoed Christine. "Haven't I just told you? We were all kidnapped by gipsies, and I escaped. I'm just buzzing off to fetch help—police, and Mr. Lee, and a whole crowd of the chaps!"

And, without waiting to say any more, Bob jumped on to his machine, and dashed off. He arrived at St. Frank's just as the First Eleven football match was coming to an end. Fenton, the skipper, scored the winning goal only a few seconds before the final whistle blew. It had been a great game.

Christine's first idea had been to get only College House fellows to help him in effecting the rescue. But most of the best Monks were captured. The others were not available—and, in any case, they couldn't be relied upon to put up a thoroughly sound fight.

So Christine decided to apply elsewhere.

"Nipper's the chap for this job!" he told himself. "Nipper and Handforth, and chaps like that. They'll be only too jolly pleased to come into it. And if Mr. Lee's at home we'll take him, too."

As he was thinking in this way, he caught sight of Handforth talking with the Duke of Somerton. Christine hurried over to them, and caught hold of Handy's arm. Handforth turned, and glared.

"What's up with you, you fatheaded Monk?" he asked politely.

"Quick! You've got to help me!" said Christine.

"Help you?" repeated Handforth. "What's the idea? And what the dickens have you been doing? You look as if you've been boiled! There's gravy on your face—or else it's dust mixed up with perspiration."

"Don't be a funny ass!" said Christine.

"Listen! Five Remove chaps have been collared by a band of gipsies, and they're all prisoners in a caravan, and they're being taken on to Bannington Moor. You've got to come and rescue them!"

Handforth looked at Christine pityingly.

"Do you expect me to believe this?" he demanded.

"Yes, you ass! It's true——"

"It's a beastly thing to tell fibs like that!" said Handforth sternly. "If you think you can palm off a thing of that sort you've made a terrific bloomer. And I'm jolly certain it's not going to work on April Fool's Day!"

Christine realised that it did sound somewhat tall.

"That's—that's just coincidence!" he said.

"It's true, Handy—you've got to believe me! And there's no time to waste—not a second!"

Handforth grinned.

"That kind of stuff has got whiskers on it," he said, in his most aggravating manner. "You're trying to rush me into it before I can think properly. But it's not happening. Besides, my brain works about six times as fast as anybody else's, and I'm jolly well not going to budge!"

Bob Christine fairly danced.

"Where's Mr. Lee?" he demanded fiercely.

"Out!"

"Out?"

"Out!" said Handforth. "There's a lot of 'out' about that, too. Mr. Lee is not in the school—and a good thing, too. What a nerve! Fancy thinking about going to him with a fat-headed yarn like that!"

Bob Christine, knowing that the precious minutes were slipping by, turned despairingly away. And just then I strolled up, with Sir Montie Tregellis-West. We had come from the playing-fields.

"Anything wrong here?" I asked cheerfully.

"Yes," said Handforth. "Some of Christine's pals have been kidnapped by a gang of counterfeiters. Something like that. They're going to be put to death in about half an hour, so we've got to buzz off to the rescue—I don't think!"

"That's supposed to be where we laugh, isn't it?" I asked.

"Look here, Nipper, it's serious—really!" said Christine earnestly. "Yorke, and Talmadge and Clapson and Oldfield and Nation have all been collared by some rotten gipsies!"

"Trying to fool me?" I asked suspiciously.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Christine. "Just because it's the First of April, you think that everything I say is an attempt to fool you. Just listen to me for a minute, and I'll explain. On my word of honour, I'm not trying to spoof you!"

"On your word of honour?"

"Yes."

"Go ahead!" I said briskly. "I'm all attention!"

"Well, the whole thing started when we fooled old Archie," said Christine. "Oldfield got dressed up as a girl, and came here. He made Archie think that he was wanted, and succeeded in decoying him——"

"Oh, did he?" interrupted Handforth. "And you've got the nerve to tell us this, you rotter!"

"It was only a joke——"

"Yes, against Archie!" roared Handforth. "He's an Ancient House chap, and you blessed

Monks had the blessed cheek to jape him! I've a good mind to punch your nose for it!"

"Dry up, Handy!" I said. "Let Christy finish."

Bob went on to explain how they had taken Archie to the cottage, and all the rest of it. Finally, he told us the manner in which he had got out of the caravan, and how he had raced to St. Frank's.

"By this time those gipsies are on the moor," he finished up. "But we can easily locate them—they can't travel fast. And we can speed off on our bicycles. Are you game to come to the rescue?"

"Yes!" I said promptly. "This seems to be a pretty serious business. Perhaps I ought to tell the guv'nor——"

"Mr. Lee's out!" put in Handforth. "I saw him go."

"We can do without him all right," said Christine. "I don't mind admitting, Nipper, that just at first I had a suspicion that you chaps were trying to jape us—but I soon knew that I was wrong. For goodness sake be quick!"

"We'll come straight off," I said. "Handy, dash round, and bustle some of the chaps together. Get as many as you can. The more the merrier!"

"Yes, and as we go through the village we'll collect the policeman!" said Bob Christine grimly. "I mean to give these gipsies in charge—and I don't care what trouble comes afterwards. I'll jolly well go in the witness-box and tell the whole story. They deserve six months' hard labour!"

"All right, you'd better go on in advance," I said. "P.-c. Sparrow isn't always available, and you'll probably have to rout him out from somewhere. Buck up! We'll be down in the village within five minutes."

Christine hurried off, glad to have obtained the help he required. And with the arm of the law to make the whole thing official, there was no doubt that the gipsies would regret ever having interfered with the St. Frank's fellows.

By the time Christine had found the village constable, the rescue party, headed by myself, arrived on the scene. There were fifteen or sixteen of us altogether. And we were quite capable of dealing with any number of gipsies.

Christine was talking to two policemen—for Sparrow had just been having a talk at the cross-roads with the constable who usually met him on the Caistowe Road. The College House leader was looking pleased.

"That is great!" he said. "Two of 'em, Nipper! We ought to manage now, I should think!"

"Rather," I agreed. "But they'll have to put a hustle on, we're not going to wait until they lumber up. These blessed constables aren't particularly good cyclists, by all that I've seen."

Police-constable Sparrow was looking very important.

"Afternoon, Master Nipper," he said respectfully. "Now, what's all this 'ere? I ain't rightly sure as this 'ere story is straight——"



Nation suddenly dashed to the window and peered out through the dirty glass.

"There's somebody prowling round again!" he said excitedly.

"Not sure!" shouted Christine. "Do you think I've told you lies?"

"Now, now, young gent," said Sparrow. "It don't do no good to get excited. But this 'ere bein' the fust day of Hapril, so to speak——"

"Haven't I told you that we're not trying to fool you?" demanded Christine.

"Well, young gent, if there's anything like that about it, I'd advise you to think twice," said the constable warningly. "It don't do to play tricks with the lor. You'll get yourself into bad trouble."

"And you'll get yourself into worse!" snapped Christine angrily. "If you don't come at once, Sparrow, and without any more argument, I'll jolly well report you to the superintendent at Bannington!"

"My heye!" said Mr. Sparrow blankly.

"Refusing to do your duty is a serious offence."

"All right, Master Christine, all right!" growled Sparrow. "Don't need to get so huffy. I can see as you're in earnest all right. Look 'ere, Ned, you'd best come along with me. These gipsies seem to be desprit characters."

The other constable agreed.

By this time the main body of the rescuers had ridden off, taking the lane that Christine had told us about; but we had not gone far before Christine overtook us. He was looking hot and excited.

"Now we're on the go," he said, "this is where we bring off a big victory."

"And all the credit will be for the Ancient House," said Handforth.

"What!" snorted Bob. "Didn't I start it all—"

"That's nothing," interrupted Handy. "Where would you have been without us? You had to come to the Ancient House for help, because you jolly well knew it was no good going anywhere else! And all you Monks could do was to get yourselves kidnapped by a gang of blessed ruffians."

"How the dickens could we help it?" asked Christine gruffly. "It was all an accident. I think I was pretty 'cute in escaping out of that caravan as I did."

"Rather!" I agreed. "A smart piece of work, Christine."

We had only gone a little distance further when we came in sight of Archie Glenthorne. He and Phipps stood at the side of the road as we approached. Archie regarded us all approvingly through his monocle.

"The jolly old rescuing squadron, what?" he observed. "Dashed good, Phipps! The lads of the village are getting busy. A sort of flying column, and all that sort of thing. It seems to me that we've started something frightfully exciting."

"Indirectly, sir, yes," agreed Phipps. "I should stand a little further back if I were you sir."

"Absolutely," said Archie. "The dust, I suppose? My sainted aunt! The old cloud is rolling along like a bally gas attack! This, Phipps, is where we use some of the good old energy."

And Archie backed away through a big hole in the hedge, and waited from this point of vantage. The dust blew on the other side of the road as we all sped swiftly by. Archie waved amiably to us.

"That's the stuff, laddies!" he called. "I'd come along with you, but it simply can't be done. Prudence warns me that I must retire to my couch, and take some well-earned

(Continued on page 33)

BEST Football and Sports Story Books

**THE
BOYS'
FRIEND
LIBRARY.**
Fourpence
Per Volume.

**THE
SEXTON
BLAKE
LIBRARY.**

Fourpence
Per Volume.

**THE
NUGGET
LIBRARY.**
3d. Per Vol.

No. 605. A LAD OF THE LEAGUE.

A superb yarn of the footer field. By A. S. Hardy.

No. 606. SENT TO COVENTRY.

A fine story of school life, sport and adventure.

No. 607. THE SILENCE.

A grand adventure tale. By Edmund Burton.

No. 608. THE MASKED BOXER.

A Splendid yarn of the boxing ring. By Captain Malcolm Arnold.

No. 609. MIGHTY LONDON.

A powerful story of life in the Great City. By Geoffrey Murray.

No. 223. THE BABOON'S PAW.

A tale of thrilling adventure and clever deduction. By the author of "The Studio Mystery," etc., etc.

No. 224. IN THE SHADOW OF NIGHT.

A fascinating tale of clever detective work, introducing Sexton Blake and Tinker. By the author of "The Doctor's Double," etc.

No. 225. THE GREAT EXPLOSION;

OR, THE SCIENTIST'S SECRET.

A grand, complete story of detective work and adventure in England and Germany, featuring the Hon. John Lawless.

No. 226. THE MYSTERY OF THE SWAMP.

A magnificent romance of adventure and detective work in England and Africa, introducing Sexton Blake and Tinker.

No. 227. IN THE GRIP OF THE TONG.

A powerful, long story of Chinese mystery and detective adventure, introducing George Marsden Plummer.

No. 69. NIPPER'S CIRCUS CHUM.

A gripping story of school fun, and circus life, introducing Nipper and Co.

No. 70. THE TREASURY NOTES MYSTERY.

A powerful detective story, introducing Nelson Lee, the famous detective, and Nipper his assistant.

Out on Friday!

Order TO-DAY !

(Continued from page 32)

rest. The old tissues, in fact, are considerably used."

We only heard a few words of this, of course. Archie had certainly been fooled, but, by all that I could see, it was the japers themselves who had come off second best.

But it wouldn't be long before we arrived on the scene.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE END OF A PERFECT DAY.



"THANK goodness!" muttered Talmadge.

A few moments earlier the rumbling old caravan had come to a stop. And now the imprisoned juniors could hear

the rattling of the harness as the horse was being taken out of the shafts. The gipsies, evidently, had decided to camp for the night. And the prisoners were getting some rest.

They could see nothing, since the caravan was tightly closed. But there was a great deal of bustle and activity outside. Very soon the crackle of a fire made itself heard. But it was not until things were comparatively quiet that the rear of the caravan was flung open.

It was still light, although the sun had just sunk below the rim of the moor. The spot was a most deserted one, down in a depression, and some little distance from the road—indeed, hidden from the road by an intervening hillock. The gipsies considered themselves perfectly safe.

The camp-fire had been lit, and a couple of little tents pitched. The prisoners were hauled out one by one, and laid in a row near the fire. Their bonds were loosened a trifle, so that they could sit up with ease. In the dusk they could see their captors walking about, and now and again talking together. And they used a language which was quite unfamiliar to the boys.

"We don't know what they're jabbering about," muttered Yorke. "Getting out some plan to deal with us, I suppose."

"Looks like it," said Talmadge. "But it's rather queer, they don't seem to have noticed that Christine's missing."

"I wish the boulder would turn up with help," growled Yorke. "I expect these gipsies are talking about it now. I shouldn't be surprised if they question us before long. The best thing we can do is to keep mum."

"That's it," said Clapson. "We'll say nothing at all."

But the gipsies appeared to be quite at ease, and made no attempt to question the boys. And it was easy enough to understand how they had made the mistake. In the rush and excitement of the capture, they had bundled the prisoners into the caravan without taking any heed of their number, and they were so certain that escape was impossible, that they had no suspicion at all.

All the same, it was strange. For Bob Christine was the only junior in Etons. The

others were attired in rough clothes, and they still wore a few traces of their facial disguise.

Oldfield, of course, was in the costume of a young lady; but the effect was rather spoiled by the fact that he had lost his wig with its pretty curls, and he didn't care now. The gipsies had seen at once that he was a boy, and they probably knew that the juniors were engaged in some kind of a lark.

And then the unexpected happened.

There was an old hag of a woman pottering about the camp-fire. The little children were playing about near by, pausing now and again to look on at the scene with open-eyed wonder.

And suddenly the old gipsy woman came across to the boys and stared at them; she pointed at one after the other. Then, in a shrill, cracked voice, she commenced shouting at the men; but the juniors could not understand her words.

Several of the men came hurrying to her side, and they, too, stared at the prisoners.

"Where's the other kid?" demanded one of the men roughly, speaking in English after a long outburst of jabbering. "There were six of you."

The juniors made no reply.

"Oh, so you won't speak, eh?" shouted the man. "Where's that other boy?"

"Find out!" said Talmadge defiantly.

For a moment it seemed that the gipsies would get nasty; but they checked themselves, and withdrew for a consultation.

"There you are," said Yorke. "I knew they'd be bound to find it out sooner or later, but I can't understand it. Christy ought to have been back hours ago with help. Something must have happened to him."

"Either that, or they've missed us," exclaimed Clapson. "I'm pretty sure that Christy got a rescue-party together, but they must have taken the wrong direction. These beastly gipsies are cute. They came down in this hollow, and we're completely hidden from the road."

In the meantime, the rescue-party was very much nearer than the captive juniors imagined.

I was riding in advance with Bob Christine, and we were now fairly on the moor. It stretched away on all sides, bleak and bare looking in the evening light, and a chilly wind was blowing from the east.

Behind us on the road came a long string of cyclists, with the two constables in the rear. They were not such active cyclists as the boys, and, try as they would, they could not keep up the pace.

"This looks pretty rotten!" said Christine anxiously. "There's not a sign!"

"But they must have come this way," I said. "They couldn't have taken any side turning, and it stands to reason that the caravan must be in the distance."

"But we can see for miles, and we ought to have overtaken them by this time," said Bob. "I reckon we'd better go back and try that little farm track a mile down the road."

"Hallo! What's this?" I said suddenly, jumping off my machine and staring down the road. "A heavy cart, or something like

that, went off the road here, straight on to the moor. Can't you see the marks?"

"By jingo, yes!" said Christine excitedly.

It was impossible to miss seeing the marks, for the wheels of the vehicle had dug deeply into the soft little grass edge where the road met the moor, and, looking over the rough ground, we could easily follow the track.

"This is it, my son!" I said. "See that little hill? The rotters have got behind it, down in the hollow! This is where we get busy!"

"Rather!" said Handforth. "Come on!"

By this time the other members of the rescue party had come up and dismounted. It was impossible to ride our bicycles over the moor itself, so we left them at this spot and proceeded on foot.

P.-c. Sparrow puffed up on his bicycle just as we were about to make a start.

"Wot's the idea of this 'ere, Master Nipper?" he asked, breathing hard.

I pointed out the tracks.

"But that ain't nothin' to do with this!" said the constable. "Why, you can see with your own heye that there's no caravan out there!"

"Not in sight, but I'll guarantee it's behind that hill!" I put in. "It must be; there's no other explanation."

We started off without any further discussion, and soon arrived at the hill. It was really nothing more than a bump on the moor, and was only a short distance away from the road.

We made our way round it cautiously, and then, without warning, came into full view of the gipsy camp. There was the fire, smoking and blazing merrily, with the old caravan a short distance away, and with the horse grazing peacefully near-by. Several rough-looking characters were moving about.

"Come on!" roared Handforth. "No need to try any fancy business!"

He rushed down the slope towards the camp, and the other fellows, with one accord, pelted after him. I was well to the fore, and when we arrived in the camp, we swooped upon it in a body.

The gipsies had made no attempt to flee, but stood waiting. They seemed to be dazed by the large force which had suddenly sprung apparently from nowhere, and they hardly put up any fight.

Handforth was disgusted.

He wanted to do as much damage as possible, but, of course, it was quite impossible to hammer anybody who wouldn't hammer back. The leader of Study D couldn't very well punch the nose of a man who kept his fists down.

And the gipsies were forced to the ground, sat upon, and held tightly. Then, quickly, I produced a length of rope and bound them all together, fastening the rope to their ankles in turn.

They were fixed in a line and allowed to stand, but it was impossible for them to dash for freedom, even if they had thought of attempting anything so foolhardy.

The old gipsy woman was allowed to stand by, crouching over the fire and crooning to herself. The children had scuttled into the caravan.

"Hurrah!" roared Talmadge joyously. "Good old Christy!"

"Good man!"

"Rather!"

The five rescued Monks were soon set free, and they stamped about, none the worse and mightily excited. Bob Christine was looking flushed and pleased. Everything had come off all right.

"Of course, I couldn't have done much without these chaps!" he said. "At first the asses wouldn't believe me, but they were forced to in the end, and now everything is O.K. We'll give these gipsies in charge!"

"I should think we will!" said Talmadge wrathfully.

"They've got all my cash on 'em!" went on Christine. "I might as well have that back at once. The robbers! The thieving bounders! We'll jolly soon show them that they can't mess about with St. Frank's!"

"My hat!" said Yorke. "Here's old Sparrow!"

"Rather!" said Christine. "I told him to come along. There's another policeman with him."

"It was your idea, Christy!" I said pointedly.

"About the police?"

"Yes," I said. "I didn't tell you to bring 'em."

"I know you didn't, but what does that matter?" asked Christine. "It's all the better that they should be here, because they can arrest these gipsies at once. Here you are, Sparrow!" he added, as the constable came up. "These are the rotters! You'd better do your duty!"

P.-c. Sparrow looked at the gipsies grimly.

"A fine mess you've got yourselves into!" he said severely. "You've got to come along with me, and don't you try no games! These 'ere young gents are goin' to give me a hand to see you safe to the police-station!"

"Hold on!" I interrupted. "I think Christy has made a mistake!"

"A mistake?" said Christine quickly.

"About the gipsies," I went on. "There's really no need to arrest them. It was your idea to bring the police into it, old son; don't forget that! Observe! To-day, I may add, is the First of April!"

I hurried forward and took something from my pocket. It was a sponge, and with the other hand I emptied some spirit on to it. I gave the first gipsy a quick rub over his face and stepped back.

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

"Allow me!" I said blandly. "Presto! De Valerie!"

The gipsy grinned cheerfully.

"Hallo, Christy, old son!" he said. "Is this the way you like it?"

Bob Christine staggered back.

"What—what—" he gasped, in amazement. "I—I—my goodness!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dished, you fatheaded Monks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ancient House for ever!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"April fools!" roared Handforth. "How do you like the idea of this jape, Christine? A bit better than yours, isn't it?"

I gave another hopsy a rub.

"Church!" I announced, grinning.

And, before the dazed eyes of the College House fellows, I introduced McClure, Dick Goodwin, Tom Burton, and at last Reginald Pitt. He was the old hag who had pottered about the fire!

"I rather think you've been dished, eh?" I said cheerfully. "We worked hard over this jape, Christine, and we deserve success; and I think we fairly whacked you at your own game! St. Frank's will yell over this jape for the rest of the term!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Christine faintly.

"You tried to make Archie an April fool, but we've gone one better than that!" I explained. "You'll never hear the last of this, my sons!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Captured by gipsies!" yelled Handforth. "Collecting a rescue party! Oh, you fat-heads!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Christine looked at me blankly.

"But—but how did you wangle it?" he asked, in a feeble voice.

"My dear chap, it was easy!" I chuckled. "I happened to spot Oldfield when he came to St. Frank's this afternoon disguised as a girl. I knew at once, although the other chaps were spoofed. But I've had a bit of experience in disguise work, and I spotted the truth!"

"You—you bounder!" exclaimed Oldfield gruffly.

"Sorry, old man!" I grinned. "But it's all in the day's work! When I saw you

going off with Archie, I followed on my own bike."

"But I didn't see you!" said Oldfield.

"No; I've followed criminals before now, and they haven't seen me, either!" I said. "As soon as I saw you take Archie into that cottage, I bunked back and thought out this wheeze on the way. It was all arranged so that everything should happen exactly as it did happen!"

"But—but it's amazing!" said Clapson faintly.

"Not at all!" I continued. "We knew Christine would come out of that cottage to investigate, and we knew that he would budge if we demanded all his money. That led to a scrap. My trusty lieutenants collared you, and shoved you in that caravan!"

"Yes, what about that caravan?" asked Christine.

"It was that which first put the idea into my head," I said calmly. "I saw it nestling near a little wood, with real gipsies camping near, so we went along and hired the van for the afternoon. It was worth the money! The kiddies came with us, just for the sake of appearances. The gipsies are as harmless as mice, and they knew we shouldn't hurt the youngsters!"

"But—but—"

"The caravan door was opened on purpose," I went on, grinning, "and Christine was put near the door on purpose! And his ropes were left loose on purpose! Oh, it worked beautifully! You fell into every little trap that we set!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Christine dazedly.

The College House fellows were absolutely done. They had a little difficulty, too, in squaring the two constables, but this was managed by means of a little palm-oil—in other words, a decent tip. Of course, I had remained at St. Frank's with Handforth and some more juniors on purpose, so that we should be ready to dash off to the rescue when Christine arrived.

Everything had happened exactly as I had anticipated, and the Monks were compelled to grovel. They had been fooled as completely as anybody could be fooled, and St. Frank's howled over the joke for weeks!

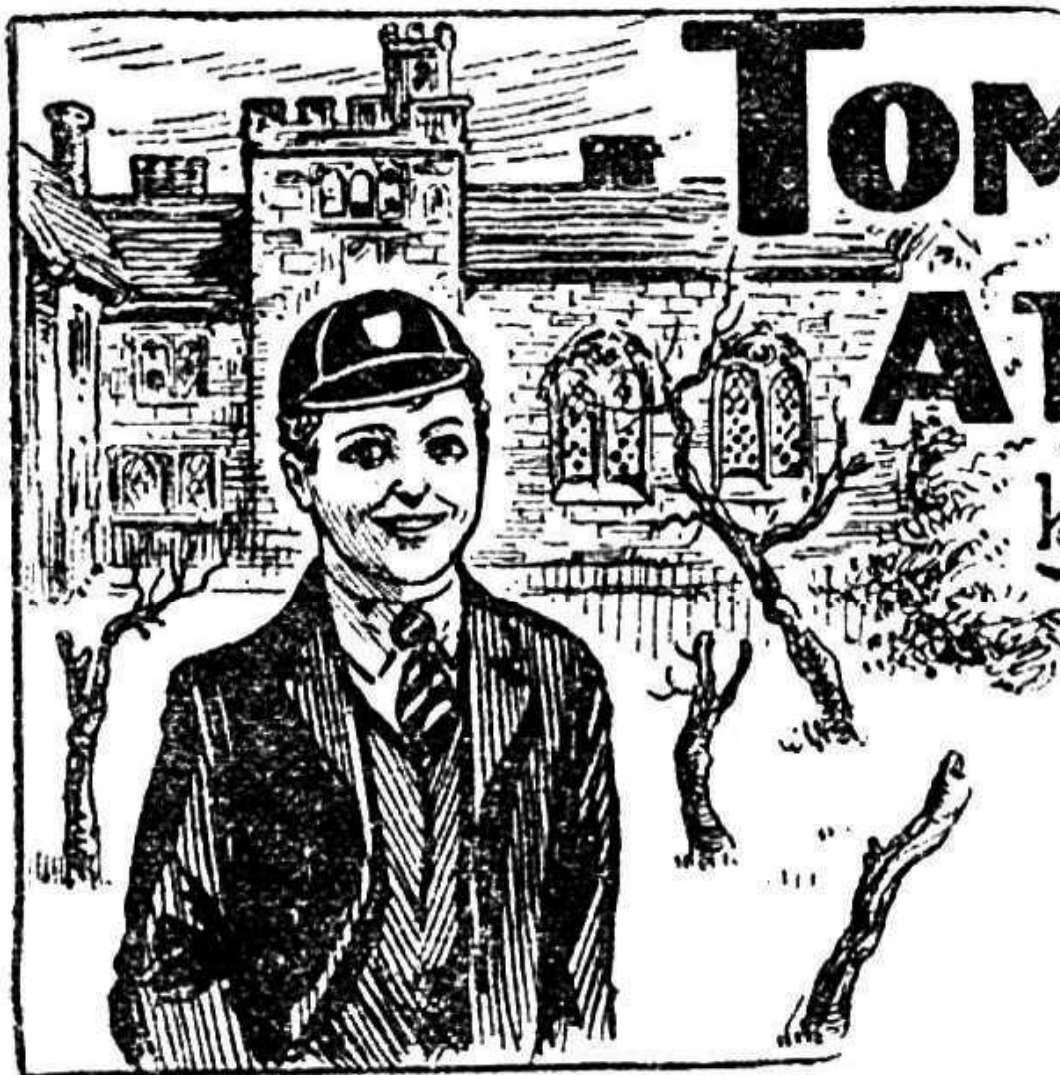
THE END.

The Mystery of Handforth's Pater!

is the Title of another Fine Story of

ST. FRANK'S, which will appear Next Week.

Look out also for No. 21, of NIPPER'S MAGAZINE.



TOM TARTAR AT SCHOOL

by HARCOURT BURRAGE

(The World's Most Famous
School Story).

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Since Tom came to Mr. Wrasper's school, both the principal and Foster Moore—the usher—have tried to get rid of the boy. Solitary confinement takes the place of corporal punishment. By scheming, Moore takes the place of the Head, who remains on at the school as the usher. Tom learns a few unsavoury facts about Moore, and the ex-usher tries every desperate means to get the boy out of the way.

(Now read on.)

CHAPTER XLV.

"When the Cat's Away——!"

MUCH to his relief, Tom found that Foster Moore had not carried out his threat of locking the door on Jonah Worrey. So he softly entered the dormitory, and got into bed.

But so excited was he by the night's discoveries, that he found it difficult to go to sleep, and several hours passed ere at last he dropped off into slumber.

He was awakened, not by the usual clanging bell, but by the noise of his dormitory-fellows, who, as they dressed, were exchanging somewhat excited remarks. From these remarks, Tom quickly gathered that the bell had not yet rung, although it was half an hour after the usual time for it to do so.

Tom jumped out of bed, washed and dressed himself, and went downstairs.

Not half the boys were down yet, and only a few of them were in the playground.

Among them was Sam Smith.

"What's the matter with everybody, Tom?" he asked. "No morning bell rung, and I was positively the first down—a thing that's never happened before. Hallo! you look as if you wanted to go to bed again."

"I haven't had much sleep, Sam," Tom replied. "Have you seen Moore this morning?"

"No—not yet. Why?"

But Tom made an evasive reply, and Sam restrained his natural curiosity, although he felt that something was in the air.

Breakfast was nearly an hour late, but Wooden Jerry made some amends for that by ringing the bell twice as loud and much longer than usual.

Mr. Wrasper was in his seat, and Tom noticed that he looked more cheerful than usual.

The deposed headmaster spoke of the beauty of the morning, and how well everything looked in the fields, and even cracked two or three small jokes.

Breakfast finished, Mr. Wrasper tapped on the table with his knife, and announced that he had some news for the boys.

It proved to be the most agreeable news they had heard for many days.

Foster Moore had gone away, having been unexpectedly called to a distance to see a sick relative. Pending his return the school duties would be relaxed.

"I have no instructions what to do," said Mr. Wrasper, "but I assume that Mr. Moore does not expect me to do double duty; and I shall, therefore, start to-day by giving you all a holiday. I trust you will bear in mind that, if you make undue use of your liberty, I shall be blamed by our friends and neighbours."

This was a gentle hint not to go rioting all over the place, and, naturally, it was met with murmured assurances from the boys, that they would behave themselves.

"Very well, then, you may go," said Mr. Wrasper. "Be back to dinner at the usual hour."

So far the lateness of everything that morning had been accounted for. The cat was away, and the mice had been playing.

"Now what can it all mean?" said Sam Smith, as he and Tom strolled out arm in arm.

"I'm trying to think it out," replied Tom.

"Foster Moore must have gone away last night."

"He must have started very late then."

"How do you know?"

"I'll tell you in a minute," said Tom. "Just give me a little time to think."

"Here's Jane," said Sam. "Shall I ask her?"
 "If you like."
 "Jane!" called out Sam.
 Jane, who was crossing the hall, stopped, and said rather testily:
 "What do you want?"
 "You've got out of bed the wrong way this morning," smiled Sam.
 "That's no business of yours, Master Smith," replied Jane, "and if that is all you have to say to me—"
 "But it isn't."
 "Well, go on."
 "What time did Mr. Moore leave this morning?"
 "He went away in the night."
 "What time?"
 "I don't know. All he did was to leave a note, saying he was gone. Anything more you want to find out?"
 "No," said Sam, "unless it is to know what is the matter with you."
 "Nothing much," replied Jane, "except that I think of going away."
 "Here, I say!" exclaimed Tom. "You mustn't talk like that, Jane! We can't do without you."
 "I am afraid you will have to try."
 "But why should you go?"
 "That's telling" said Jane, as she glided away.
 "Hanged if I can understand it all!" remarked Sam.
 "I don't like Moore's going," said Tom.
 "What!" exclaimed Sam. "Are you so fond of him as all that?"
 "No, I don't want to see him again," said Tom. "All the same, I don't like his clearing off like this. Come on, Sam! I want to have a peep at solitary."
 "Perhaps you would like to be shut up for the day," grinned Sam.
 Tom shook his head.
 "I am only going to look at the outside of it," he said.
 But even that was denied him; for the door of the lumber-room was locked, and the key gone.
 "Moore's taken it away with him," said Tom.
 "Is he afraid Wrasper would shut any of us up?" asked Sam.
 "Don't be an ass, Sam," said Tom, "you don't understand."
 "Then why don't you make me understand?"
 "You won't say anything to anybody if I do?"
 "Not me. On the word of an eagle."
 "That's enough," said Tom, smiling. "I found out last night that Posh Powner and Diggles are both hiding in the house."
 "You told me you suspected as much," said Sam.
 "But I was not sure of their hiding-place. I found where it is last night. They are hiding in solitary!"
 "Never!" exclaimed Sam in amazement.
 "It's a fact," said Tom, "one in each of the dingy little cells so many of us know. That's where they are, and I mean to have them out to-day. Moore's going off will give me a chance of doing it quietly. But I should like to

have a talk with Sir Claude Freshley first. We will walk over to the Hall together, and see him. Come on! We must get away quietly, or the other fellows will want to know where we are going."

They left the house by a back door intended for the use of servants only, and departed by the kitchen-garden across the fields, making a circuit so as to bring them on the road that led to Sir Claude Freshley's mansion.

This brought them to the outskirts of the village, and there they encountered Miss Hatty Smatterly.

It was the first time Tom had met her since he had done her the good office of preventing her marriage with Foster Moore, and he was quite surprised to see the change in her.

She looked brighter, happier, and younger than he had ever seen her look before.

Tom raised his cap, and was passing on, but she stopped and held out her hand.

"I have never thanked you," she said "although I have felt that I ought to do so a hundred times. I can never repay you for what you did, but I hope to be always reckoned among your warmest friends."

"It was nothing, Miss Hatty," said Tom, "and I hope you won't trouble to speak of it again."

"Nothing," she said, with a bright smile. "Is it nothing to save somebody from a life of misery?"

With a look of gratitude she passed on, and Tom and Sam resumed their way.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Wooden Jerry on Show.

ON reaching the Hall Tom was greatly disappointed to learn that Sir Claude, Lady Freshley, and Cecil had gone to London. They would be absent some days, the butler said.

"I don't know what to do now," said Tom, as he and his chum turned away.

"Suppose we pay Ralph a visit," suggested Sam.

"I don't mind," said Tom, with a sigh, "but I do wish Sir Claude had been at home!"

"Why not go to the police?" suggested Sam.

"Perhaps I will," Tom replied. "I'll think things over. But we'll see Rosy Ralph first."

They called at the poacher's cottage, only to be informed by the old nurse that Ralph was asleep, and must on no account be disturbed.

Strolling leisurely into the village, they came upon Wooden Jerry in the act of making a speech to a small crowd surrounding him.

That he had been indulging in too much liquor at the village inn was only too apparent; for, standing on a flat-topped stone that had been used as a mounting-block in days when ladies rode behind their lords pillion fashion, he was swaying dangerously to and fro, as he held forth to his audience of astonished villagers.

"There's been changes," he was saying,

"in that place yonder which used to be called 'Wrasper's School for Young Gents.' It ain't Wrasper's no more—'cos why? 'Cos Wrasper have been downed by Mister Foster Moore, hesquire! But Mister Foster Moore Hesquire ain't agoin' to have things all his own way—'cos why, agen? 'Cos if Mister Foster Moore ain't mighty careful, he'll find himself downed by somebody else! And who's that somebody else?"

Wooden Jerry paused and looked round him with a bleared eye, as if waiting for a reply.

For a time no reply was vouchsafed, but at last an old man ventured on a suggestion.

"Mebbe the perlice 'ull down him," he said.

Wooden Jerry smiled contemptuously.

"The perlice!" he snorted. "Wot can the perlice do? Mister Foster Moore Hesquire won't be downed by no perlice! He snaps his fingers at the perlice. It 'ull want a *man* to down Foster Moore, Hesquire—and I knows the man for the job!"

He paused again, and nearly fell off his perch. Recovering his balance, he went on:

"Here's the man to down him!" He smote himself proudly on the breast. "Here's the man as will show Mister Foster Moore, Hesquire that he——"

But the violent gestures with which Jerry was emphasizing his threat proved too much for his equilibrium. He lost his balance, and toppling off the pillion-block, went to the ground on all fours.

"Who—who shoved me?" he demanded fiercely, as he struggled to his feet.

"Nobody shoved ye," answered a grinning yokel. "Ye've 'ad a pint o' ale too much to-day, I reckon!"

Jerry scowled at the man, and was about to ascend the pillion-stone again when a vigorous, open-handed smack caught him between the shoulders, accompanied by a:

"Cheero, Jerry!"

He faced about, and confronted Tom Tartar.

"Was that you smacked my back?" he growled.

"Of course it was!" laughed Tom.

"What for did ye take the liberty?"

"Oh, just to buck you up, Jerry!"

"Look here!" snorted Jerry. "I've stood a lot from you lately. Your name's Tartar, and a Tartar you are! Afore you come to the school all was 'appiness, rest, and peace. Since you come everythink's changed. It's—it's heart-breakin', that's wot it is—heart-breakin'."

With astonishing suddenness his ferocity departed, and he commenced to weep. Evidently the drivelling, maudlin stage of intoxication was coming on.

"'Twas a bitter day when you come, Tartar," he presently resumed. "It's you as have—as have—where was I? Ah, yes, I remember! 'Twas a bitter day—but ne' mind, *my* day's a-comin', and when it *do* come let Mister Foster Moore and everybody else look out for themselves! I'll down 'em all! I'll show 'em that they can't trample on Jerry Wood!"

"Why don't you go home?" called out a middle-aged woman, who had been regarding

the maudlin orator with alternate pity and disdain.

"I'll go home when I like," returned Jerry.

"You ought to go now," the woman said, "and put yourself to bed."

"I'm agoin' to bed here," he said, and staggering across the road he threw himself down against a wall. Folding his arms, he began to snore right away.

Whether he meant to feign sleep or not is uncertain, but anyway Nature succumbed to strong liquor, and he slept.

"Let him be," said Tom Tartar: "he'll be just as well off there as anywhere. Stop a moment, though."

He held a rapid consultation with Sam, and together they hurried into the shop of Widow Blake.

"Have you a bottle of gum?" he asked.

"Lor, bless 'ee, a dozen!" replied the widow.

"And have you got such a thing as a square piece of board?"

The widow rummaged out a soap-box lid, smooth and white, and handed it to Tom.

"Now a bottle of ink and a brush," he said.

"Bless the boy, if he isn't going to clear out the shop!" said the widow, pleased, however, to do business.

"I have a little job," said Tom, "and if you don't mind, I'll do it here. Sam, look around and buy a few bobs'worth of biscuits, choes, and things. We're out of everything, you know."

While Sam was looking round and making his purchases, Tom went to work upon the board, on which he rapidly sketched the following inscription:

"I'M A SILLY FOOL! I OUGHT NOT TO DRINK SO MUCH ON MY WAGES."

"There, Sam!" he said. "I think that will do."

Sam agreed, and they left the shop.

Wooden Jerry was still sleeping and snoring, but a new feature to the entertainment was to be found in the Inn dog, who had taken a violent dislike to the nasal sounds he sent forth, and was barking angrily at him.

Lawrence Turrell and Jonah Worrey were now both on the spot, and the latter seeing what Tom had in his hand, asked Tom why he didn't leave the "poor man alone."

"I am going to shame him, if I can," was Tom's answer.

"Mr. Moore won't like it," said Jonah.

"Who's to tell him?"

"I will."

"Tell away!" said Tom, as he placed the board with the inscription on Jerry's breast; "or, if you don't like it, take it away."

"I've a good mind to," returned Jonah.

"And a better mind not to," replied Tom; "for if you take that board away I'll pull your nose."

Jonah Worrey muttered something not audible to those around him, and slunk away.

Wooden Jerry was still snoring, and the inn dog was still barking in resentment.

(Continued on next page.)

SEXTON BLAKE.

Every week the exploits of the most famous of modern detectives are recorded in the "Union Jack" Library. If you are one of the few who don't yet know him, now's the time to make his acquaintance. Each issue of the "U.J." contains a new long complete story. Ask your newsagent for this week's. It's out on Thursday, price 2d. Don't forget — get the

**'UNION JACK'
LIBRARY.**

(Continued from page 38.)

"Now let us decorate him," said Tom Turrell, "get me a couple of sheets of stiff paper from the shop, and a few yards of ribbon."

In a quarter of an hour they had made Jerry as hideous a figure as ever sat snoring in the sunlight, with a huge frill round his neck, his feet tied up in an old bit of sacking, and a dunce's cap on his head.

During the operation Wooden Jerry never as much as stirred. He simply snored on.

"I think that'll do for to-day," said Tom; "and now we can leave him on show."

The village policeman now appeared, and all but Tom decamped. He waited to hear what the officer would say to it.

All the policeman said was:

"I'm blessed! Very pretty indeed!"

"Won't you lock him up?" asked somebody near.

"No," replied the officer, "not till he's disorderly. Now he's only drunk."

Tom walked after his chums and returned to the school, where they spread the tidings of having once more taught Wooden Jerry a lesson.

Some of the younger boys went off to see him, but speedily returned with the tidings that he was gone.

At dinner, Mr. Wrasper presided, and Jane waited at table.

"I am sorry to tell you, boys," said Mr. Wrasper, "that Jerry has been misbehaving himself, and has been locked up."

There was a twinkle in his eyes that rather belied his expression of sorrow, and those boys who knew what had taken place expressed their grief by laughing aloud.

Jonah Worrey alone looked glum.

"Mr. Moore won't like it when he hears it," he said.

"Then Mr. Moore must discharge him," returned Mr. Wrasper.

"He can't do it," Jonah said.

"What can you possibly know about it?" demanded Mr. Wrasper.

"I know a lot of things," sullenly muttered Jonah.

"Whatever you may know," said Mr. Wrasper, "you will please behave yourself, or you will be punished."

"Who will punish me?" sneered Jonah.

"I will!" Mr. Wrasper said. "Be silent!"

"I'll speak if I like," said Jonah defiantly.

"Leave the room!" said Mr. Wrasper, rising. "You will go into solitary for this."

"I won't!" cried Jonah.

"We will see about that," said Mr. Wrasper. "Tartar, unlock the lumber-room door. Now, Worrey, will you come quietly or not?"

Tom saw that a premature explosion was impending. If Mr. Wrasper carried out his threat, what about Posh Powner?

There was nobody there who could hope to make him a prisoner.

"I don't know where the key is, sir," he said.

"It is in the study," replied Mr. Wrasper.

"I saw it hanging on a nail over the mantel-piece. Please fetch it."

There was nothing for it but to obey, and Tom hurried from the room.

"Now, Worrey," said Mr. Wrasper.

Jonah stood up sullenly, half-cowed, half-defiant still.

"Follow me," went on Mr. Wrasper. "Boys, keep orderly until I return."

Sam Smith was getting nervous.

He knew Tom would not shirk opening solitary, but what would Posh Powner do when he was discovered?

The man, in his desperation and fury, might kill somebody.

Sam fairly lost his head, and rising from his seat, said hastily:

"Before you lock up Worrey, sir, may I speak a word to you?"

"I am surprised that you should plead for him," Mr. Wrasper replied.

"I am not pleading for him," Sam said. "But you can't put him into solitary."

"Why not?"

"Because both places are full!"

Mr. Wrasper stared at him.

"Smith," he said, "what's the matter with you? Have you been standing in the hot sun to-day?"

"There's nothing the matter with me," Sam said desperately. "I am quite well, and I am only speaking the truth. It's a serious matter—Tartar knows—I—I—"

"Come outside with me," said Mr. Wrasper. "Worrey, stand where you are until I come back. Now, Smith, I am ready."

As they went outside Tom returned with the key in his hand.

"Tartar," said Mr. Wrasper, "Smith has told me an extraordinary story about solitary being occupied, and—"

"I couldn't help it, Tom!" interrupted Sam. "If that brute got loose, he would kill you—I am sure he would!"

"What brute?" asked Mr. Wrasper.

Sam hung his head, but Tom, seeing that concealment would be of no further avail, resolved to tell all.

"Posh Powner and Diggles are hiding there," he said. "Sam, don't hang your head. It had to come out."

"You don't blame me, then?" said Sam, looking up.

"Of course not!" returned Tom.

"Please to explain," said Mr. Wrasper, staring from one to the other in bewilderment. "What have you to do with that poaching ruffian and Diggles? What has induced you to hide them here? It is a very serious offence in the eye of the law."

"I did not hide them," returned Tom, "and I did not discover they were here until last night."

"Who is their friend then?" asked Mr. Wrasper.

"They have two," replied Tom, "Jerry and Mr. Moore."

"Tartar, mind what you are saying! I know Moore to be a villain—but that," added Mr. Wrasper, hastily, "I cannot discuss with you. Tell me your story."

Tom in a few words related how he had dis-

covered the two men in hiding, and avoided touching on other matters.

Mr. Wrasper listened with amazed interest.

"It is impossible that we can act by ourselves," he said, "or do anything until we have had our dinner. Then you had better go to the inspector and bring him here with sufficient help to secure this dangerous man. I will devise another punishment for Worrey."

They went back to the dining-room, where every eye was fixed upon them.

"Resume your seat," said Mr. Wrasper to Jonah Worrey.

Jonah stared at him, and then at Tom and Sam, as if he did not quite understand.

"Sit down!" said Mr. Wrasper angrily. "I have only postponed your punishment."

To all but the three in the secret the whole thing was amazing.

The other boys looked at Tom and Sam with enquiring eyes, but they vouchsafed no explanation. Both went on with their dinners, and said not a word.

The meal finished, Tom, in obedience to a nod from Mr. Wrasper, left the dining-hall. A few moments later he was on his way to the police-station.

CHAPTER XLVII.

The Birds Flown!

THE police-station was about a mile on the other side of the village, in the direction of the quarry. It stood by the roadside, a compact little structure of stone with a couple of cells, which were but rarely occupied.

But to-day one of the cells was occupied by Wooden Jerry, and Tom, as he tapped at the station door, could hear him bawling out threats of what he would do to those who had laid him by the heels.

The inspector himself opened the door to Tom, and bade him enter.

"No further trouble with our young friend Ralph, I hope?" he asked.

"No," answered Tom. "It's about Ralph's father I've come."

They went into the little office, and the inspector pointed to a chair.

"Sit down, young gentleman," he said, "and tell me the news. You say you've come about Posh Powner. Have you seen or heard anything of him?"

"I know where he's hiding," said Tom quietly.

"You do!" exclaimed the inspector. "Where is he? Anywhere handy?"

"Yes—he's at the school!"

And Tom quickly told how, on the previous night, he had found out that Powner and Diggles were in the "solitaries."

The astonished inspector asked a number of questions, and finally arranged to bring three or four constables to the school that evening, and effect the arrest of the two "wanted" men.

"I shall have to send over to Delchester for assistance," said the inspector; "so I expect

(Continued on page iii of Cover.)

(Continued from page 40.)

it'll be getting dark when we arrive. Tell Mr. Wrasper he can expect us at about nine o'clock."

Tom returned to the school, saw Mr. Wrasper, and then confided what was going to take place to Sam Smith.

After that there was nothing else to do but wait patiently for evening to arrive.

Slowly the hours went by. Supper was served earlier than usual, and shortly before nine o'clock the boys were told that they might either go to bed or to the schoolroom.

Among those who went to the schoolroom was Sam Smith; but he set apart from the others, and waited with ears astrain.

Presently he heard the bell ring, and Mr. Wrasper go quietly to the door.

The click of the latch was followed by the sound of several muffled footsteps.

Sam was now in a state which might be called agitated. All his usual coolness had deserted him.

He could no longer sit still, but rising, began to pace up and down.

Jonah Worrey, who was sitting by one of the windows, with his head resting on his hand, said:

"Why don't you keep still, Smith? I want to listen. I fancy I heard the sound of people outside."

"Well, suppose you did?"

"It's just this," said Jonah, "I want to know what is going on when Mr. Moore is away. There's a lot of secret business going on."

"There is," replied Sam, "but it won't be secret long."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Jonah.

"Just what I say," returned Sam.

Pubsey Wrasper, who was in the middle of the room, seated at one of the desks, here struck in:

"Don't talk to him, Sam," he said, "Jonah is Moore's spy."

"It's a lie," cried Jonah fiercely.

"It's true," insisted Pubsey. "You always were a sneak. When I was your friend, and used to confide things about my father to you, you took them to that villain Foster Moore. I've an idea, Jonah, that you knew Moore before he came here."

"Knew him before?" spluttered Jonah Worrey.

All the other boys—there were about half a score in all, with Lawrence Turrell, Cautious Johnny, Necker, and Chucks among them—sat still, listening closely to what was going on.

"Yes," said Pubsey, "there is a mystery about Moore which we never could make out. He came here a beggar, and a little time after you joined the school. From the first he never had anything to say against you. Who is Moore? What is Moore?"

"And who, for the matter of that, Jonah, are you?" added Sam.

"Yes," said Pubsey; "who are you, if it comes to that?"

Jonah moved his head from one to the other, and it may be assumed that he was looking at them, but it was now too dark to see his face.

"Moore came here without a character," continued Pubsey.

"More fool your father to take him then," said Jonah.

"That's true enough," retorted Pubsey, quickly; "he *was* a fool, and it has been his ruin."

"He's got to pull himself up again," said Jonah, "and if he can do it he is a cleverer man than I take him for."

Pubsey was about to say something more, when the door of the schoolroom opened, and everybody looked in that direction.

The figure of Tom Tartar was dimly seen in the doorway.

"Sam," he said, "Mr. Wrasper wants you."

Sam and Tom went out and the latter closed the door.

"Have you got him?" asked Sam eagerly.

"Oh, don't put that question to me!" said Tom, with a moan.

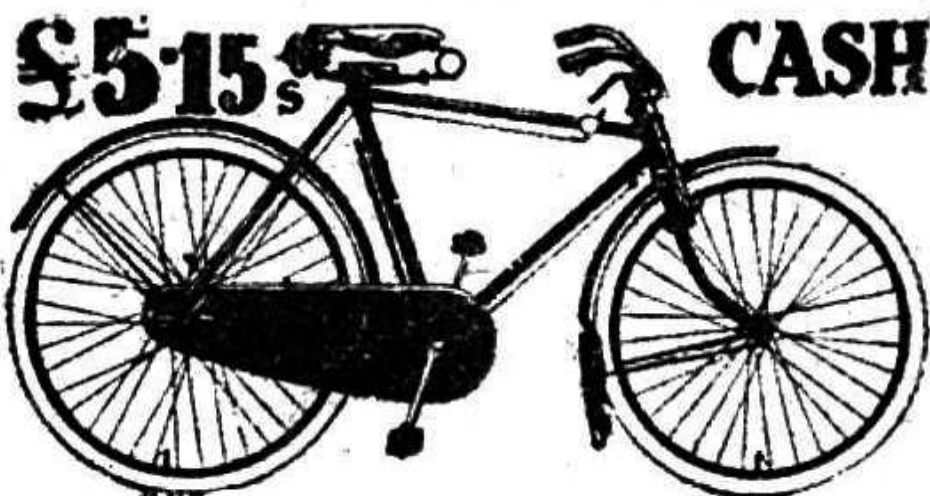
"What d'you mean, old chap?"

"Why, both the cells in solitary were empty!"

"What!" gasped Sam. "Mean to say Powner and Diggles have got away?"

"Foster Moore smuggled 'em away!" replied Tom bitterly. "That's the only explanation. His 'sick relative' yarn was just an artful excuse. And now he's got nearly twenty-four hour's start—time enough to get those two fellows out of the country."

(To be continued.)



12'6
Monthly

is all you pay for our **No 400A Mead "Marvel"**—the finest cycle ever offered on such exceptionally easy terms. Brilliantly plated; richly enamelled; lined in colours. Sent packed free carriage paid on **15 DAYS' FREE TRIAL**. Fully warranted. Money refunded if dissatisfied. Old machines exchanged. Big bargains in factory soiled mounts. Tyres and accessories 33 1-3% below shop prices. Write **TO-DAY** for testimonials and illustrated art catalogue.

Mead

Cycle Company (Inc.),
(Dept. B 607) Birmingham

Monthly Payments Buy

Masters' Double Life Boots, Gent's Dripped Waterproof Soles, also Ladies' Boots, Shoes, 5/- monthly. Also Suits, Overcoats, Costumes, Winter Coats, Blouses, Bedding, Blankets, Rings, Bracelets, Jewellery, Gold and Silver Pocket and Wrist Watches, Clocks, Cutlery, Plate, Accordions, Gramophones, etc. Everything in our Price List on Easy Terms. Write for a FREE Copy. (Estab. 1869.)
—MASTERS, Ltd., 52, Hope Stores, RYE.

NERVOUSNESS

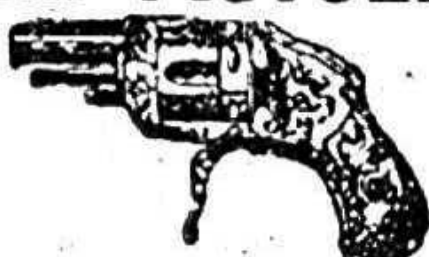
is the greatest drawback in life to any man or woman. If you are nervous, timid, low-spirited, lack self-confidence, will-power, mind concentration, blush, or feel awkward in the presence of others, send 3 penny stamps for particulars of the **Mento-Nerve Strengthening Treatment**. Used in the Navy from Vice-Admiral to Seaman, and in the Army from Colonel to Private, D.S.O.'s, M.O.'s, M.M.'s and D.O.M.'s—**Godfrey Elliott-Smith, Ltd., 527, Imperial Buildings, Ludgate Circus, London, E.C.4.**

REPEATER WATER PISTOL.

1/9, Postage 3d. All metal, ejects 6 powerful sprays with one loading.

POCKET CINEMA.

Complete with 250 films. 1/9, postage 3d.



"THE PLURASCOPE."



2/3, postage 3d. Contains 8 instruments in one: Combined Opera and

Field Glasses, Telescope, Stereoscope, Microscope, Eye-Mirror, Compass. Invaluable for examining flowers, coral, microbes, etc.

FREE. To all purchasers of our goods we will give one of the following gifts absolutely Free. 2-blade steel pocket-knife (bone handle); Vulcanite Fountain Pen. Powerful Microscope. Petrol Lighter. When ordering, select gift required. 1922 Catalogue of Electrical, Mechanical Models, Novelties, etc. Now ready, 3d. post free. Our Guarantee: Satisfaction or Cash refunded. **BENNETT BROS., 5, Theobalds Road, Holborn, London, W.C.1.**

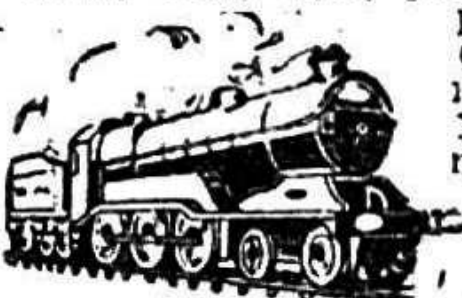
Wonderful way to grow tall. (2 to 5 inches guaranteed.) Thousands of testimonials—from Royalty downwards. Send stamp for particulars. Write—Perceval Carne, Caerphilly, Cardiff, 2.

CUT THIS OUT.

The Nelson Lee Library. Pen Coupon. Value 2d. Send 7 of these Coupons with only 2/9 direct to the **Fleet Pen Co., 119, Fleet Street, E.C.4.** You will receive by return a splendid British-Made 14-ct. Gold Nibbed Fleet Fountain Pen, value 10/6 (Fine, Medium or Broad nib). If only 1 coupon is sent the price is 3/9, 2d. being allowed for each extra coupon up to 6 (Pocket Clip 4d. extra). This great offer is made to introduce the famous Fleet Pen to NELSON LEE readers. Satisfaction guaranteed or cash returned. Foreign post extra.
Lever Self-filling Safety Model, 2/- extra.

A Model STEAM ENGINE.

Complete, ready for work, 15/-. 21/-. & 32/-. Rails, 6d. per length. Post extra, 1/-. Battery, Switch, Wire, Lamp, Holder, Reflector, Instructions, etc., 4/9; postage 6d. Larger size, 8/6; post 9d.



SHOCKING COIL! Set of parts for making, 1/9. Battery Parts, 1/6; post 3d. Electro Magnet, 10d.; post 2d. Box

Electrical Experiments, 2/9; post 4d. Vertical Steam Engine, 7/6; post, etc. 9d. 4-Volt Dynamo.

12/6; Electric Motor 3/9. (Catalogue 4d.) **The HARBORNE SMALL POWER Co., Queen's Rd., Aston, Birmingham. SEND NOW!**

WHY BE SHORT?

If a few extra inches are what you need, commence the Girvan Scientific Treatment at once. Students report from 2 to 5 inches increase. You will work, eat, and sleep better. Send p.c. for particulars, and £100 guarantee, to Enquiry Dept., A.M.P., 17, Stroud Green Road, London, N.4.



THE NEW '10 IN 1'

Saw, Screwdrivers, Chisels, Gimlet, Bradawl, Gouge, Nail and Tack Lifter, Etc. The Screw Up Case (7 ins long), encloses all Ten Tools when not in use and also forms Handle for each when in use. Quite as Strong and much handier than Single Tools 6d. to 1/- each. Only 1/11 or with Hammer Head extra, to fit on top, 2/2. Part Postage and packing on either 3d. extra. Delight or Money Back Free. Illustrated Catalogue post free. Big Bargains 7/6d. to £6. Watches, Clocks, Jewellery, Accordions, Useful Goods, Novelties, Toys, Etc.

PAIN'S PRESENTS HOUSE, DEPT. 9A, HASTINGS. Established 33 Years.

DON'T BE BULLIED.

Learn the Wonderful Japanese art of Self-Defence without weapons. Send NOW Four Penny Stamps for Splendid Illustrated Sample Lessons or 3s. 6d. for Large Portion of Course. (Dept. N.L.), School of Jujitsu, 31, Golden Square, Regent St. London, W.1. Personal Tuition also Given.

MAGIC TRICKS, etc. —Parcels 2/6, 5/6. Ventriloquist's Instrument, Invisible, Imitate Birds. Price 6d. each, 4 for 1/-.—**T. W. HARRISON, 239, Pentonville Road, London, N.1**

ARE YOU NERVOUS? Get my simple home cure for **Timidity, Nervousness, Blushing.** Send 2d. Stamp. U. J. D., 12, All Saints Road, St. Annes-on-Sea.

When communicating with Advertisers please mention the **NELSON LEE LIBRARY.**