

TWO FINE STORIES OF NELSON LEE AND NIPPER!

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FULLWOOD'S FORTUNE, *Or, THE EMERALD PENDANT.*

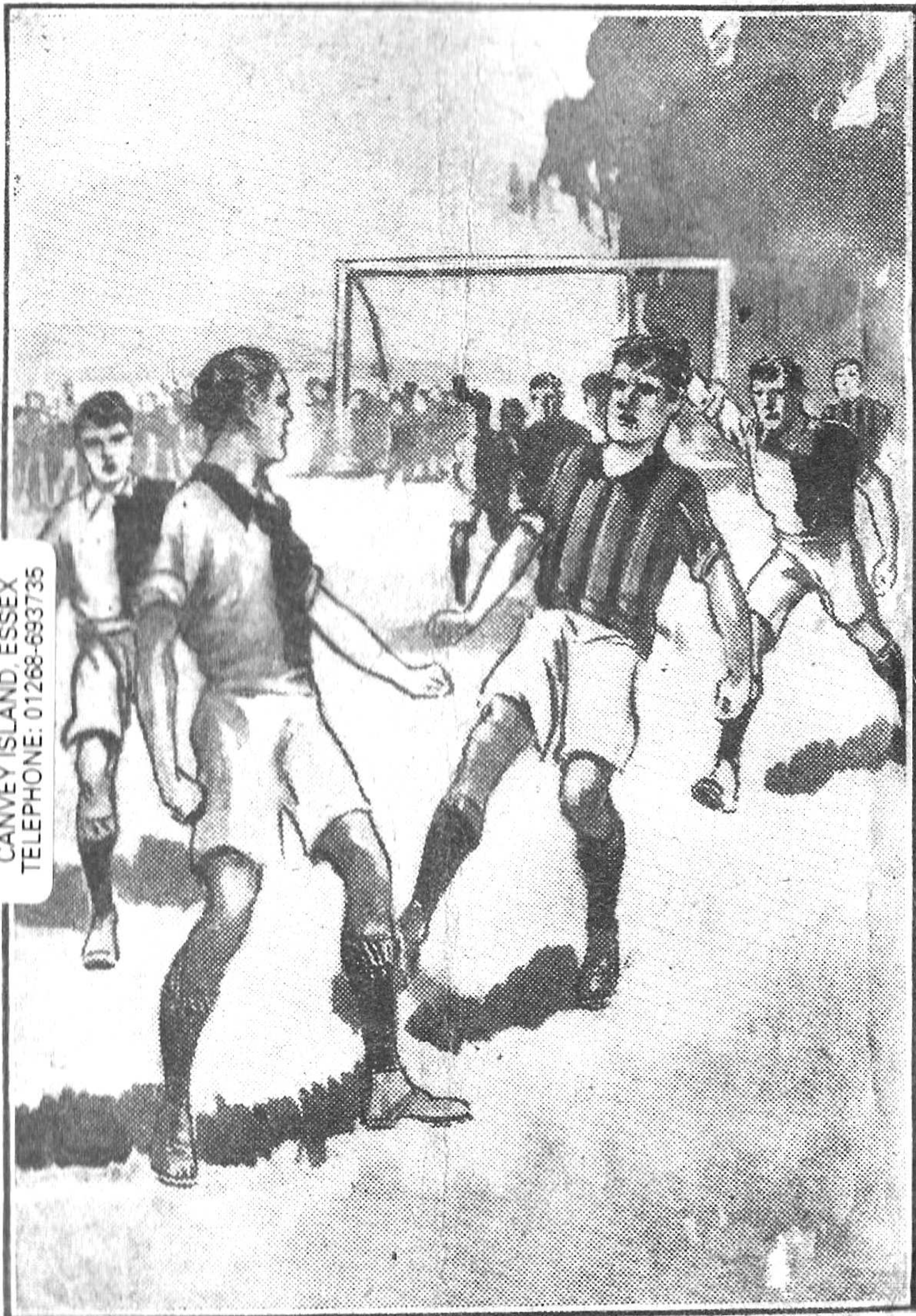
This Week's Grand Long Complete Story of St. Frank's College.

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Fullwood snapped out a growl and kicked. The point of his boot caught the half-back on the shin, and he gave a gasp of pain.

FULLWOOD'S FORTUNE !

An absorbing story of St. Frank's, in which Fullwood, the cad of Study A, taking advantage of Nipper's absence, contrives to get himself elected captain of the Remove. The Holiday Party, including Nipper and his supporters, have not yet returned, and the Remove, under Fullwood's doubtful leadership, is rapidly getting itself a very bad name, both inside and outside the school. It is a story which cannot fail to grip the reader from the first to the last page.—
THE EDITOR.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER I.

THE EMERALD PENDANT!

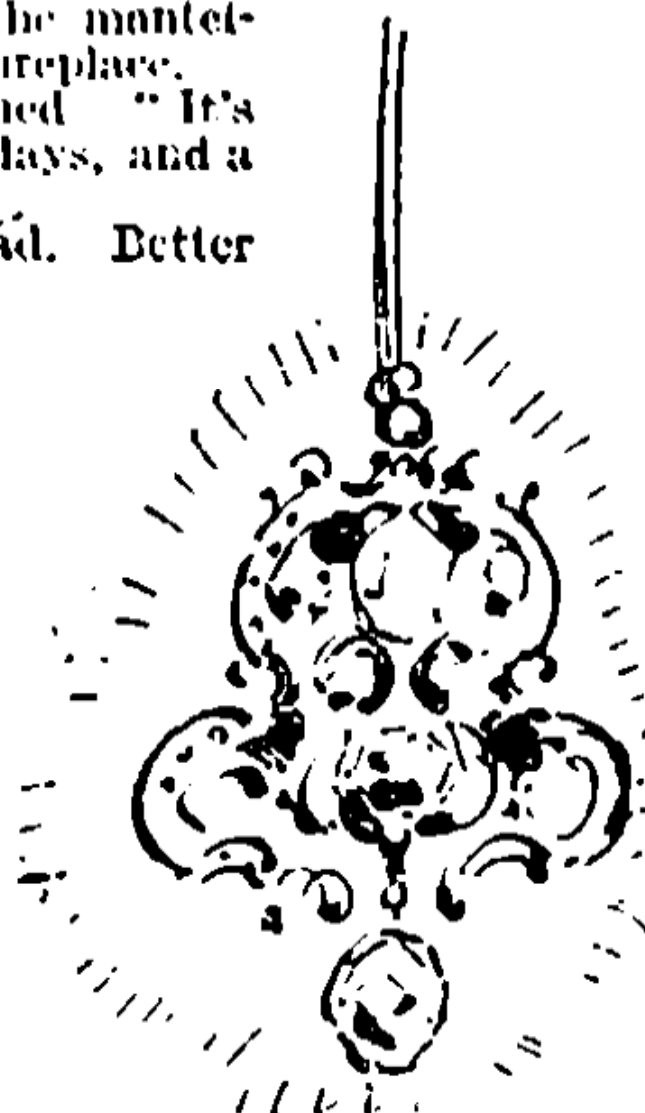
RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD rested his feet upon the mantelpiece, and lazily tossed a cigarette end into the fireplace. "I'm gettin' a bit fed up with things," he yawned. "It's as slow as a rotten funeral at St. Frank's nowadays, and a chap doesn't know what to do with himself."

"Oh, I don't know," said Gulliver. "It ain't so bad. Better than it was when Nipper was skipper of the Remove, anyhow. We can do pretty well as we like, without any blessed interference."

"Rather!" agreed Bell.

The Nuts of the Ancient House at St. Frank's were in Study A, and Gulliver had been over for about twenty minutes. It was a half-holiday, and the three juniors hardly knew what to do for the afternoon.

It was quite a sunny day—one of those September days which are exactly like real summer. The heat outside was considerable, and the triangle was lazily basking in sunshine and shade with a monotonous drone of insects sounding from the flowers in the Head's garden.



St. Frank's was just exactly the same as ever. Certainly, it was not quite so animated as of yore—but this was mainly owing to the fact that twenty of the principal lights of the Remove were absent.

For, of course, all the fellows who had gone abroad on the big holiday adventure had not yet turned up. I was one of those fortunate twenty, and the others included Tommy Watson and Tregollis-West—Reginald Pitt and De Valerie—to say nothing of Fatty Little, Handforth and Co., and Archie Glenthorpe.

And during the absence of so many juniors, St. Frank's was going on in very much the same old way, but in a greater degree of quietness. This was only natural—for Handforth alone caused a good deal of noise.

The Ancient House was being looked after by Mr. Crowell—who was nominally the Master of the Remove. In the College House things were practically the same as usual, for only a few Monks had gone on the trip.

The school had been going now for several weeks. By all rights, the Wanderers should have returned in time for the beginning of the new term. But they had not turned up. Not a word had been heard about them, in fact.

And all the other fellows, coming back to the school, had found things pretty slack.

For Fullwood and Co., the general conditions were better. For now there was no recognised captain of the Remove, and the football had been allowed to tail off badly. This was just the beginning of the season, and football ought to be in full swing. But with nearly all the members of the Remove eleven absent, football was rather difficult.

The majority of the decent chaps—such as Burton and Jerry Dodd and Farman and Somerton—were in favour of waiting until some definite news was heard of the holiday party.

And things had been allowed to rest in abeyance. For I was captain of the Remove, and the best element in the Form wanted me to return to find everything in just the same way, without any radical changes.

But, unhappily, the majority of the best fellows were with us—and two-thirds of those in the Remove now were of a non-descript type who were neither particularly bad, nor particularly good.

And so the Remove, without any big leader, was becoming stale. Football was nearly at a standstill, and the slackness in the junior studies was rather fearful. Fullwood and Co., for example, smoked just as much as they liked in Study A. Mr. Crowell very seldom came round, and the fellows did practically as they liked.

"There ought to be a change," went on Fullwood. "I don't believe those cads will ever come back. Anyhow, I jolly well hope they won't! I'm blessed if I want that crowd here again."

"Yes, things are pretty easy now," said Bell. "If Nipper starts his rot again we shall be pounced on every bally day! I expect the whole crowd's got lost down in the Antarctic—an' a good thing too!"

Everybody knew, of course, that we had gone towards the South Pole. At first it had been believed that we had gone down to the bottom of the sea in Lord Dorrmore's yacht, the Wanderer. But, later, Mr. Gray had sent out wireless messages from his airship, telling the world of our safety, and that we were making for the Antarctic. Since then nothing had been heard.

"Of course they won't come back!" exclaimed Gulliver. "But why should we worry? The question is what are we goin' to do this afternoon? It's a lovely day, an'—"

"By gad!" exclaimed Fullwood, jumping up.

"What the deuce—"

"The races!" snapped Fullwood. "Confound it! I'd forgotten all about them until this minute!"

"The races?"

"Yes, at Bannin'ton!" went on Fullwood. "They don't often have any racin' at Bannin'ton, an' I've just remembered they're on this afternoon! Rats! We shall miss the two o'clock an' the two-thirty!"

Gulliver looked doubtful.

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "What's the good of goin' to the races without any money? An' what's the good of goin' with money? We nearly always lose it if we have a flutter on horses—"

"Rot!" interrupted Ralph Leslie. "It's a fine game—nothin' like it. Why, a chap can increase a quid into ten quid in half a tick on the racecourse! He's only got to put a quid on a ten-to-one winner!"

"Oh, easy!" said Gulliver. "The trouble is, we can't pick the giddy gee-gees out! We generally manage to shove our money on the duds!"

"Well, look here—I've got a couple of quid," said Fullwood. "It's not much, but it won't last long, anyhow. An' if we go careful we can increase it to six times the amount. Come on!"

The three juniors hurried out of Study A, and went down the passage to the Ancient House lobby. The Duke of Somerton and the Hon. Douglas Singleton were lounging in the doorway, chatting with Jerry Dodd.

"Hallo! What's the hurry?" inquired Singleton.

"Mind your own business!" said Fullwood curtly.

"That means you're up to something

pretty blackguardly!" said Singleton. "I'll bet anything that you're off to the Bannington races. Mugs! You'll walk home, and you'll lose your giddy boots!"

Fullwood and Co. took no notice.

But they were rather upset to learn that their mission was so easily guessed. However, they didn't care. They got their bicycles out, and they were soon speeding along the dusty roads towards the town.

They arrived to find Bannington a great deal more animated than usual. There were only about two race meetings every year in the town, and these were not particularly big affairs.

The big race meetings took place at Helmford, twenty miles away.

Nevertheless, Bannington was making the most of the occasion. And a little on the outskirts of the town, past the Grammar School, lay the park. And within these grounds was the racecourse.

Fullwood and Co. paid their admission money, and went in. Gulliver and Bell only raked up just enough to gain admittance. They couldn't very well back out, particularly as their leader was so set upon the idea. And they knew that if Fullwood met with any luck, he would share out. He was several kinds of a cad, but treated his own pals pretty well.

"Just in time for the three o'clock," said Fullwood. "Now, let's have a look at the card."

They studied the race-card with perfect intelligence—for these mysterious documents were nothing new to the "nuts" of the Remove. They knew practically every horse by name, for they always followed the racing news, and made a point of looking up form.

"What-ho!" said Fullwood. "Swanee Whistle's runnin' in the three o'clock! A jolly fine horse—it beat Tortoiseshell by a couple of lengths at Sandown last week. She'll romp home."

"I fancy somethin' else," said Gulliver. "Swanee Whistle hasn't got much of a form, takin' the whole season into consideration. Besides, look at the weight she's carrying! She won't last!"

"Never!" said Bell.

Fullwood smiled.

"You needn't worry—it's my money!" he said. "I'm not askin' you to risk anythin'. If Swanee Whistle's a good price, I'm goin' to shove a quid on her."

They went across to one of the numerous bookmakers, and very soon discovered that bets were being taken on Swanee Whistle at five-to-one against. Fullwood put his pound on at once.

"What did you do—ten bob each way?" asked Bell.

"No—a quid to win."

"All right—I'll bet she won't come home in the first three!" said Gulliver. "An' if she does, she'll get a place. Your quid's gone. But I say—keep your eyes

skinned. We don't want to meet anybody we know."

They had taken the precaution to bring tweed caps with them—and they were already wearing grey flannels. So there was nothing to show that they were St. Frank's Juniors. It would never have done to have worn their school caps on a local racecourse!

They had to chance whether they were recognised. They had chanced it on other occasions, and had more than once brazened things out, lying glibly, and actually proving an alibi.

So they were not in much fear. All their attention was centred upon the three o'clock race, which was just about to start. Very much depended upon the result—for if Fullwood won, he would certainly splash even more liberally.

"They're off!"

The shout went up from the crowds.

Fullwood grabbed at his card, and gazed at it.

"Swanee Whistle's number six!" he exclaimed. "Jockey's wearin' red sleeves and black cap. There he comes! Good! Swanee's leadin'!"

The horses came thundering past.

"Hallo! She's fallin' back now!" panted Gulliver excitedly. "Look at that rotten number eight! He's gettin' ahead!"

They could no longer see the horses as they swept round the bend. They turned anxiously, and stared at the post where the result would appear. The numbers came up very promptly.

Eight—four—two!

"Rotten!" grated Fullwood. "Swanee's lost!"

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Gulliver. "I knew she wouldn't come home in the first three—"

"I didn't ask you to crow!" growled Fullwood curtly. "We can't always win! I'll get this quid back on the next race—you see if I don't! I'm not goin' to be whacked!"

"But you'd better go easy!" said Bell. "You've only got a quid left, an' you don't want to plunge. You'd better put five bob only on the three-thirty-half-crown each way or somethin'. No need be rash."

"We'll see," said Fullwood.

They studied the race-card again, and Fullwood picked out a horse which, in his opinion, was not merely a dead certainty, but a walk-over. There was no question about the horse winning.

"I'm going to put a quid to win on it!" he declared.

"An' what if it loses?" asked Bell.

"This horse won't lose—Bella Rosa is a tip I had from a chap only last week," said Fullwood. "She's an outsider, too—bound to be a big price. I'm goin' all or nothin' on her!"

"Look here, don't be an ass!" protested Gulliver. "You were just as certain that Swance Whistle would win—an' she lost. You'll have no money for the four o'clock or the four-thirty if you blue it all on Bella Rose. I shouldn't go more than five bob!"

"Of course not," said Bell. "It's a mug's game to plunge."

Fullwood listened to his chums' advice, and finally agreed to go easy, and bet only five shillings. But he wouldn't listen to them when they suggested that he should put the money on half-a-crown each way—that is, half-a-crown to win, and half-a-crown for a place.

"No, I'm not going to mess about like that," he said. "Hang it all, I've a good mind to put a quid, after all! I can get eight to one on Bella Rose—an' that'll mean eight quid in pocket, in addition to my quid back."

"An' it'll mean you're stony if Bella Rose comes in second," pointed out Bell.

"Oh, all right!"

Fullwood put five shillings to win on the horse, and then he and his chums paced up and down, watching the crowds, and waiting for the race to start. The time soon passed, and the race was run.

The numbers went up—three—seven—one.

"Great!" gasped Fullwood. "She's won, you chaps! Number three—that's Bella Rose!"

"You'll draw two-pounds-five from the bookie," said Bell. "That's all serene!"

"Is it?" snapped Fullwood angrily. "If it hadn't been for your rotten advice, I should have got four times the amount! I'm blessed if I'll listen to you again! Puttin' me off, just when I was on a certainty!"

He collected his money, but was very morose about it. He wasn't content with winning moderately—he couldn't help remembering that he would have been eight pounds in pocket if he had stuck to his original decision.

On the next race he went a pound—and lost it. Gulliver and Bell said nothing. But they advised him to go easy on the last race—which, in their opinion, was a very risky one. It was almost impossible to foretell the winner.

But Fullwood knew.

He picked the winner in a few seconds. It was a horse that couldn't possibly fail to romp home in a canter, and he put another pound on it, leaving himself with only five shillings.

As a matter of fact, the horse came in about five minutes after the others.

"Well, what about pluggin'?" asked Gulliver bitterly. "A fat lot of good you did by whinnin' that two quid! You've lost it all!"

"Don't talk to me!" snarled Fullwood. "It was all your fault. I was goin' to put a quid to win on Bella Rose, an' you know

it! I'm fed up with this! We're stony, an' I can't get any more money until next week."

They were a very disconsolate trio as they walked across the grass towards the exit. But even this experience had not taught them a lesson. As soon as they got hold of some money again, they would probably back horses once more. They always had an idea that they would win.

They were slouching along, heads down, and too grumpy to speak to one another, when Fullwood suddenly stopped.

"What's that?" he muttered.

He had seen something gleaming amid the grass—something green—which looked like a piece of brilliant bottle glass. As a matter of fact, he thought that his guess was correct. But he bent down to make sure. And the next second he uttered a startled exclamation.

"By gad!" he gasped.

"What's the matter?" asked Bell quickly.

"Oh, nothin'!" said Fullwood. "The grass looked funny, that's all!"

There were all sorts of people about, and Fullwood had no intention of showing his prize in the public gaze. He had slipped something rapidly into his pocket. And his chums were very curious.

It was not until the three juniors were well out in the road, and to themselves, that Fullwood extracted his hand from his pocket.

"I found it—lyin' there in the grass!" he whispered. "It looks pretty valuable, too. Have a squint!"

He opened his palm, and Gulliver and Bell stared. The object which Fullwood held was a pendant—an article of jewellery which had apparently been dropped by some lady who had been leaving the racecourse on foot.

The pendant was a delicately made article of some white metal, which was apparently platinum. And it was set with four gloriously large, green stones. The centre drop was a superb thing.

—And the chums of Study A stared at it, rather fascinated.

CHAPTER II.

ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD!



GULLIVER was the first to speak.

"It's only imitation!" he said. "A thing like that couldn't be real—you don't pick up genuine jewellery in the grass nowadays! I suppose it's worth about a couple of bob!"

Fullwood examined it closely.

"No fear!" he exclaimed. "It's the real thing. My mother's got a pendant somethin' like this. You can always tell

a dud article from the genuine thing. It's real platinum, an' these stones are emeralds!"

"Phew!"

"Emeralds!" said Bell. "They ain't very valuable, are they? Emeralds are common stones—not half so good as rubies or diamonds—"

"You ass!" interrupted Fullwood. "Emeralds are the most expensive of all—an' these look regular beauties. By gad! Just see the size of that centre drop! I'll bet this pendant is worth five hundred quid if it's worth a penny."

Gulliver and Bell gasped.

"You're mad!" said Gulliver faintly.

"I know I'm not—it's tremendously valuable," said Fullwood, slipping it back into his pocket. "An' we're goin' to make some cash out of it, too. We've had some luck on the race-course, after all! We'll make quids over this!"

His chums looked absolutely alarmed.

"But—but you can't keep it!" stuttered Bell. "You—you fathead! That would be thievin'! You can't—"

"Who's talkin' about keepin' it?" snapped Fullwood. "I'm not such a mug as all that! Why, if I tried to pawn this, I should be detained at once—an' I couldn't even try to sell it. If I did sell it by a lucky fluke, I'd have about a dozen bobbies after me in a couple of hours!"

"I'm glad you know that, anyhow!" said Gulliver, with relief. "I—I don't feel comfortable with a thing like that on us."

"It's on me!" said Fullwood coolly. "There's no need for you to worry."

"But—but it might be risky!" persisted Bell. "If somebody happened to see us pick it up, he'll tell the police, an' we shall all be arrested."

"Nobody saw us," said Fullwood. "There's no need to get scared, my sons. I know what I'm doin'! An' I'm stickin' to it!"

"But—but that's mad!" said Gulliver. "The best thing we can do is to take it to the police-station, an' then we shall get a reward a tenner, at least!"

"Exactly!" said Fullwood calmly.

"Eh?"

"A tenner—at least!" repeated Fullwood. "We shouldn't get any more, if that. I'm pretty wide, my lads. You can't catch an old bird like me."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, you're dense!" said Fullwood impatiently. "Just look here. Supposin' we take this pendant to the police-station, an' say we found it on the race-course? In the first place, that'll be bad for us. In the second place, we've got to give our addresses, an' they might get to know at St. Frank's."

"I hadn't thought of that!" said Bell.

"Of course you hadn't," went on Fullwood calmly. "An' there's another thing, too. When the owner of that pendant hears it, she'll do one thing straight

away. She'll buzz to the police-station, an' say she's lost an emerald pendant. An' the bobbies will yank it out, an' there you are. Where do we come in?"

"Why, they'll tell her we found it —"

"Exactly," said Fullwood. "She'll have her pendant, an' won't care tuppence about who found it. If we're lucky we'll get a fiveer. That's not good enough for me not by long chalks!"

"Then what do you propose doin'?"

"We'll wait!" said Fullwood. "I wouldn't mind bettin' a quid to a brass button that there'll be an advert in the Bannington Gazette to-morrow. This pendant is valuable, an' they'll move heaven and earth to get it back. An' about the first thing they'll do is to offer a reward. They'll advertise—an' if they don't offer fifty quid, I shall be mistaken."

"But—but—"

"We'll simply answer the advert, an' take the pendant with us," said Fullwood.

"We'll say where we found it, an' draw the reward. If they ask why we didn't give it to the police, we'll say we thought it was an imitation, an' worth about tuppence. See? We didn't realise how valuable it was until we saw the advert. It's money for nothin'!"

His chums stared at him in open admiration.

"Well I'm blessed!" exclaimed Bell, at length. "I knew you were pretty smart, Fully, but I never thought you were as deep as all this! It's a great wheeze! Supposin' it happens all right? Will you give us some?"

"Of course," said Fullwood. "An' now we'll buzz back."

He was quite cool, but Gulliver and Bell were extremely excited. Fullwood grinned knowingly.

"There you are!" he said. "It looks significant, eh?"

He nodded towards the police-station. A superb limousine was waiting outside obviously the property of an immensely rich person. And as the three juniors went by, they caught a glimpse of a lady within, talking to the inspector in charge. Fullwood's surmise was surprisingly correct.

He chuckled as they continued their ride.

"She's just givin' him the information about the loss!" he grinned. "Why, it's obvious! An' the pendant's in my pocket all the time! By gad! We shall be rollin' in money after this—you mark my words!"

His chums were almost too overcome to speak. And they didn't exactly know how they passed the remainder of the evening.

Gulliver, in fact, dashed back into Bannington just before calling over to get an evening paper. But although he searched the columns through and through, there was no mention of any emerald pendant. This was not surprising, for the paper had probably been in the press at the time of the loss.

For the remainder of the evening Fullwood & Co. were jumpy with impatience.

They knew it was quite useless to do anything that night. They had to wait until the morning. And Fullwood was quite right. Under the circumstances—and providing the pendant was really genuine—it was practically certain that an announcement of some kind would be in the morning paper. And it was not only likely to be in the local paper but in the London dailies as well.

Some of the other juniors noticed that Fullwood & Co. were rather on edge, but they didn't take much account of this. Fullwood & Co. were a queer lot, and were generally allowed to go their own way.

When the rising-bell went in the morning, three juniors leapt out of bed with one accord. They were Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell. And this created a record.

They had never been known to get up so promptly in the whole course of their St. Frank's existence. And some of the other fellows sat up, and rubbed their eyes, and stared.

"Great Scott!" said Hubbard. "What's happened? Fullwood's out of bed—and Gulliver and Bell are out of bed! Gimme water!"

"Dry up!" snapped Fullwood. "Dem' funny doesn't suit you, Hubbard! We're goin' for an early mornin' run."

Hubbard seemed to choke, and buried himself in the bedclothes. Sundry gurgling sounds came to the surface. The idea of Fullwood & Co. going for an early morning run was somewhat humorous.

Nobody could get the Nuts to say why they were so fearfully energetic this morning. And at last Fullwood & Co.—who had been making a race of dressing—finished up in a dead heat. They rushed downstairs together.

In the lobby they met Morrow, of the Sixth.

"Hallo, hallo!" exclaimed the prefect. "What on earth—?" He clutched at the wall for support. "Who said the age of miracles had passed?"

"Oh, we—er—thought we'd get down pretty early this mornin'," said Fullwood carelessly.

"You young asses!" exclaimed Morrow, holding his heart. "You shouldn't do these things so suddenly! What's the matter? Expecting a tip from home, I'll bet! Nothing else would drag you down like this!"

Fullwood grinned.

"You've guessed right first time!" he said coolly. "As a matter of fact, we're hard up, an' I think my pater's sendin' me a liver!"

"Lucky young dog!" said Morrow, as he passed on.

Fullwood & Co. didn't even go near the letter rack they knew without looking that it was barren as far as they were con-

cerned. But they sped like lightning to Mr. Crowell's study.

They knew that the Form Master would not be down yet—and they knew, also, that his papers would be lying neatly on his desk.

"Is it safe to go in?" breathed Bell, as they paused just outside the study door.

"Safe—of course it's safe!" said Fullwood. "Old Crowsfoot never gets down at this time! He'll be half an hour yet, if he's a minute! An' supposin' he surprises us? He'll only give us twenty lines, at the most. No harm in lookin' at the newspaper!"

They entered, quite satisfied that there was nothing to worry about. And, sure enough, on Mr. Crowell's desk, there were two newspapers—the "Daily Mail" and the "Bannington Gazette." Mr. Crowell always believed in being well up with local news, but he couldn't do without his "Mail."

Fullwood seized the "Bannington Gazette," and he didn't even have to open it. For there, on the very front page, at the top of a column, were the words:

**"VALUABLE EMERALD PENDANT
LOST! £100 REWARD."**

"A hundred quid!" panted Fullwood, his eyes glittering. "What did I tell you? What did I tell you? A hundred quid! Look! Here it is, as plain as your giddy face!"

"Great Scott!" breathed Bell faintly.

"A—a hundred quid!" muttered Gulliver dazedly.

They stood there, gulping. In their wildest dreams, they had never expected anything of this kind. But there it was, in black and white. They feverishly read the announcement.

It was an ordinary news item, and announced the fact that Lady Norton, wife of Sir William Norton, Bart., of Oakley Manor, Helmford, had lost a very valuable emerald pendant on the previous afternoon—to the best of her knowledge, on the racecourse. The pendant, the report stated, was worth £1,500. And a reward of a hundred pounds was offered for any information which would lead to its recovery. Readers who thought they knew anything were advised to apply to the police-station, or to Sir William Norton personally, at the Grapes Hotel, Bannington. Sir William was staying in the town for a couple of days.

Fullwood & Co. were quite pale with excitement.

"It—it's impossible," said Bell, breathing hard.

"Oh, absolutely!" agreed Gulliver.

"Is it?" said Fullwood, his eyes glittering. "We'll soon see about that! We're goin' to grab that hundred pounds reward—an' we'll do it quickly, too. The sooner

the better. I'll give you chaps ten quid each!"

"Good!" said Gulliver. "That's—that's jolly decent of you, Fully. Thanks awfully!"

Ten pounds was a great deal of money to Gulliver—as it was to Bell. They never received very liberal allowances from home. Fullwood, of course, generally managed to have a good supply of cash. He had rich relatives, and his father was always pretty extravagant with him. Not that Fullwood ever made any good use of the money.

What he would do with a hundred pounds seemed rather problematical.

"How will you get it?" asked Bell feverishly. "I suppose you'll dash over to Bannington at once—"

"No fear!" said Fullwood. "I've got

"Don't you worry—I know what I'm doin'! It'll be ten times as good if we can get Sir William to come here for the pendant. I'll explain afterwards. No time now."

Fullwood coolly seized Mr. Crowell's telephone, and placed the receiver to his ear. Gulliver and Bell were more and more impressed with their leader. He was proving himself to be a great deal deeper than they had ever given him credit for being.

"Hallo! Oh, give me 688 Bannington," said Fullwood. "Yes. Hallo!" he added, after a pause. "Is that the Grapes Hotel?"

"Yes, what do you want?" came a voice. "I'm the clerk."

"I'd like to speak to the manager—"

"Sorry, but the manager isn't about



A limousine was waiting outside the police-station, and as the three juniors went by they caught a glimpse of a lady within, talking to the inspector in charge.

the pendant—an' I don't see why I should do any dashin' about. Let them do that."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, for one thing, I don't want to have anything to do with the police," said Fullwood. "Inspector Jameson is in charge at Bannin'ton, an' old Jameson is a rosey bouncer. I'm goin' to ring up."

"Ring up?"

"Yes."

"But—but—"

"My dear chaps, don't get excited!" said Fullwood. "I'm goin' to ring up the Grapes Hotel, an' I'll tell Sir William Norton that we found his pendant on the roadside, in the grass. How can he tell any difference? He'll probably buzz round here in his big car, an' bring the cash with him."

Gulliver and Bell stared more than ever. "But that'll set the chaps talking!" said Bell.

"Just what I want!" replied Fullwood.

just yet—it's rather early," replied the hotel clerk. "Who is it please?"

"I don't think that matters," said Fullwood. "As a matter of fact, I want to speak to Sir William Norton—he wouldn't know my name if I gave it. Please tell him it's very important."

"Sorry, sir, but Sir William is not yet up," said the clerk. "If you could give me any indication of your business I might be able to send a message—"

"Oh, all right!" said Fullwood. "Tell him it's about the missing emerald pendant. I've found it, an' I want to tell Sir William—"

"Eh? You've found it?" shouted the clerk through the wires. "Oh! All right—all right! I'll see if I can get Sir William Norton to the 'phone!"

Fullwood grinned as he waited.

"I thought that would startle him!" he remarked calmly. "An' when Sir

William Norton comes, everythin' will be O.K."

He turned back to the instrument, as a voice sounded.

"Hallo!" it came—a deep voice. "Who is that? Dear me! The 'phone is atrociously bad this morning. What? What?"

"Are you Sir William Norton?" asked Fullwood.

"Yes, I am," came the reply. "What is it you want? What is this I hear about the pendant being found—"

"It's quite right, Sir William," said Fullwood. "I've got it in my possession now. I found it in the grass just outside the racecourse yesterday afternoon. But I thought it was worthless until I saw the announcement this mornin'."

"Good gracious me!" ejaculated Sir William. "You've found it, have you? Outside the racecourse? Splendid! Splendid! Who are you, sir? Kindly give me your name at once—"

"My name's Fullwood, sir, an' I belong to the Ancient House at St. Frank's College, near Belton," said Fullwood. "I'd like to come over at once, sir, but I'm not allowed to leave the school grounds before breakfast. So I thought I'd let you know over the 'phone."

"Very thoughtful indeed—very thoughtful!" said Sir William. "A schoolboy, eh? Good lad! Good lad! All right—I'll come over at once. What did you say your name was?"

Fullwood repeated it, and gave other directions.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Sir William. "I understand that St. Frank's is only a short distance away. I will come by car as quickly as possible."

"Right you are, sir," said Fullwood. "I don't suppose you'll bring the police with you, will you?"

"The police?" repeated Sir William. "Good gad, no! What on earth for? The police don't need to interfere here. I'll tell them about it later."

"Don't forget the reward, sir," said Fullwood.

"If you've got the genuine pendant, you shall have the reward!" replied the baronet. "Good-bye—good-bye! Good gracious, this is most fortunate!"

Fullwood could hear him talking excitedly away as he hung the receiver up. And the leader of Study A pushed the instrument aside, and looked at his chums.

"There you are!" he said calmly. "All fixed up! He's comin' along now with the hundred quid, an' we shall have it in our pockets within an hour. An' the police won't know anythin'. It's easy!"

But Gulliver and Bell were feeling rather too overcome to say much. They followed their leader out of Mr. Crowell's study in a dazed kind of way.

And then they hung about outside on the

Ancient House steps. It was rather dull this morning, but still mild and fine. And in a surprisingly short time a huge car rolled up, and entered the gateway. From it stepped an elderly gentleman in grey tweeds. He stood looking about him through his pince-nez. Fullwood and Co. were by his side in a moment.

"Yes, yes!" said the newcomer. "I am looking for a boy named Fullwood—"

"Quite so, sir—I am Fullwood!" said Ralph Lealle. "If you'll come to my study, sir, we'll settle about this little matter at once."

"Dear me! A most collected young gentlemen," said Sir William. "Thank you—thank you!"

They all went into the Ancient House, with many juniors watching their movements. When they arrived in Study A, Fullwood carefully closed the door, and got to business at once.

"Here's the pendant, sir," he said, pulling it out of his pocket. "We found it just in the grass—"

"Wonderful!" interrupted Sir William, grasping the pendant, and examining it intently. "Yes, yes! This is certainly Lady Norton's property. I am greatly relieved, my boy—very greatly relieved! I had half an idea that you might be playing an absurd practical joke, or that you might have been mistaken. But no. This is indeed the genuine pendant."

"I thought so, sir," said Fullwood calmly. "Well, it's yours, of course—an' I think we take the little reward, don't we?"

Sir William looked up, smiling.

"Ah, to be sure—to be sure!" he exclaimed, beaming. "And I am glad to give it to you, my lad! By gad, you've been so confoundly straightforward over the whole business that I can afford to be generous. I'll make it a hundred-and-fifty—hang me if I don't!"

"That's jolly good of you, sir," said Fullwood steadily—although his eyes glittered.

Sir William Norton produced a bulky pocket-book—one that fairly bulged with money. There were notes by the pack in there, and the baronet placed a big pile bound by an elastic band upon the table.

"There's a hundred," he said, chuckling with delight. "And now about the extra fifty. Here we are, my boys! Count them after me!"

Gulliver and Bell were still clutching at the table, as though they couldn't believe the evidence of their own eyes and ears. But Fullwood remained calm. He checked the notes as Sir William counted them out.

This was better than even Fullwood had hoped for. Fifty pounds extra! But Sir William was obviously rich, and he was so extremely delighted to get the necklace back with such a small amount of trouble, that he could afford to be generous.

"That's right, sir," said Fullwood, at length. "Thank you very much. I thought it better to ring you up as soon as I could."

"Splendid—most commendable of you," exclaimed Sir William. "And now what about your masters? Had I not better see one of them, and explain this little affair? It hardly seems—"

"Oh, that's all right, sir," said Fullwood easily. "I told the Head all about it and he knows you were comin'. I shall take him this money at once, an' ask him to put it in his safe."

"Excellent!" said Sir William, gazing lovingly at the pendant once more before putting it away. "A most business-like young man. Well, I think I may as well be going. Thank you—thank you! I cannot tell you how delighted I am that everything has turned out so well. Good morning, boys—good morning!"

He was escorted out by Fullwood. Gulliver and Bell remained in the study. They sank into two convenient chairs. And it seemed as though they had some little difficulty in breathing.

CHAPTER III.

MONEY LIKE DUST!



"QUIDS—quids all over the giddy place!" said Bell feebly.

Fullwood had just come back, and was looking at the notes lovingly. And now he was collecting them

up and recounting them in order to make sure that the amount was correct.

His composure had gone somewhat, and he was now giving way to his excitement—for, to tell the truth, Fullwood was even more excited than his chums. But he could control himself better.

"By gad!" he gloated. "Talk about luck! This is the biggest stroke we've ever had! I've never met with such a glorious stroke! An' Sir William's a good 'un for springin' the extra fifty."

"Rather!" agreed Gulliver. "I—I say, perhaps—perhaps you'll make it a bit more now for Bell an' I. We were with you when the thing was found, you know—"

"Don't you worry—you'll help me spend it all right," said Fullwood. "But I want to have a jaw with you fellows. I've got a wheeze—a jolly good idea. That's why I wanted Sir William to come here. You'll soon find out about it."

By the time breakfast was over quite a number of fellows were hazarding guesses as to who the benevolent looking old gentleman was who had called upon Fullwood and Co. They were not in the habit of having such visitors.

As a rule, they consorted with very different looking people.

And during the interval before morning lessons, a number of fellows were gathered round the Ancient House steps. Fullwood and Co. lounged out, and Hubbard came up carelessly, and nodded.

"You're looking pretty pleased!" said Hubbard.

"I've good reason to be!" said Fullwood calmly.

"Why, what's happened?" asked Hubbard. "Who was that queer old gent who came here this morning in a car?"

"He was a solicitor."

"A solicitor?"

"Yes," said Fullwood easily. "He brought me some good news."

"Glad to hear it!" said Canham, coming nearer. "Come into a fortune?"

Fullwood nodded.

"Well, as a matter of fact, yes," he said coolly. "That's just it. I have come into a fortune."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tell us another, Fully!"

"Of course, if you don't like to believe it, you can do the other thing!" said Fullwood. "But it happens to be a fact that I'm jolly rich now. An uncle of mine died, an' he left all his money to me—about four hundred thousand!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll soon wake up, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Fully, you don't expect us to believe that, I suppose?" asked Owen major. "Don't be an ass! Just as if you'd come into a lot of money like that! You giddy spoofer."

"There's no spoof about it," put in Bell. "Fully's nearly a millionaire—an' he's got the money in his own right. He's absolutely rollin' in it—he's got money like dust!"

The juniors crowded nearer, and Fullwood fairly hugged himself. There was nothing he liked better than being the centre of attraction. It was very seldom he could enjoy this experience—for, as a rule, the juniors took very little notice of him.

But now, suddenly, he saw a way, of not only gaining attention, but also of gaining power. Money, as he well knew, is a very useful thing to have about the place.

"I say, Singleton, come and look here!" called out Canham. "Fullwood say's he's got pots of money—he's come into a fortune. In that case, he ought to be richer than you are. But I'll bet you can show the most tin!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Hon. Douglas Singleton had been known as the Spendthrift when he arrived at St. Frank's. He was always throwing money about in every direction, and he had pots of it.

"I don't see any reason why you chaps should cast doubts like this!" said Gulliver warmly. "Bell an' I were in the study at the time, an' we heard the whole thing. It's true enough."

"Rot!" said Owen major.

"Piffle!"

"Why, Fully couldn't produce a five!"

"Perhaps not," said Fullwood, "but I can produce a few pound notes, if you'd like to see 'em. I don't see why I should do anythin' to prove my words. But I don't like bein' called a liar, so I'll show you."

And Fullwood leisurely dived into his pocket, and brought out a crisp bundle of Treasury notes. The juniors gasped as they saw him. There were at least a hundred in Fullwood's fist—more than most of the fellows had ever seen in all their lives. They stared, open-mouthed.

"Money!" said Fullwood proudly. "See it? This little lot is just a hundred quid! The solicitor left it with me to be goin' on with. I can draw as much as I like, whenever I like—see? It's taken the shine out of you fellows, anyhow! I'm somebody pretty big."

"But—but is it real?" gasped Canham faintly.

Fullwood laughed.

"Do you think they're duds?" he grinned. "Here you are—you can have one! I don't care—I've got more than I can spend, anyway!"

He tossed one of the notes into Canham's hand, and the junior took it, and looked at it in a bewildered manner.

"It's—it's a real note all right," he panted. "But—but it's not mine! I can't keep it—"

"You'll be a fool if you don't!" interrupted Fullwood. "I'm feelin' generous just now. Take it, you ass! I've given it to you!"

"Oh, thanks—thanks awfully!" said Canham eagerly.

"I—I always said you were a generous chap, Fully!" exclaimed Hubbard, with a smirk. "I—I suppose you couldn't lend me a quid, could you?"

"No, I couldn't!" replied Fullwood. "But I'll give you one, if you like. Here you are—take it, and my blessing goes with it!"

The change in Fullwood was startling. He was positively bouncing with importance, and his usual supercilious face was now fixed into a kind of superior smile. He seemed conscious of the fact that he was miles and away better than anybody else.

"It is most generous of you, sir!" exclaimed Enoch Snipe, edging up to Fullwood, and rubbing his hands softly together. "I am always willing to do any little service for you, my dear Fullwood."

He paused, regarding Fullwood out of his little, piggyish eyes.

"Oh, so you've come lickin' round, have you?" said Fullwood. "I suppose I might as well give you a quid, just to show there's no favourites. You see, I can easily afford the whole hundred."

Snipe snatched the note as though Fullwood might change his mind.

And by now the juniors were swarming round in an eager, excited crowd. The end of the Remove had suddenly become a popular hero. Most of the fellows completely forgot his record. They only knew that he had plenty of money—that he had come into a fortune—and he was absolutely certain of countless friends—of a certain type.

With money to chuck about, and to distribute among the juniors, Fullwood was in an altogether different position to what he had been the previous day.

But even Fullwood was not quite such a conceited fool as to throw his money away for the mere sake of swanking. There was something behind all this—and that something soon came out.

"By the way," he said, after a while. "Things have been goin' pretty bad in the Remove of late. I reckon we ought to have a skipper—a chap ought to be elected captain of the Form. It's all very well to say Nipper's comin' back—but he doesn't come. An' I reckon we ought to go ahead an' appoint a skipper, in any case. Blow Nipper!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I suggest Fullwood as captain!" exclaimed Hubbard.

"Good!"

Fullwood looked round, smiling. He had been expecting it. If nobody else had proposed him as Form captain, Bell would soon have done so. But it was far better to come from one of the others.

Practically every junior accepted without question the story which had been told. They believed that Fullwood had come into a fortune. Hadn't they seen the solicitor arrive? Hadn't Fullwood shown a hundred pounds in notes? Hadn't he distributed a number with reckless generosity?

If it wasn't true, he wouldn't throw money about in this way. Indeed, he couldn't have the money. And if he had come by it dishonestly—which, after all, was very unlikely—he certainly wouldn't swank about with it. So practically all the fellows believed the story.

And this was just what Fullwood wanted.

Having received fifty pounds more than he had anticipated, he felt that he could splash a bit. And for a long time he hoped to have power in the Remove. He had never been able to have any particularly big voice. But he could see that a display of money, and a tale of a fortune, would make all the difference. With his usual cunning, he had seized his chance.

"Yes—Fullwood's the chap to be skipper!" said Canham.

"Hear, hear!"

"It's jolly decent of you," said Fullwood, looking round. "I'll tell you what—we'll have an election after morning lessons. I think Nick Trotwood was thinking of puttin' up as skipper. I don't want to chuck him out, of course, but if I'm elected, he'll have to accept the vote of the Form."

"Of course!" said Nicodemus Trotwood,

nodding. "But I can't buy votes in this way, Fully! And any chap who votes for you because of your giddy money, won't be worth his salt! Even if you're elected, you'll only be pitchforked into the captaincy by bought votes."

Fullwood scowled.

"I'm not asking for votes of that sort," he replied. "This election is goin' to be square."

But it wasn't.

Soon after morning lessons, the election took place. But by this time Fullwood had been round numerous studies. He had looked in Study B, and he was certain of the votes of Hubbard and Teddy Long. He was equally certain that Merrell and Marriott and Noys would be on his side. Canham was already a supporter, and even Owen major, fascinated by the display of money, was going to vote for Fullwood.

There were many other juniors who were equally keen—particularly as Fullwood had dropped in and had loaned them as much cash as they required—although he never went beyond a pound. He also intimated that the chaps needn't hurry about paying the loans back.

The result was inevitable.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood, the worst cad in the Ancient House, was elected to be Captain of the Remove!

CHAPTER IV.

THE RETURN OF THE WANDERERS!



DR. MALCOLM STAFFORD paced up and down his study with an extremely pleased expression on his face.

The door opened, and Mr. Crowell appeared.

"Ah! Here you are, Mr. Crowell!" said the Head genially.

"Yes, sir, you sent for me!" said the Form Master.

"Quite so—quite so!" said the Head. "I have some most excellent news, Mr. Crowell—news that will delight you, I am sure."

Mr. Crowell started.

"Concerning my boys, sir?" he asked. "Concerning Mr. Lee?"

"Exactly!" interrupted the Head. "Some very delightful news, Mr. Crowell, concerning your Remove boys and Mr. Lee! You will be greatly interested to hear that they are all in London."

"Good gracious!" said the Form Master, starting. "But—but that is surely impossible, sir! When we last heard, they were travelling in the vicinity of the South Pole!"

The Head smiled.

"Quite so!" he agreed. "That, I believe, is a precise statement of fact. But you see, Mr. Crowell, there is really no

telling what these remarkable people will be up to next. By what I can understand, the boys were in the region of the Antarctic Ice towards the latter part of last week."

Mr. Crowell smiled.

"You are joking, sir—"

"Not at all!" put in Dr. Stafford. "They have been travelling, as you know, in a most remarkable aeroplane—invented and owned, I believe, by a certain Mr. Raymond Gray. This extraordinary craft is capable of attaining the incredible speed of over two hundred miles per hour—and, what is more, the machine can maintain this speed for two or three days on end. That, in fact, is the most extraordinary part of the performance."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Crowell. "And the boys are all in London? Needless to say, this is a very pleasant surprise to me, sir. I had been hoping that the boys would return before the term was very far advanced. It will also be a great relief if Mr. Lee takes up his duties as House-master again."

"Exactly!" agreed the Head. "I knew you would be pleased, Mr. Crowell. I have had a letter this morning from Mr. Lee, and he informs me that he will ring me up from London later in the day—and make certain arrangements regarding the boys. But in any case, they will be at St. Frank's to-day."

"Good gracious me!" said Mr. Crowell. "This—this is remarkably sudden, sir—most surprising. It is somewhat calculated to take me off my feet. To-day! The boys will return to-day?"

"I can well understand your surprise, my dear sir," said the Head. "However, to-day also embraces the hours up till midnight. By what I understand, the boys will return to the school by the last train from London—that is, the last train to Bannington. It arrives, I think, at something after ten. The boys will walk from the town, and arrive here at about eleven."

"Splendid!" said Mr. Crowell. "And to-morrow we shall be able to go on as usual—and after that everything will run smoothly. I am more delighted than I can say—for I fear things have been somewhat slack of late. My added duties have prevented me from attending to many little matters—"

"I quite understand, Mr. Crowell," said the Head. "Oh, and by the way! I do not think the boys want any mention of their arrival made known. You quite understand? Some little idea of their's—"

The telephone-bell rang sharply.

The Head excused himself, and placed the receiver to his ear.

"Yes, this is St. Frank's," he said. "Exactly. Why, dear me! It is Mr. Lee, is it not? My dear Mr. Lee, I cannot tell you how wonderfully delighted I am to hear your voice again! It seems ages since you were here with us."

"If it seems ages with you, Dr. Stafford, it positively seems aeons to me—which, after all, amounts to the same thing!" came Nelson Lee's voice. "We have met with many strange adventures on our travels, but all the boys are bronzed and healthy, and quite eager to get back to school."

"That is good news, indeed!" said Dr. Stafford. "No doubt you will all be featured largely in the newspapers to-day and to-morrow, and for many days to come. I understand you have met with the most astounding experiences near the South Pole."

"Quite so," said Nelson Lee.

And he continued to chat for some little time. And while he was at the telephone, I was not far off him. Handforth and Co. were over by one of the windows, looking out into Gray's Inn Road. Other juniors were collected in various parts of the room.

For we were in Nelson Lee's consulting room in London. We had arrived in London two days earlier—and most of the fellows had spent a whole day at home. Nelson Lee would not allow them more—for we were due back at St. Frank's. And there was no getting out of it.

Ever since our arrival in London we had been sought out by reporters by the score. We had told dozens of our adventures, and were already persons of vast importance in the public eye.

Most of the fellows kept their heads quite well. Perhaps the only one to really suffer was Handforth. He suddenly blossomed forth into a person of vast importance.

When any interview was sought, Handforth was always ready. In fact, he talked so much that even the reporters grew tired of listening. Finally, Handforth announced that he was going to write a whole book on our travels. He didn't seem very pleased when Pitt remarked that it would be a shame to waste good paper and ink.

Handforth was determined—and he seemed to have an idea that when we returned to St. Frank's we should be people of such note that everybody else would be obliged to bow before us.

Not that Handforth was conceited in the usual way. But, as he remarked, what was the good of us going through all sorts of marvellous adventures, if we didn't talk about them?

We certainly had passed through some extraordinary experiences.

We had only just got back in the Golden Rover—Mr. Raymond Gray's marvellous aircraft. And now we were nearly ready to return to St. Frank's. We contemplated starting this very evening.

"I think we ought to go down this morning!" Handforth was saying, while the gov'nor was telephoning to Dr. Stafford. "It's absolute rot to leave it until to-night. I've got all sorts of plans."

"Yes, I know," I said gently. "You've

got an idea of having a brass band to meet us, haven't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's nothing to laugh at!" roared Handforth. "It's a jolly fine idea. We're important people, and there's no reason why we shouldn't have a decent reception. If we go down early, we can arrive just before tea. And we can roll up to St. Frank's in a whacking great motor-car—two or three cars, in fact. There's nothing like creating an impression."

"Who's going to pay for the cars?" asked Church.

Handforth looked at him witheringly.

"Just like you!" he sneered. "Thinking about rotten money at a time like this! Isn't it right that we should be given a huge reception? We want to let them all know we're coming. And then, after we're there, there's going to be a huge feast in our honour!"

"Hear, hear!" said Fatty Little promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a jolly good idea!" said Fatty stoutly. "I thought about the feast—it was my wheeze. All the chaps at St. Frank's ought to get up a huge party, so that when we get down there we're all——"

"Fed up like prize turkeys?" said Pitt.

"That sort of thing might suit you, my fat son, but it doesn't suit me. And I don't think it suits many of the others, either."

"Rather not!" said Church. "We don't want to go swanking down there like heroes! We don't want to be met with crowds to kow-kow to us just because we've gone through a few adventures."

"Eh?" said Handforth ominously.

"I—I mean——" began Church hastily.

"You traitor!" roared Handforth. "You blessed rotter! And this is all you can do after the way I've treated you!"

"But—but I've done nothing!" gasped Church.

"You've been sneering at me!" retorted Handforth. "But I'm jolly well going to have my way."

"Look here, Handy, be sensible!" I put in. "This thing goes by the vote—and the vote is already taken. The majority of us prefer to go down to St. Frank's on the quiet, without any fuss or display."

"Hear, hear!"

"The idea," I went on, "is to go to Bannington by the last train, and then we'll walk to St. Frank's, and arrive after everybody is in bed. They won't know we're there until the next morning—so they can't prepare anything."

"My hat! Won't they be surprised?" grinned Watson.

"Rather!"

And we discussed the whole situation—much to Handforth's disgust—and made all sorts of plans for our journey down to St. Frank's.

Little did we imagine the surprising events which were occurring there!

CHAPTER V.

GOING STRONG!



"THIS is what I call decent!" said Fullwood, lounging back in his easy chair, and lighting a cigarette. "I'm goin' to make the fur fly, my sons. Nipper's not here, an' he isn't likely to be here. I don't suppose the cad will ever turn up again."

"Let's hope he doesn't anyway," said Gulliver. "Well, you're skipper of the Remove, Fully. What are you goin' to do about it?"

Fullwood grinned as he looked round Study A.

"Do?" he repeated. "I'm going to get busy at once—I'm goin' to make everythin' absolutely different from what it has been. An' what's more, we'll have a football team of our own."

"We haven't got any decent players," said Gulliver.

"Rot!" said the new skipper. "I can fix up an eleven at a moment's notice, if necessary—an' I'll guarantee we do as well as Nipper's rotten lot. Anyhow, we'll see. An' there are all sorts of other things I shall do, too. I've got the support of the Remove, now—"

"But will you be able to keep it?" asked Bell. "All the chaps think you've come into a fortune. But they won't think that after your tin has vanished. An' even a hundred quid won't last for ever."

"Not if you spend it like this!" said Gulliver.

Fullwood had already been very lavish. He had laid in a large number of luxuries, and he had been throwing his money about in the most reckless fashion. What did he care? He had pockets full of notes. And he informed his chums that he would be able to treble it—once the Helmford races started in a few days.

"To make big money, you've got to bet big money," he said. "It's the only way. An' I'll bet I'll have quids by the hundred all the time now. Don't you worry your little heads, my children. I shall be able to keep up this fortune yarn just as long as I like. An' nobody will be the wiser."

"Well, you know best, of course," said Gulliver. "I shouldn't mind one of those cigarettes—"

"Help yourself!" said Fullwood generously.

The door opened, and a head appeared. It was the head of Kenmore of the Sixth. Kenmore was a prefect, and it was his duty to deal very severely with junior smokers. And Study A was rather blue at the moment.

But Kenmore entered, closed the door, and smiled.

"Don't mind me!" he said, with a wink.



"That's jolly good of you, sir," said Fullwood steadily, although his eyes glittered as Sir William Norton produced a big packet of notes.

"It's all right, kids—I don't mind a bit of a puff now and again."

"Good!" said Fullwood calmly. "Try one."

Kenmore helped himself, and sat down, smoking. This, of course, was quite atrocious conduct on the part of a prefect. But Kenmore was one of the worst bullies in the Sixth and he would never have been a prefect if the Sixth Form master had had any inkling of his real character.

"Of course, smoking is against all rules," said Kenmore. "Not that it matters to me. I don't see any reason why I shouldn't be pally with you youngsters. You're a decent crowd—I've always liked you."

"Thanks," said Fullwood drily. "How much do you want to borrow?"

Kenmore smiled.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I am a bit hard pressed for the moment," he said. "I didn't come here to borrow anything—but now you remind me of it, I might as well take advantage of your wealth."

"Jolly good of you," said Fullwood languidly.

"Is it true?" asked the prefect.

"Is what true?"

"Why, that you've come into a huge fortune?"

"Of course it's true," said Ralph Leslie. "My uncle left it to me, you know. Nearly half-a-million. But it hasn't turned my head. I'm still just the same as ever. How much would you like, Kenmore? A quid two quid—"

"Well, I thought about a fiver—"

"Right you are—anythin' to oblige," said Fullwood, taking out a bulky pocket-book, and counting five currency notes on the table. "I particularly want to be pally with you, Kenmore, because—well, a friend in the Sixth is always handy."

Kenmore nodded.

"I understand," he said, rising. "You needn't worry—I'm on your side, kids. Thanks for this fiver. I'll pay you back soon."

"There's no hurry," said Fullwood generously.

Kenmore nodded, and left the study.

"You'll never see that money again," remarked Bell.

"Who wants it?" said Fullwood. "It was well spent—Kenmore will be our slave in future. We can do practically as we jolly well like. I can tell you, things are goin' to be easy in the Remove now."

Only a few minutes had elapsed before Kenmore looked in again.

"Somebody asking for you on the 'phone, Fully," he said. "I told them to hang on."

"Somebody askin' for me?" said Fullwood quickly. "Who is it?"

"Oh, some kid—the captain of the Eastwold College Juniors, I think. He wanted to speak to you."

"But I don't know the chap—"

"Well, he doesn't know you," interrupted the prefect. "He merely asked for the captain of the Remove—so I came here."

Fullwood beamed.

"Oh, I see!" he exclaimed. "Right you are! I'll go and speak to the chap at once. Eastwold?" he added, after Kenmore had gone out. "Isn't that a new school just the other side of Banninton?"

"Yes, the whole school moved down to a new buildin' at the beginning of this term," said Gulliver. "They come from some place near Brighton, I think. Not much of a crowd, by what I understand."

"Well, anyway, I'll see what he wants," said Fullwood.

He went along to the prefect's room, and was soon on the telephone. A pleasant voice came over the wires.

"Are you the junior skipper?" it asked.

"Yes," said Fullwood. "Anythin' I can do?"

"Well, yes," said the other. "My name's Dalton, and I'm captain of the Fourth over here—Eastwold College. I was wondering if there was any possibility of us fixing up a footer match?"

"Certainly," said Fullwood promptly. "To-day, if you like."

"My hat!" said Dalton. "You're pretty swift, arn't you?"

"No time like the present," went on Fullwood. "There's plenty of light after lessons. If you can get over here pretty promptly, there's no reason why we shouldn't have a match. Then perhaps we can fix up some future dates."

"I say, that's jolly decent of you!" said

Dalton eagerly. "Thanks, awfully! Yes, we'll come rather! It'll be great to play a match this evening. I wasn't expecting you to give us an opening for weeks."

"Of course, St. Frank's is a jolly posh sort of place—don't forget that," said Fullwood condescendingly. "However, I believe in being sportin'. Bring your team along, an' we'll give you a good game."

Dalton was profuse in his thanks, and soon rang off. And Fullwood grinned, and went back to Study A. He explained to his chums what he had arranged, and they looked at him in a very surprised way.

"But, hang it all, what's the idea?" asked Bell. "We can't play a game this evenin'!"

"Why not?"

"Well, for one thing, we've got no team," said Bell. "That seems to be a pretty important point, to my mind."

Fullwood grinned.

"You chaps always seem to think that things are impossible," he said. "Now that I'm captain of the Remove, I'm goin' to wake things up. None of this dilly-dallyin' business. I'm a chap for speed."

"Well, you've certainly been goin' pretty swiftly," said Gulliver.

"Football isn't a game that needs a lot of practice," went on Fullwood. "There's a big lot of swank about the whole thing. I can put a team into the field that will knock spots off Eastwold."

"How will you get the team up?"

"Easy!" replied the new skipper. "I'll shove Hubbard in goal, an' I can make a fine forward line from Merrell an' Marriot an' Owen major an' a few others."

"What about us?" asked Bell.

"Of course, you'll be in it," agreed Fullwood. "I shall be centre-forward, an' you chaps can play just where you like—I don't care. Choose your own giddy positions! We'll soon fix things up."

According to Fullwood's talk, it did not seem that he would be very successful as a football skipper. Favouritism went a good deal further with him than merit. Any two youngsters in the Third, picked at random, would make better forwards than Gulliver and Bell.

But these little details seemed to be of no importance to Fullwood. And later on, just before afternoon lessons started, the Remove skipper happened to run into Kenmore once again. As a matter of fact, Fullwood was looking for him.

"I say, Kenny, I want you to do me a favour," said Fullwood.

"Anything you like," said Kenmore generously. "I'm only too glad to oblige, old man."

"Great pip!" ejaculated Singleton, who happened to be near by.

He was quite staggered. Previous to this, if Fullwood had dared to ask Kenmore a favour, the latter would have clipped Fullwood over the ear. But now he was on the point of being obsequious.

"Anything you like," repeated Kenmore.
 "Well, you see, we're having a match this afternoon, after lessons," said Fullwood. "Some of the Eastwold fellows are comin' over. I thought perhaps you'd give a hand—an' referee for us."

Kenmore nodded.

"Just as you like," he said. "I'm your man!"

"Oh, by the way," said Fullwood carelessly. "We're goin' to win—you get me? We've got to win, Kenny. We're not goin' to let these Eastwold bounders go back with a victory to their credit."

Kenmore grinned.

"Trust me!" he said knowingly.

CHAPTER VI.

SOMETHING LIKE FOOTBALL—BUT NOT MUCH!



"HALLO -- hallo -- hallo! What's all this? What's the giddy invasion in the peace of the September eve?"

It was the Hon. Douglas Singleton who expressed himself thus. He was reclining elegantly against one of the stone buttresses of the Ancient House steps. Lessons were just over, and Singleton had been discussing matters in general, and Fullwood in particular, with Somerton and Trotwood, and one or two others.

But now he gazed across at the big gateway.

A perfect troop of cyclists had just entered—fully twenty youngsters, and there appeared to be some more behind. They were absolute strangers to the St. Frank's fellows, and they were regarded with much curiosity.

"Blessed if I know who they are!" said Conroy minor. "Their caps are unfamiliar, too! They must have made a mistake."

Singleton and a few others marched down to meet the invaders. In advance of the newcomers was a fair-haired, freckled youngster, with a particularly cheerful face.

"Anything we can do?" asked Singleton politely.

"Are you Fullwood?" asked the freckled youth.

"I hope not!" said Singleton promptly.

"I don't quite understand."

"Well, of course, you wouldn't!" said Singleton. "I can't quite picture a perfect stranger coming up and insulting me deliberately. So we'll forgive it, and let the matter pass."

"But I don't know what you're talking about!" exclaimed the freckled junior.

"How did I insult you?"

"You mistook me for Fullwood!" said Singleton blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The newcomers couldn't see the joke

"Look here, my name's Dalton, and I'm the captain of the Eastwold College Juniors," said the freckled boy. "I fixed up a footer match for this evening, and we've arrived."

"Oh!" said Conroy minor. "You fixed up a match? That's queer—we don't know anything about it! And all the footballers in the Remove are here. Of course, our best chaps are away, and goodness knows when they'll come back. To be absolutely frank, we haven't really got a football team just now."

Dalton looked rather blank.

"But but I arranged it over the 'phone—to-day!" he said. "I was talking with the junior skipper himself—Fullwood—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fixed the match up!" said Dalton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't see anything funny about it!" said the Eastwold junior, becoming rather impatient. "What's the joke?"

"The joke, my son, is that Fullwood knows about as much concerning football as a cat knows about swimming the Channel!" said Singleton calmly. "In fact, what he doesn't know about the game would fill a library. To be absolutely candid, Fullwood's a hopeless duffer!"

"I don't believe it!" said Dalton promptly. "No offence, of course—but I think you're trying to pull my leg. A chap wouldn't be elected Form skipper unless he was a decent footballer."

"Ah, but you don't know the facts," said Singleton mysteriously. "Fullwood's only been skipper for about half-a-minute—and then he bought the votes. You see, he's just come into a fortune, and he's been chucking money about like powder. We couldn't walk in the Triangle for pound notes an hour ago!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The blessed things kept blowing into our faces—"

"Look here, I don't want to be rude, but this is a bit too thick!" grinned Dalton. "I can easily see that you're trying to kid me—"

"My only sainted aunt!" gasped Somerton suddenly. "Look! Gaze! Feast your eyesight upon the vision!"

"Great Scott!"

All the juniors fairly gaped as they turned round and looked at the Ancient House doorway. A number of fellows were coming out—fellows who were attired in football togs. They wore the St. Frank's junior colours—but they were certainly not the St. Frank's Junior Eleven.

In short, Fullwood & Co. had appeared for the fray.

Dalton and his chums did not see anything peculiar.

"I knew you were trying to spoof me!" said Dalton. "The Junior Eleven is coming out now. I say, is Fullwood here?" he added, going forward.

"My name's Fullwood," said Ralph Leally, holding. "I suppose you're Dalton, eh?"

"Yes."

"Good man," said Fullwood. "We'll get straight along to Little Side at once. We've got a Sixth Former to referee—one of the prefects—so you can rely on a straight game."

"Oh, that'll be great!"

"Rather!"

The Eastwold fellows streamed away towards Little Side with Fullwood & Co. And Singleton and the other juniors looked at one another.

"This," said Singleton, "is going to be rather funny."

"Either funny—or nasty!" said Nick Trotwood. "Personally, I don't think Fullwood & Co. will play much of a game."

They decided that it was up to them to go along and have a look at things.

And so they collected round the ropes of Little Side. The two teams were in the pavilion, but Fullwood & Co. soon emerged, and they lined up in readiness for the match.

Fullwood thought practically nothing of football, and he was only playing this game now, because he wanted to be big and important. It pleased his vanity to know that he was the one really big fellow in the Remove—a fellow who could arrange a football-match without anyone to say him nay. It pleased him, too, to be able to arrange his field after his own choice.

His judgment did not seem to be very excellent.

"Ye gods and little bloaters!" gasped Singleton. "Look! Did you ever see such a field? Hubbard's in goal! Hubbard—who can't even play marbles! This is going to be a rag-time match."

All sort of comments were passed among the players. The team, as it stood, was made up in the following order:—Hubbard; Skelton, Merrell; Noys, Marriott, Canham; Clifton, Gulliver, Fullwood, Simmons, and Bell.

The forward line was absolutely atrocious. There wasn't a single junior who knew anything about forward play. The rest of the team was of very much the same order. They were not likely to give much of an exhibition.

And then Kenmore came strolling on the field, dressed in shorts.

"Ready?" he asked briskly.

"They're just comin' out," said Fullwood.

And, a moment or two later, the Eastwold fellows came trotting out of the pavilion. They looked a sturdy, well-set-up lot. A few supporters, who had come with them, gathered about the pavilion to watch.

The visitors trotted on to the field, and then came forward, and the toss was taken. The visitors won.

"All right—it doesn't make much difference," said Fullwood. "I might as well tell you that we're goin' to smash you to bits!"

"Thanks!" said Dalton.

He smiled as he went to his place. And

then, after looking round, Kenmore put the whistle to his lips.

"This is where the fun starts!" said Singleton.

The whistle blew, and Fullwood kicked off. He sent the ball out to Gulliver, and the latter immediately succeeded in falling over it. Before he could recover, one of the Eastwold halves came down upon him, trapped the ball, and neatly passed it to one of his forwards.

The latter, with quite excellent skill, centred.

And Dalton was upon the ball in a flash. Slam!

He sent in a terrific drive. Hubbard stood quite still, and looked at it. It passed him by inches, and banged against the back of the net.

"Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hubbard could have saved that goal easily. But he seemed quite dazed, and didn't even put out a hand. Fullwood came running up to him, with a fierce scowl upon his face.

"You silly fool!" he snarled. "What do you call that?"

"I—I didn't notice it!" said Hubbard faintly.

"You—you dolt!" snapped Fullwood. "If that occurs again, I'll jolly well smash your face in after the match!"

Hubbard said nothing. Some of the Eastwold fellows looked rather surprised that the St. Frank's skipper should speak in such a way to one of the players. But, of course, they made no comment.

"Go it, you dummies!" yelled Trotwood derisively. "By the end of the first half you'll only be about fifty-five goals down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The teams lined up once more, and it could be seen that the Eastwold fellows were looking quite pleased with themselves. They had already seen sufficient to convince them that their task was to be a very easy one.

Kenmore blew his whistle, and play recommenced.

This time Fullwood did not pass out, but took the ball himself. He evidently intended running straight through.

But the visiting halves were not allowing anything like this.

Two of them bore down upon Fullwood, and one easily succeeded in getting the ball away.

Fullwood snapped out a growl, and kicked. The point of his boot caught the half-back on the shin, and he gave a gasp of pain, and sat down. In a moment, Fullwood was off once more with the ball.

"Oh, foul!"

"Did you see that, ref?"

"Foul—foul!"

It was, indeed, a most deliberate foul. Kenmore had seen it, but he took no notice. He waved his hand up the field, as an indication that play was to go on. The Eastwold players, more amazed than indignant,

stood quite still, hardly believing it possible that any referee would allow the game to go on.

Fullwood had been quite certain that Kenmore would not stop the game. He ran right up, between the visiting backs—who took no notice of him at all, for they had believed that the game had been pulled up.

Fullwood kicked hard for goal.

It was really a piece of luck that the ball went in, for although he was within easy shooting distance, the leather struck one of the uprights, and rebounded from the goalkeeper's elbow. But it rolled into the net.

"Goal!" roared the St. Frank's Eleven.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Singleton.

Kenmore pointed to the centre of the field, and Dalton rushed up to him, his face expressive of bewilderment and anger.

"Look here, that wasn't a goal!" he snapped hotly. "That chap was fouled, and you pulled the game up—"

"I didn't do anything of the sort," said Kenmore. "In future, I should advise you to play to the whistle."

"But—but—"

"I don't want any arguments," interrupted Kenmore curtly. "That's enough."

Dalton nearly choked. He had seen a few fouls in his time, but never one quite so deliberate as that. It seemed as though he were about to make some hot rejoinder, but he pulled himself up, and walked away.

The player who had been kicked was limping, but he decided to go on with the game, after a few moment's talk with his captain.

Round the ropes the St. Frank's juniors were indignant.

"I say, we can't allow this!" exclaimed Somerton warmly. "These cads will give St. Frank's a terrible name. I vote we rush the rotters, and sweep them off the field."

"Can't be done!" said Trotwood. "Don't forget that Kenmore's in command—and he's a prefect. He'd twist the whole thing about, and we should all get it in the neck. And Fullwood and Co. would go scot-free. It might even mean the sack for one or two of us. It can't be done."

Trotwood was right.

With Kenmore on the field, refereeing the match, it would be a most rash proposition for the juniors to attack the footballers. For they had the law on their side, so to speak. Kenmore, being a prefect, was in charge. And if any horse play occurred he would make it extremely hot for the culprits.

And so the game restarted—with all the decent fellows looking on with growing anger.

Played under ordinary conditions, the match would have been an absolute walkover for the visitors. But they soon found that it was almost impossible to get going. The whole thing was a fiasco.

No sooner did the Eastwold forwards bear down upon the St. Frank's goal than the

referee's whistle blew sharply. Kenmore would either declare a player to be off-side, or would award a foul where no foul had been even attempted.

His decisions were just as much the reverse when it came to the home side.

On several occasions one of the St. Frank's so-called forwards was palpably and obviously off-side. But in spite of this, he was allowed to continue onwards, Kenmore making no attempt whatever to pull him up.

And the supporters of Fullwood and Co. were fouling every minute of the game. The number of times they handled the ball could not be counted. If they couldn't control it with their feet, they used their hands—and Kenmore displayed a supreme indifference.

Dalton and his chums would have stood this all right, although it exasperated them beyond measure. But when it came to deliberate fouling, they were up in arms. It was too much.

One of the Eastwold forwards came through in a superb manner, beating every defence with the greatest of ease. And for once Kenmore allowed him to go through. The prefect probably meant to pull him up at the last minute.

But it wasn't necessary.

For Hubbard came charging out of goal, and he ran with all his strength into the arms of the opposing forward.

Crash!

Hubbard's fist went into the forward's face, and the latter collapsed. Then Hubbard dashed back, and picked the ball out of the net. It was an excellent goal, but Kenmore pointed to the corner flag.

"No goal!" he announced. "Corner kick!"

He was surrounded by the Eastwold fellows.

"You can't allow that!" shouted Dalton furiously. "It was a goal, in any case, and our chap was punched—deliberately punched! It was a rotten, cowardly foul! You can't let it stand—"

"Another word, my son, and I'll send you off the field!" snapped Kenmore.

Hubbard had run up to the injured player—for, after all, Hubbard was not a bad fellow at heart. Not being familiar with football, he had acted in the excitement of the moment, his own thought being to save his goal.

"I—I say, I didn't mean that!" he gasped. "I hardly knew what I was doing! I'm sorry!"

The Eastwold forward looked at him curiously.

"All right we'll say no more about it," he growled. "But if you think it's football, you'd better go and buy a book of rules!"

"Did you apologise just now?" snapped Fullwood, running up. "You blitherin' idiot! It was a perfectly fair charge, and after this you won't play any more!"

"Thanks!" said Hubbard sourly. "I don't want to!"

In the meantime, the visitors were still storming round the referee.

"It's not a game at all!" shouted Dalton. "We can't get going without you pull us up for offside—and you never notice a foul when these cads—"

"That's enough!" snapped Kenmore. "I've warned you once—"

"I don't care!" shouted Dalton hotly. "I'm not going to be shut up!"

"Look here, my lad, you'll get off the field—quick!" roared Kenmore. "Insolence to a referee isn't allowed. You're ordered off—understand?"

Dalton breathed hard.

"Is—is that what you call playing the game?" he shouted. "We came here thinking we should get a fine game! We thought St. Frank's was a first-class public school, with a good code of honour!"

"Clear off!" thundered Kenmore.

"If Dalton goes, we all go!" shouted one of the other visitors.

"Hear, hear!"

"It's all right—we're going!" said Dalton, white with anger. "I wouldn't play for another minute with these blackguards! That's all they are! If we finished the game out we should go home crippled! This has taught me a lesson I shan't forget in a hurry!"

"Look here, you're goin' to continue this game," shouted Fullwood hotly. "You asked for a game, an' we're givin' you one—"

"Who said so?" shouted Dalton. "Is this what you call a game? It's nothing but a lot of cowardly fouling! If I had my way, you'd all be barred from a football field for the rest of your lives! We're going, and you'll never see us at St. Frank's any more—you curs!"

The Eastwold fellows crowded off in a furious group—to be met near the pavilion by Singleton, Somerton, and a few others.

"I say!" began Singleton. "I hope you don't think we're all like that—"

Dalton walked past with his lips tightly closed. And every other Eastwold junior followed his example. When they came out it was the same. And they mounted their bicycles and rode off.

"Well, that's done St. Frank's a bit of good—I don't think!" exclaimed Owen, major. "The rotten cads! Blow Fullwood and his money! I wouldn't touch a penny of it after this!"

"And he's our Form skipper!" said Conroy, minor, bitterly.

CHAPTER VII.

PROWLERS IN THE NIGHT!



"HERE we are!"

"Good!"

"Same old place—just as it used to look!" said Handforth, gazing round the platform of Bannington Station. "Same

old bookstall—same old waiting-room! By George! It's even the same old porter!"

I grinned.

"You speak as though we'd been away for twenty years!" I chuckled. "And yet, as a matter of fact, it's only about two months. Did you expect to find everything different?"

"It seems that we've been away for ages!" said Handforth. "But I suppose you're right—there wouldn't be much difference, after all. All the same, it's jolly fine to be back among the old scenes."

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie Glenthorne. "I feel, dear old lads, that it's up to me to stagger away to the pater's place. As you know, it's only slightly in the offing from here—"

"You're coming with me, Archie," declared Pitt.

"Oh, absolutely, every time!" agreed Archie. "That is to say, precisely, old scream! We trickle towards the old school in a somewhat big crowd. I mean to say, back to the scenes of childhood, what? Back to the old place where we learn the jolly old A.B.C.!"

"I don't think we started quite so early as that, Archie!" chuckled De Valerie. "Well, come on. Don't forget your tickets. It's a glorious night, and we shall be at St. Frank's easily within the hour."

The whole crowd of us had alighted on Bannington Station. The last local train had left for Bellton long since. Our only method of getting to St. Frank's from Bannington was to walk, or hire a car.

Archie was strongly in favour of the latter.

"Pray don't let the matter of expense worry you, dear old things," he said. "That, as it were, is a mere old what-do-you-call-it? That is to say, a bally old bagatelle! Kindly dismiss it! I will produce considerable lumps of cash, and sling it at the old garage merchant—"

"That's all very well, Archie, but it's needless expense," I said. "Besides, we shall all enjoy the walk."

"Oh, absolutely!" murmured Archie. "It'll be frightfully ripping. The scheme is a poisonous one, old dear, but proceed! I will withdraw from the old arg."

And it was agreed that we should all walk. Many of the fellows would have liked a car-ride—but I didn't see why they should be indulged. There was no hurry at all, and the night was calm and clear. Besides, we didn't want to give St. Frank's any warning of our arrival.

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And so we started out—the whole party of us, going four abreast through the town. We had no luggage—for this had all been left at the station, to follow us on in the morning.

And the walk did prove to be really enjoyable. Long before we reached the half-way mark, the moon was up, and the whole countryside was bathed in a wonderful silvery light.

So far we had remained in London since our return from abroad. And this was our first glimpse of the quiet English countryside since our arrival.

"Oh, you can't beat it!" declared Pitt. "We can go to tropic islands, and strange lands hidden in the Antarctic—but there's nothing like the good old English scenery, after all!"

"Rather not!" said Church. "Isn't it glorious?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Upon the whole, dear old lads, I consider it was a priceless scheme, after all. I mean to say, it makes a chap bubble with poetry, as it were. We wander along and sing a jolly old song—Gadzooks! Did you notice, old tulips? Poetry, don't you know?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The meter was a bit wrong!" grinned Watson.

"You couldn't expect anything else, with gas like that!" chuckled Reggie Pitt.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

We walked on, joking and laughing. And, indeed, it was certainly glorious to see the countryside bathed in the September moonlight. Only a few of the trees were beginning to show signs of Autumn.

And soon we should be at St. Frank's—we should see the old school again after our thrilling, hair-raising adventures. It all seemed very peaceful and quiet after the stirring times abroad.

But this really made it all the better.

Adventure is all very well, but it's always possible to have too much of a good thing. And we felt that we should thoroughly enjoy a quiet time at St. Frank's, with football, and other school interests to keep us busy.

And then, at length, we came to the village of Bellton.

It was quite asleep, for at this hour all the villagers had long since retired. And Bellton was reposing peacefully in the quiet moonlight. We seemed almost compelled to go on tiptoe as we passed through.

We certainly talked in whispers—with the single exception of Handforth. He was talking in a loud voice all through the village.

And yet he declared that he was whispering all the time! This was the most peculiar part of it. When Handforth whispered, you could hear his voice about half-a-mile off. He seemed to imagine that a whisper should be about twice as loud as an ordinary voice. He simply imparted a husky sound to his tone.



Crash! Hubbard's fist went into the forward's face, and the latter collapsed.

But we got through Bellton all right, and then made our way up the lane to the school.

And when we arrived, we hopped nimbly over the wall, and looked into the Triangle. There were the old buildings. To us, who knew them so well, there was something pally about the shape of the Ancient House. We could see Mrs. Hake's tuck shop nestling in the corner, and I noticed that Fatty Little's tongue was licking his lips as he saw the building.

"Oh, for a feed!" he exclaimed. "I'd love to break into there now, and pinch some of Mrs. Hake's lovely beef patties! They're absolutely great! I suppose we couldn't get in, and leave the money——"

"We couldn't!" I interrupted. "If you're patient for a few minutes longer, you'll find a ripping spread all ready for us indoors. It's all arranged—and then we shall go to bed afterwards."

"Well, we don't want to stand here—let's get inside!" said Fatty.

But just then Pitt caught my arm.

"What's that?" he asked, pointing. "I thought I saw some figures moving on the other side of the shrubbery."

"Your fancy, I suppose——"

I broke off, and stared. Sure enough, there were some figures there. I warned all the fellows to remain quiet, and we stood still and watched. Fatty Little was terribly impatient, but we wouldn't let him move.

And then, out into the moonlight, came at least two dozen shadowy forms! This

was most extraordinary, for we had expected to find the whole school asleep. I didn't think these figures belonged to St. Frank's fellows.

"We'll have a look into this!" I said grimly.

"Burglars, what?" said Archie. "I mean to say—"

"My dear ass, burglars don't come in troops!" I exclaimed. "These fellows are schoolboys—and I want to see what they're up to."

"Come on!" said Pitt.

We went forward at a run. And then, in a moment, the figures in front of us turned and faced us. And as we came up we saw that they were perfect strangers. Over by the school wall were a couple of sacks, and two tins.

"What's the idea of this?" I asked calmly. "Who the dickens are you, and what do you want?"

"I was going to ask you the same questions!" said one of the figures.

"I'll soon answer that," I said. "We're St. Frank's fellows, and we've just come back from a holiday—a bit late for term, but we'll soon make that up. But what's the idea of prowling round here at eleven o'clock at night?"

To my surprise, I found that all the strangers were looking at us aggressively.

"Do you belong to the Remove here?" asked one of them.

"Yes," said Pitt.

"We don't want anything to do with you!"

"That's pleasant!" I remarked. "But what's the idea? What have we done? Before being barred, we should like to know the reason for it."

"I should think you ought to know!" said the spokesman bitterly. "My name's Dalton, and I'm captain in the Remove at Eastwold College. If you didn't seem a decent chap, I wouldn't be talking to you now."

"That's very nice of you," I said. "But I'm still in the dark."

"You oughtn't to be!" said Dalton. "Look here, you fellows—I'll put it to you straight, and I can judge your characters by your answer. What kind of a chap is your Form skipper?"

"First class!" said Pitt promptly.

"One of the best!" said Tommy Watson.

"Hear, hear!"

Dalton stared grimly.

"All right—that's enough!" he said. "If you think your Form skipper's one of the best, I don't want to say another word to you. Personally, I think he's a cad—an out and out rotter!"

"Thanks awfully!" I said. "But what have I done?"

"What do you mean?"

"Merely that I happen to be the captain of the Remove," I replied smoothly. "I

should just like to know why I've got such a tremendous character?"

Dalton gripped my arm.

"You're the Remove captain?" he asked blankly.

"Yes!"

"What's your name?"

"Nipper."

"But the Remove skipper's name is Fullwood," said one of the others.

Reginald Pitt staggered, but recovered almost at once.

"Fullwood!" he said feebly. "Fan me, somebody! Oh, by jingo! Is it possible that Fullwood has made himself skipper during our absence? Great cokenuts! I could understand these chaps calling him a cad and a rotter!"

"Fullwood is the captain!" said Dalton grimly.

"Then, look here, old man, there's something radically wrong," I said quietly.

"You see, we've all been away, and we're late in getting back. I'm the Remove captain, and if you had any dealings with Fullwood, I'm sorry for you. He's the biggest cad in the Lower School, and his pals are all the same class. I should like to hear how you run across him."

We did hear—then and there.

Dalton told us the whole story about the blackguardly football match. We listened with growing indignation. And by the time the Eastwold fellows had finished, we were fairly bubbling with fury.

"The cads—the infernal rotters!" exclaimed Pitt hotly. "But I'm not surprised—it's just the kind of thing they would do! I hope to goodness you chaps don't think we're all the same here."

"We did think so," admitted Dalton.

"Then you'd better think again—quick!" exclaimed Handforth, placing his fist beneath Dalton's nose. "See that? Any fellow who runs down St. Frank's in my hearing gets this fist on his blessed nose!"

"Don't take any notice of this chap—he's harmless!" interrupted Pitt. "He's quite tame, although now and again he breaks out. And he seems to have a special liking for punching the most innocent noses. But he's as good as gold at heart—absolutely one of the best."

Handforth gulped.

"You—you fathead!" he said weakly.

As a matter of fact, he had been about to slaughter Pitt on the spot—but the latter part of Reggie's sentence mollified him to such an extent that he had mercy. He glared round him aggressively.

"Look here, you chaps!" he said grimly.

"You Eastward chaps, I mean—or East something or other! Fullwood is a dirty cad—and all his followers are more dirty cads! While we've been away, I expect they've got into power. Of course, I'm the Captain of the Remove, really—"

"Then there are three skippers?" asked Dalton.

"No—only one—and that's me!" said Handforth. "Of course, I hate trouble, and so I let Nipper call himself skipper. But when it comes to running the Remove, I'm always the responsible chap. Nipper's not a bad sort—if he likes to think he's skipper, I don't mind!"

The Eastwold fellows were looking rather bewildered.

"That's just another sign!" I exclaimed. "Hail's all right—but he will have these delusions. I'd like you to come over on Saturday afternoon, Dalton, and we'll give you a match—the real thing, not a travesty of it!"

"Well, I don't know——"

"Look here, you've got to come!" said Handforth curtly. "By George! Do you think we're going to allow you to have such a rotten impression of St. Frank's? I'm the Remove goalkeeper, and if you can get the leather past me, you'll be wonders! I'm unbeatable!"

"Modesty is one of his chief characteristics!" murmured Pitt.

Dalton and his chums agreed to come over on Saturday. They were, in fact, very favourably impressed with us—I could see that. This was not to be wondered at, after the treatment they had received at the hands of Fullwood.

"But what's the idea of this?" I asked. "Why have you chaps come round here?"

"At this time of night?" added Pitt.

"Well, the fact is, we were going to give your precious Fullwood & Co. something to be going on with!" explained Dalton. "We've got tar here—and a couple of sacks of feathers. We thought about giving them a good double coating. Any fellows who play foul in the way they did, deserve to be tarred and feathered!"

Handforth grabbed Dalton's hand.

"Good man!" he said. "Go ahead—that's the best thing you can do! And, by George, I'll help you!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Steady on!" I exclaimed. "I don't think that operation had better be performed to-night. It'll upset things considerably. You can trust us, Dalton, to make things hot for those cads. You see, the Head's up and awake, and he's expecting us. He'd be bound to hear the commotion, and then there'd be trouble all round. But I'm jolly glad we met you. Take my advice, and drop this thing for to-night. If you like to come one evening next week—we won't interfere!"

Dalton nodded.

"Right you are—you know best!" he said promptly. "Thanks for the tip—we don't want to ask for trouble. And we'll be here on Saturday—and we hope we'll have a really good game."

"You'll have a clean game, anyway," I said. "Good-night, you chaps!"

They went—with their opinion of St. Frank's already much altered.

"It seems to me," I said grimly, "that it's high time we arrived back!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE POWER OF MONEY!



CLANG—clang!

The rising bell made its usual racket, and sleep was no longer possible for all the fellows of St. Frank's. In the Remove dormitory in the Ancient House, one or two juniors sat up sleepily.

They didn't care much for turning out. But it generally happened that at least two or three fellows were determined to rise immediately upon the bell sounding. Perhaps they had arranged for a little early morning jaunt. But it was far more likely that they were expecting a letter from home. Not that they were anxious about the letter. Their eagerness to get down was to ascertain if the letter contained something in the shape of a postal order, or a currency note.

On this occasion Owen major sat up, rubbed his eyes, and gave a prodigious yawn. He looked sleepily up and down the room, and then gave a little gulp.

He was quite accustomed to seeing the dormitory in a somewhat deserted condition. Ever since the beginning of this term at least fourteen beds had been empty—although these beds were kept constantly aired and ready.

But the missing juniors had not returned. And the Removites had grown accustomed to the semi-deserted nature of the dormitory.

It was hardly surprising, therefore, that Hubbard gulped.

Every bed was occupied!

"What the—— How the—— I must be dreaming!" gasped Hubbard. "Hi, you chaps! Canham—Farman! Look!"

Owen major's two study chums were accommodated in the next beds, and they looked up dreamily as Owen major's voice smote their ears.

"Say, I guess you're some darned noise!" growled the American junior. "I'm kind o' feelin' rattled."

"Look, you new!" roared Owen major.

"Gee!" said Farman, sitting up. "What in thunder's bith' you? Waal, say! If that ain't real queer! Them beds is sure full up! Now, what do you know about that? Say, pards, I guess I'm sure puzzled!"

"But but they were empty last night!" exclaimed Canham, blankly. "All those beds were empty! Some fathead must be playing a game they're full of dummies! I'll soon see!"

He bent down, picked up a boot, and hurled it at one of the beds. There was a wild howl, the bedclothes heaved up like some volcanic eruption, and then a fierce face appeared—but a well-known face.

"Who did that?" it bellowed, like a mighty blast.

"Handforth!" yelled Owen major wildly.

"Handforth!" gasped Canham.

"You—you funny fatheads!" roared Handforth. "What's the idea of chucking things at me? Why, hallo. What the— Oh, yes! Of course. I'd forgotten for the minute."

Handforth sat up and looked round, forgetting his bump.

"How goes it, you chaps?" he said.

"Back again, you know! And this term I'm jolly well going to keep things in order!"

"When—when did you come?" asked Owen major faintly.

"Last night!"

Handforth spoke quite unconcernedly—although he was conscious of his own importance. Then another junior sat up—and another—and another. It was really unreasonable to expect the fellows to go on slumbering while Handforth was talking. One might as well expect oil to mix with water!

Fullwood was one of those who sat up.

He gave one stare round—and then his

expression became utterly startled. It quickly changed to a scowl of vicious hatred.

"By gad!" he muttered. "They're back!"

It took Fullwood quite by surprise. It left him stranded. For he had been confidently telling himself that nobody could come along to drive him out of his new position. He was the Remove captain, and he meant to stick to his job. And now, just when everything was all right, the wanderers had returned.

For Fullwood, it was certainly rather sickening.

"Oh, so there you are?" said Handforth, glaring at him. "You cad!"

"What?" snapped Fullwood.

"You miserable blackguard!" said Handforth warmly.

"Look here——"

"I'm looking!" went on Edward Oswald.

"And I can see something that oughtn't to be alive. I can see an object that absolutely gives me a pain! I don't know why they allow such things to live! They kill beetles and scorpions and other venomous insects—and yet they let you live!"

"Good for you, Handy!" grinned Owen major.

Fullwood was purple with rage.

"What's the idea of this?" he snarled.

(Continued on next page.)

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—the first thing you do when you see me is to insult me right and left!"

"I know all about it!" said Handforth mysteriously. "I get to know things? You seem to forget that I'm a detective! And although I wasn't at St. Frank's yesterday, I jolly well know that you acted like a common ruffian on the football field! I might as well tell you at once that I'm going to slaughter you!"

And Handforth stalked out of bed, and slowly and deliberately turned up the sleeves of his pyjamas. Fullwood hastily jumped out of bed, and backed away. The coming of the holiday party was not very welcome to him.

"Stop it!" he gasped. "If—if you touch me I'll yell for a prefect. I'm captain of the Remove—"

"Oh, are you?" interrupted Handforth. "That's queer! What put such a dotty idea into your head? The best thing I can do is to drive it out. I don't believe in doing things on the sly, so I'll tell you what my plan is. I'm going to get your head in chancery, and I'm going to punch your nose until you say you're not the captain of the Remove."

By this time every junior was sitting up—for the commotion was somewhat fearful. I was grinning, for the whole affair was somewhat humorous. Possibly Fullwood did not think so.

"Steady on, Handy!" I said. "We'll thrash this matter out later—there's no need to kick up a commotion now. And don't forget that we've just got back. It wouldn't look well."

"I don't care!" said Handforth. "Do you think I'm going to stand here, and see this cad call himself the captain of the Remove. Why, the first gorilla out of a travelling menagerie would make a better skipper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

This, perhaps, was the most deadly insult of all. But matters were not allowed to go further, for just then Morrow happened to come in. The prefect started, flushed, and then strode into the dormitory.

"Well I'm hanged!" he exclaimed. "Where in the name of all that's wonderful did you kids drop from?"

His question was one of scores. And in a very short time we were all answering such questions as fast as we could manage. Everybody wanted to know all about our adventures.

And Handforth, in the flush of relating his marvellous deeds, forgot Fullwood for the time being. The latter was undoubtedly relieved.

He hurriedly dressed, and went down to Study A with his chums. And Fullwood was in a fine fury.

"Confound it!" he snarled. "Of course, they're bound to turn up, just when we don't want them! What ghastly luck!"

"An' it's just like the cads to sneak in

at dead of night, without giving us any warnin'." said Gulliver. "Well, I'm afraid it's all up with you, Fully."

"What do you mean?"

"About the captaincy—"

"All up with me?" snapped Fullwood.

"Oh, is it? We'll see about that! If Nipper thinks he's going to turn me out, he's made a bloomer! The cad! Comin' back like this an' spoilin' everythin'!"

"It's no good gettin' into a temper about it" said Bell. "We all know that they were comin' back some time—but we didn't expect them quite so soon. An', strictly speakin', Nipper is the Form captain."

"He was," said Fullwood. "He is not now. An' I'll take jolly good care that I stick to the job!"

In the meantime we were hearing all sorts of yarns about the recent slack times in the Remove. The fellows who were particularly pleased at our return were Burton and Jerry Dodd and Nicodemus Trotwood and Singleton and Levi, and one or two other decent chaps. The rest, for the most part, did not seem to welcome us particularly. For they knew that the free and easy slackness would be stopped.

Fullwood and Co. and Merrell and his gang were absolutely angry about it. I knew well enough that they would have liked us to remain away for good. But here we were—and we were soon in possession of the facts.

"Oh, so that's it, is it?" said Reggie Pitt, as he finished dressing. "Fullwood's the skipper, and he's been creating the merry dickens! Well, his life as captain will be short and sweet!"

"Of course, he'll have to resign now," said Tommy Watson. "Nipper's back, and Fullwood will resign automatically."

"Will he?" exclaimed Somerton. "I don't think so. Fullwood's not that kind—he'll have to be pitched out in the end."

"I don't want anything like that," I put in quietly. "If Fullwood's been elected captain, he is the captain."

"Are you willing to let it stand?" asked Handforth fiercely.

"No, of course not," I replied. "But I'll ask Fullwood if he'll resign—and if he refuses, we shall hold another election. That'll settle it. If he's voted captain, I'll say no more."

Pitt grinned.

"It's as good as settled," he declared. "He'll never be skipper. You'll get three votes to his one—and if he doesn't abide by the Form's decision, we'll jolly well scrag him!"

"Hear, hear!"

As soon as we went downstairs we were surrounded by numbers of eager juniors. And even the seniors came buzzing round, asking all sorts of questions concerning our adventures. And this, of course, was only natural. But everybody wanted this other

matter settled at once. The idea of Fullwood being captain made the Juniors rather heated.

And so, without delay, I went along to Study A, tapped and went inside. The study was hazy with cigarette smoke. Fullwood and Co. were there, and they greeted me with hostile looks.

"Clear out!" said Fullwood curtly.

"Thanks—I will soon," I replied. "But I'd just like a word with you first, Fullwood. I understand you've been elected captain this term?"

"I have!" said Fullwood.

"Do you regard that as a permanency, or merely until my return?"

"As a permanency, of course."

"It's just as well to know these things," I said. "I thought perhaps you'd be willing to resign."

"You'd better think again!" snapped Fullwood. "I'm the Form captain, and I'm not standin' any nonsense from you. You're a back number, my son! I'm skipper, an' my word is law!"

"Right you are!" I said. "I think the Remove will have something to say about it."

"What do you mean?" snarled Fullwood.

"My dear chap, it must be obvious to you that a large number of fellows won't allow this to stand," I said quietly.

"There'll be another election—immediately after breakfast. If you get the most votes, I'll say nothing further, and I'll let you remain captain until the Remove gets tired of you. But there's no sense in talking about it now."

I retired, and told the other fellows what the result was. They had expected it from the very first.

"Well, of course, it doesn't matter," said Jack Grey. "There'll be the election after brekker, and Fullwood will be nowhere!"

But Fullwood had other ideas.

"Another election!" he exclaimed, in Study A. "You heard that? I thought as much! Well, we'll see. 'I'm not goin' to be pushed out by this rotter! An' by gad, if I'm re-elected, I'll make him suffer.'"

Without wasting any time Fullwood got busy.

He got hold of every fellow he could—although he took great care not to interfere with the Juniors who were loyal to me. But he went round to all the others—and before he had finished he had distributed at least twelve or fifteen pounds. At all costs, he meant to get the votes. He had piles of money in his pocket, and he didn't care how much he spent.

Besides, he had told everybody that I had come into a fortune. We had heard this but I didn't particularly believe it. There was no doubt, however that Fullwood had a most unusual supply of cash.

And after breakfast, in spite of all the other matters in hand, the election was

held. It was necessarily quite a brief affair—for it was not like an ordinary Form election.

In the common room we all gathered—every single member of the Ancient House Remove. The whole affair did not take more than ten minutes from start to finish. I stood up, and Pitt asked all the fellows in favour of my captaincy to raise their hands.

There was a flood of hands at once, and they were counted. I could see that my supporters were looking rather anxious, for a surprising number of fellows did not vote for me.

Then Fullwood received his votes.

It came as a bit of a shock to me to see the number of hands that went up. Pitt, Grey, De Valerie and the others looked very anxious. Their anxiety turned to consternation when the result was announced.

Fullwood was elected captain by a majority of five votes!

Pandemonium reigned after that. All my supporters, and particularly Handforth, shouted at the top of their voices. They weren't going to have it—they weren't going to let such a thing stand.

"Look here, we've got to play the game," I said quietly. "I told Fullwood that if he was elected I would say no more, and if you chaps want to please me, you'll keep mum. Let Fullwood have the captaincy—it'll be rather rich to see what he does with it."

But the anger in the Remove was very pronounced.

Everybody knew that Fullwood had obtained his votes by bribery. And this, of course, made the whole thing something of a snaco. But I was content to let it go on.

And while we were still in the common room, talking, Tubbs, the Ancient House page, came along the passages, looking for Hubbard. He was found in the lobby, talking to Owen major.

"You're wanted, Master Hubbard, please, sir," said Tubbs.

"Wanted?" repeated Hubbard. "Where?"

"In Mr. Lee's study, sir."

Hubbard, rather bewildered, accompanied the page-boy to the Headmaster's study. And he was staggered when he passed inside to find that Inspector Jameson, of the Bannington police, was seated in an easy chair. There was another man in addition to Nelson Lee—a man whom Hubbard recognised as Mr. Cowley, a Bannington chemist.

"Yes, that's the boy!" said Mr. Cowley at once.

"What—what's wrong, sir?" asked Hubbard, startled.

"It is all right, my lad," said Nelson Lee. "There is nothing to fear—I merely wish to make a few inquiries. I think you made

a purchase last night in Mr. Cowley's establishment?"

"Yes, sir—I bought some photographic films," said Hubbard.

"You tendered a pound note, I believe?"

"Why yes, sir."

"I don't know whether you know it, young man, but that note was a forgery!" said Mr. Cowley severely. "As it happened, it was the only note in my till just then, for I had left only silver with my assistant. He knew at once that you were the customer who had given the note in."

Hubbard went rather pale.

"The—the note was a dud one, sir?" he asked blankly.

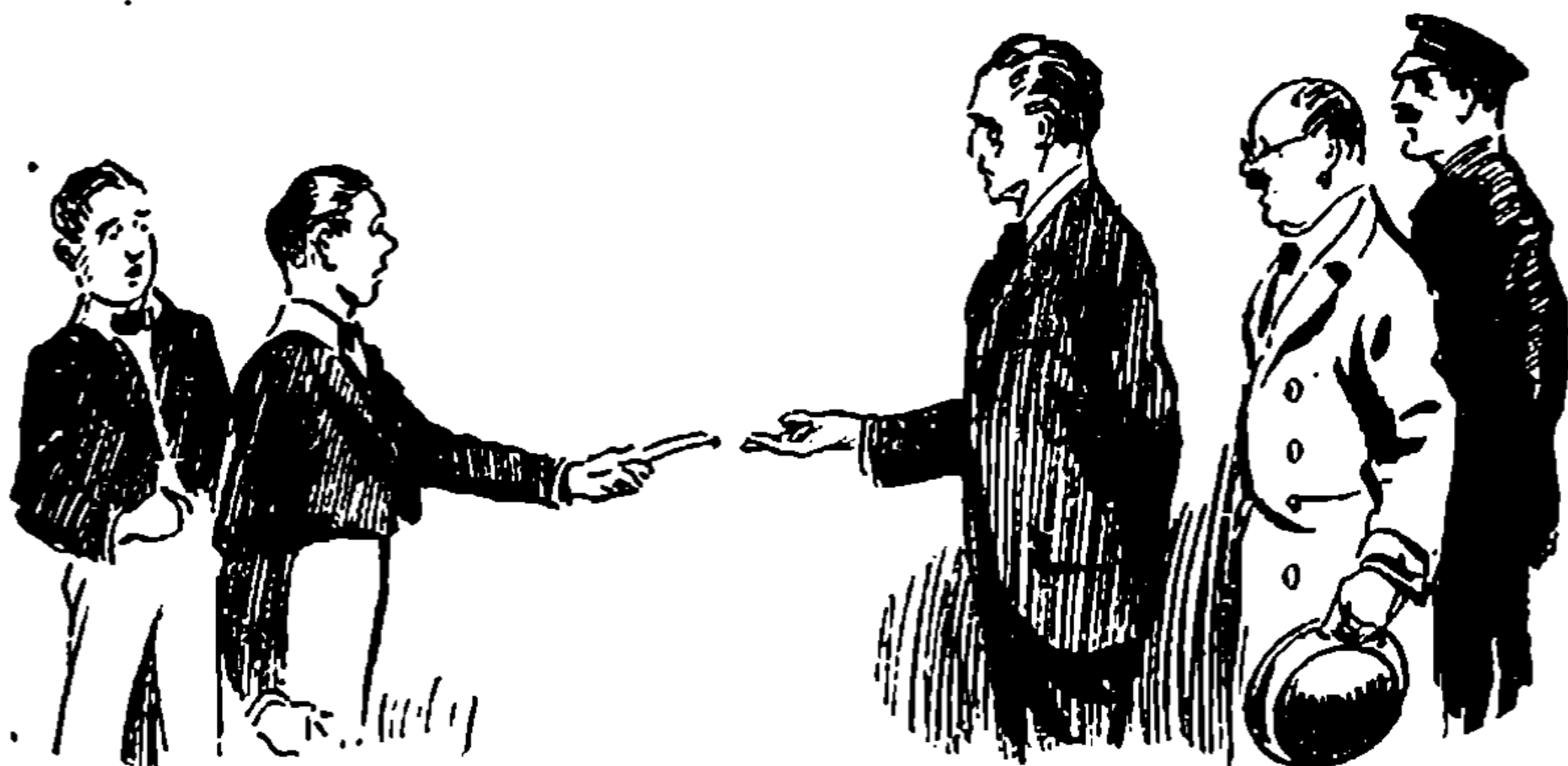
"Yes—and we should like to know where

excitements in the wonderful land of the New Anglians, far, far South. That adventure was already beginning to seem like some strange dream of the past.

"Well, Hubbard?" said Nelson Lee, applying himself to the matter in hand. "There is nothing to fear, my lad. The Inspector does not believe that you passed the note deliberately——"

"I—I didn't know it was a dud one, sir!" gasped Hubbard. "It looked all right——"

"Of course!" put in the Inspector. "As a matter of fact, these particular forgeries are an extraordinarily clever job, and the forged notes are most difficult to detect. Do you remember where you got the note from?"



Fullwood hesitated for a moment or two, and then brought out three pound notes from his pocket. Nelson Lee took the notes, and one swift glance was enough for him.

you obtained it," put in Inspector Jameson. "It may be of great help to us if you can give us that information, my boy."

Hubbard caught his breath in, and stared. For he had suddenly remembered—and he was utterly flabbergasted.

The note had been given to him by Ralph Leslie Fullwood!

CHAPTER IX.

A SHOCK FOR FULLWOOD!



NELSON LEE looked at Hubbard curiously.

The famous detective was somewhat surprised to find himself mixed up in a police case the very morning after his arrival at the old school. It all seemed so

prosaic—so commonplace—after the stirring

"Fullwood gave it to me, sir——. I—I mean——"

Hubbard paused, breathing hard. He had half made up his mind that he would not say anything about Fullwood. But it was out almost before he knew it. And now, it was too late to retract.

"Fullwood gave it to you?" repeated Nelson Lee. "Well, that is not particularly exciting. Why did Fullwood give you a pound note, Hubbard?"

"I—I don't know, sir," said Hubbard, scared.

For, quite suddenly, the junior felt shaky. He remembered the lavish way in which Fullwood was giving the pound notes away—he remembered the story of a sudden fortune. Was it possible that Fullwood had deliberately given forged notes away? It seemed altogether too awful. Even Fullwood wouldn't do that, rascal though he was

"What do you mean, Hubbard?" asked Nelson Lee. "You don't know why Fullwood gave you that note? Didn't he lend it to you?"

"No—no, sir!"

"He made you a present of it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he make similar presents to other boys?"

"I—I think so, sir!"

"Oh, indeed!" said Nelson Lee grimly. "Is it usual for Fullwood to go about presenting pound notes to his schoolfellows?"

"Nun—no, sir—he's never done that before," gasped Hubbard. "Fullwood's got lots of them—pounds and pounds and pounds!"

"Oh, is that so?" said Inspector Jameson, jumping up. "So Master Fullwood has a great many of these notes? And he has been distributing them freely? To my mind, Mr. Lee, this looks very significant!"

"It certainly is very strange," agreed Nelson Lee. "Before we proceed further, I think we had better have Fullwood brought in. He will be able to tell us much better than this boy."

Nelson Lee touched his bell, and Tubbs soon appeared. Hubbard wanted to go, but he was not allowed to—Nelson Lee had no desire for him to spread a story about the school.

Tubbs was instructed to fetch Fullwood at once. And, within five minutes, Fullwood arrived, looking quite cocksure—but inwardly alarmed. He believed that Nelson Lee had heard something about that football match.

Ralph Leslie got a big surprise as soon as he saw Inspector Jameson. His mind instantly jumped to the emerald pendant. But, with an effort, he managed to control himself.

"You sent for me, sir?" he asked calmly.

"Yes, Fullwood," said Nelson Lee. "I understand that you are in possession of a considerable amount of money?"

"Well, I don't know, sir," said Fullwood. "I haven't got very much—just a pound or two."

The inspector and Lee exchanged glances.

"A pound or two?" repeated Lee.

"Have you got the notes on you?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Show them to me!"

Fullwood hesitated for a moment or two, and then brought out three pound notes which he happened to have in his waistcoat pocket. He couldn't for the life of him understand what all the trouble was about. Nelson Lee took the three notes, and one swift glance at them was enough for him. He passed them to Inspector Jameson, and then looked at Fullwood.

"Are you aware, my boy, that those notes are forgeries?" he asked quietly.

Fullwood staggered.

"Forgeries!" he panted huskily.

"Yes!" said Lee, watching him closely.

"They are forgeries—worthless slips of paper."

"But—but I didn't know, sir," panted Fullwood. "I—I—. Then—then the others—." He paused, and then gulped.

"The others, Fullwood?" said Nelson Lee. "Come, come! If you have any more of these notes, you had better deliver them at once. For if you attempt to pass them after knowing them to be false, you make yourself liable to arrest. Give me all the pound notes you possess."

A feeling of absolute desperation and dismay had come upon Fullwood. All his golden castles were tumbling about his ears. His money was worthless—in reality, he hadn't got a cent!

And now he no longer wished to conceal the actual state of his supposed wealth. Hastily feeling in his pockets, he pulled out bundle after bundle of currency notes.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Nelson Lee, rather startled. "How many are there here?"

"I—I don't know, sir—about a hundred and fifteen!" said Fullwood.

"A hundred and fifteen!" repeated Nelson Lee grimly. "Upon my soul! How on earth did you come into possession of such a big sum of money—or, rather, supposed money? I must have a full explanation at once, Fullwood. What was the original sum you possessed?"

"A hundred-and-fifty pounds, sir."

"There's something fishy about this, I'll warrant!" said Mr. Cowley. "No school-boy has a right to go about with a fortune like that in his pockets! I'll warrant the young rascal knew all the time—"

"I shall be obliged, Mr. Cowley, if you will allow me to conduct this inquiry," said Nelson Lee coldly. "And I cannot permit you to make accusations against this boy without the proof. Come, Fullwood, the best thing you can do is to tell me the exact truth about the whole matter. Where did you get the money from?"

"Sir William Norton gave it to me, sir," said Fullwood quickly. "I—I didn't know! He's a rotten scoundrel, sir—"

"Now then—now then!" put in the inspector. "That sort of thing won't do, my lad! Sir William Norton is a most respected landowner—a thorough gentleman—and it is absolutely impossible that he gave you the notes—"

"But—but he did!" shouted Fullwood. "It was a reward—a reward for the emerald pendant which was lost—"

"What's that?" ejaculated Jameson. "Hallo, hallo! I'm beginning to see a bit of the daylight!"

"What is this talk about a pendant?" asked Nelson Lee. "I am at a disadvantage, since I only arrived at the school last night."

"Why, Lady Norton lost her emerald pendant at the Bannington races!" said the inspector. "The pendant was recovered only last night, and it was found to be in the possession of two well-known crooks. They were trying to get out of Bannington at the time, when we detained them on suspicion. And the necklace was found on one of them. And these crooks are well known as forgers!"

"The necklace has been recovered?"

"Yes," said the inspector.

"But—but I found it!" shouted Fullwood.

"You found it?" repeated Nelson Lee. "And you declare that Sir William Norton paid you a hundred-and-fifty pounds in reward?"

"Yes, sir."

"I don't know what the boy is talking about," said Jameson. "Sir William certainly offered a hundred pounds reward for the recovery of the necklace. But it was obtained by the police in the course of their duties—and so, of course, the reward was not paid."

"What does all this mean, Fullwood?" asked Nelson Lee sternly. "I am very much afraid that you have not acted in a straightforward manner. You declare that you found this pendant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"Why, I—I was out with my chums that afternoon, sir," said Fullwood. "We happened to be comin' along the road just near Bannington racecourse. An' in the grass I happened to see somethin' sparklin'. I picked it up, an' found that it was a pendant."

"Why did you not immediately take it to the police-station?"

"I—I didn't think it was valuable at the time, sir," said Fullwood, his voice failing to ring with conviction. "I—I simply gave it a glance, an' put it in my pocket."

"Well?"

"An' the next mornin', sir, I saw a notice in the paper offering a hundred pounds reward for a pendant," said Fullwood. "I knew at once that the thing I had found was the missin' one."

"In that case you should have taken it to the police then."

"I didn't see any reason why I should, sir," said Fullwood, feeling a little easier. "I saw that Sir William Norton was at the Grapes Hotel, and so I rang the hotel up. Somebody answered, an' I asked for Sir William. But the clerk wouldn't do anythin' until I told him my business."

"You told this clerk that you had found the necklace, and were willing to give it up?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, of course, the whole thing is perfectly clear," said Nelson Lee. "The man who answered the 'phone was not the hotel

clerk, but one of these criminals. He heard that you were a mere boy, and as soon as he found that you had the pendant in your possession, he saw an opportunity of stealing it. When he went to fetch Sir William, he merely fetched his confederate."

"Oh, the awful scoundrel, sir!" said Fullwood thickly.

"The man you thought Sir William was really the chief criminal," said Nelson Lee. "And this man came to St. Frank's with the reward—which, we now see consists of false currency. The man's generosity in making the amount up to a hundred and fifty pounds, is quite understandable."

"Then—then I haven't got a penny, sir?" asked Fullwood.

"You have not."

"But—but I ought to have had the hundred pounds—"

"You forfeited all right to that by your underhand conduct," interrupted Nelson Lee grimly. "You certainly cannot claim the reward now because it was the police who recovered the emeralds. This ought to be a lesson to you, Fullwood, not to act in an underhand manner."

"But—but I didn't—"

"You did!" said the detective curtly. "Your first duty, on finding any property that may be valuable, is to take it at once to a police-station. But I can see your reason for not doing so. You thought you would gain a much bigger reward. Upon seeing the advertisement, you should have taken your find to the police-station, and awaited results. Instead of that you used the telephone—a most foolish move. I am thankful the whole matter has come to light in time."

"An'—an' what about my money, sir?" asked Fullwood desperately.

"You have no money," replied Nelson Lee. "I shall not punish you further, because I think the lesson will be a severe one. You did not act criminally, but greedily. And your reward is a fitting one. You have received nothing."

The room seemed to reel round Fullwood's head.

"There is another point," went on Lee. "You must give the names of all boys you gave these notes to. I will see that they are recovered and traced—and I will do so without making the matter public. At all events, Fullwood, I will spare you from that humiliation."

"Thank—thank you, sir!" gasped Fullwood.

"And now you may go!" said Nelson Lee. "And upon the whole, you may consider yourself very lucky to have escaped so lightly."

Fullwood looked aggressive.

"But I found the pendant in the grass, sir!" he declared. "If it hadn't been for me, those men wouldn't have had the thing on them. So it was my dom' that that the

property was recovered. That reward is mine—"

"You have lost all right to it," said Nelson Lee sternly. "However, I will see Sir William Norton, and it is possible that he will see the matter in the same curious light as yourself. If such turns out to be the case, I shall send the money at once to your father, to be held for your benefit—and I shall instruct him not to send any of it to St. Frank's!"

"But—but—"

"That will do, Fullwood—you may go."

Fullwood went, feeling crushed after he had given Nelson Lee a list of the fellows who had received the forged notes from him.

He understood that Nelson Lee would recover those notes—or find out where they'd gone—without allowing the juniors to know the real truth. So the school would never know about the matter.

Hubbard was the only fellow—and Full-

wood made sure that Hubbard would never breathe a word.

He went to his study, nearly crying with rage and helplessness. Even if Sir William gave the money—which was doubtful—he wouldn't be able to use it. And here he was captain of the Remove, without a penny!

And his very existence as skipper depended upon the bribes he had given out. Fullwood could see that it would only be a very short time before he would be knocked off his pedestal.

But he was determined to make one grim effort to retain control.

The affair was over, and the school knew nothing. But in Fullwood's heart there lurked a desperate scheme to save the situation.

His greed had ended in dire results. And it went to prove that those who plot and plan to gain much, generally finish up in losing all!

THE END.

Editorial Announcement.

IMPORTANT.—All correspondence relating to "The Nelson Lee Library" should be addressed to The Editor, "The Nelson Lee Library," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

My Dear Readers,—With the welcome return of the Holiday Party to St. Frank's, Fullwood's captaincy is likely to be short lived, though somewhat exciting. His make-believe fortune, by which he was enabled to get into power, has burst like a bubble and he is now at his wits' end to know how to retain the captaincy of the Remove. Luckily for him, his supporters do not know the truth about his mythical fortune, and Fullwood realises that the tenure of his office depends on how long he can keep up appearances. Somehow or other, he must raise money. But this is another story, and will be told Next Week in "THE PRICE OF FOLLY!"

The popularity of the detective adventures of Nelson Lee and Nipper are becoming more apparent every week. It will therefore be good news for you to know that when the present serial concludes in the course of another week, I hope to give you a longer detective story. In fact, I have already one in preparation, a story in two parts with a strong, baffling mystery in between. On this account I cannot give more than two pages to the Mag. Let me know what you think about this arrangement.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

Nipper's Magazine

No. 44.

EDITED BY NIPPER.

Sept. 23, 1922.

MY DEAR CHUMS, I am heartily glad to be back at St. Frank's again, and I hope it will not be long before Fullwood & Co. will find their proper level.

Next week's number will contain two humorous contributions, one of which will be a revival of Handy's amusing adventures of Trackett Grimm, and the other, an equally laughable article, with a moral, on "The Backing of Gee-gees."—Your affectionate pal,
NIPPER (The Editor).

THE BEGINNING OF WINTER TERM.

SCHOOL has just begun again, and the business of settling down to study and school discipline after weeks of holiday-making is difficult at first. The masters are busy getting out rolls, questioning new boys and a hundred and one other matters that require their attention when school reopens after the long vac.

A PLEASANT CHANGE.

There is a delightful nip in the air, and every one is looking and feeling remarkably fit. Nothing much is done for the first few days, and the masters are more tolerant than usual, for they are in a good humour. To be back at school again is a pleasant change from those idle days at home, by the sea or in the country, when time began to pall on one. It is cheering also to meet old faces and to see new ones.

THE NEW BOY.

To some of you who read these lines, it is your first term at a big public school. This great event in your life will be remembered vividly in the years that are to come. You may find things very different from what you expected or to what you are accustomed. In the first place, you will discover that other boys are not exactly angels and that sooner or later you will have to submit to chaff and unsuspected pranks which you will not like. Your feelings may be ruffled, and you will be sorely tempted to show your annoyance. Any exhibition of anger would not only be ineffectual but highly amusing to your schoolfellows. Instead, always keep a cheerful countenance and smile gamely at your tormentors. Remember that there is nothing more distasteful in the eyes of your schoolfellows than to blub or to "let on" to the masters or prefects.

ON SNEAKING.

There are times when you may have to take the blame for something of which you are innocent. If it is not really a very serious

offence, it is better to say nothing and the chances are that the real culprit will own up rather than see you punished. In any case, it is better to submit to the punishment than to sneak. On the other hand, if it is a serious offence, you can but plead innocence, and give the other fellow a chance to own up. However, this would rarely come your way, and on the whole, sneaking should be avoided almost under any circumstances. I suppose there are more new boys entering public schools at this time of the year than at any other, and I trust that the advice given above will prove beneficial to those readers who are faced with this ordeal.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDY.

With the winter term begins the new school year or course of study. To the schoolboy who looks ahead, whose future may depend largely on the progress he makes at school, now is the time to brace himself up for serious work. Let him ask himself whether he cannot do better in the next summer examinations than in the last. The evenings are lengthening and opportunities for study will be greater. It is up to every schoolboy to take advantage of these long winter evenings by applying himself earnestly to his books. There are some boys who are not endowed with a capacity for brainwork. They have to make tremendous efforts to learn anything. This in itself, if it does nothing else, strengthens a boy's character, which is even more important than actual cleverness. More students are "ploughed" in examinations for lack of trying than for lack of brains.

FOOTBALL AGAIN.

A welcome feature of the winter term is the reappearance of King Football. The goal posts are already in position, and it is not long before the first practice match is in full swing. Everyone is longing to kick at the bouncing sphere, and to lift it crashing into the net. At last, the ball comes temptingly to our feet, we steady it, and then, crash! Instead of sailing serenely into the goal the leather goes scudding along the ground or misses the goal by, at least, fifty feet. We have not yet got into our stride. In a very short time that will come back to us together with all the tricks of tackling and passing that were familiar to us last season. This year, we hope to win every match. That feeling of confidence is a healthy spirit to cultivate, and goes a long way to securing victory. But the will to win does not begin on the day of the match. It begins on those cold mornings when every member of the team turns out for field practice and training. Finally, whether you be at play or at work, make up your mind this term to try your hardest, and I hope that success will follow your efforts.

Your Football Club.

The Duties of a Full Back.

Another Interesting Chat to Junior Footballers.

PERHAPS the full back's job is not the hardest on the field; perhaps it does not require the polish and skill of the successful forward but, like every other position in football it makes its own peculiar demands upon the man who would grace of it; it requires skill and practice—different sorts from those indulged in by the forward perhaps, but above all, the man who would shine as a back must have certain physical and mental qualifications.

He must, in the first place, possess the power of anticipation. By that I mean to say he should be able to judge with some accuracy where the ball will alight after it has left the foot of an opposing forward; say, what a forward speeding towards goal with the ball at his feet is likely to do when he challenges him. He must learn the art of position play. During the course of a match he will find himself in tight corners when he must think and act quickly; therefore he must have a quick thinking and ready brain.

Rudiments of Science.

Those should be his principal mental qualities; now for the physical. Pace, in his case, is not such an important factor as it is to the forward, but for all that, he should be possessed of a certain amount of speed. He should be sturdily built, possessed of a fair amount of strength that will aid him in his tackling. He should be a good kicker with either foot—that last a most important point. He should have a quick eye, and plenty of pluck. Given these and you have all the essentials necessary for the moulding of an ideal full back.

Now for the play.

The Great Mistake.

I am going to assume that you, who are reading this article, are a full back and speak to you as such. Kicking and tackling are simple arts that you will have naturally mastered ere this so we can dismiss those, and get on with the all important question of combination.

Combination, in this case, simply means establishing an understanding with your partner and working with him. Individualism in the full back line is of very little use to-day; to be successful you and your partner must work together, to co-operate. Watch your partner when he is engaged, be prepared for what he might do. A few games played like this will soon establish the necessary combination.

A great mistake with most full back lines, I have noticed, is that the two backs stand on a line with each other. This is wrong; against a

tricky forward who knows his job both of them are generally left standing still. The better arrangement is for one full back to play slightly in front of the other so that the back behind his partner can see what is going on and then give opportune assistance. It is very necessary that one back should cover the other, should act as a sort of support to him. A forward finds it much easier to dribble the ball between two men equi-distant from each other; it's the very deuce of a job, however, for him to dribble the ball past both. If he defeats the first the second is almost bound to stop him.

The Essence of Defence.

But exactly in what positions shall the full backs place themselves, some of you may ask. Well, it has always been my experience that the man in advance should play on the wing on which the attacking happens to be developing, the rear back in advance of, though not blocking, the goal. The centre-half, in front of both, can be depended upon to check the centre-forward.

You see what I mean? Well, follow that advice and you won't go far wrong. Remember that the whole secret of full back play lies in the one back covering the other, and that such a combination as I have illustrated is more of a puzzle to opposing forwards than the straight toe-to-the-line business. When you rob an opposing forward and have the ball in your possession, look round before you do anything with it and see if there is a man of your side better placed to clear than you are yourself. If so, pass to him. If not, kick out to the wings, as hard as possible so as to get the ball as far out of the area of your own goal as possible.

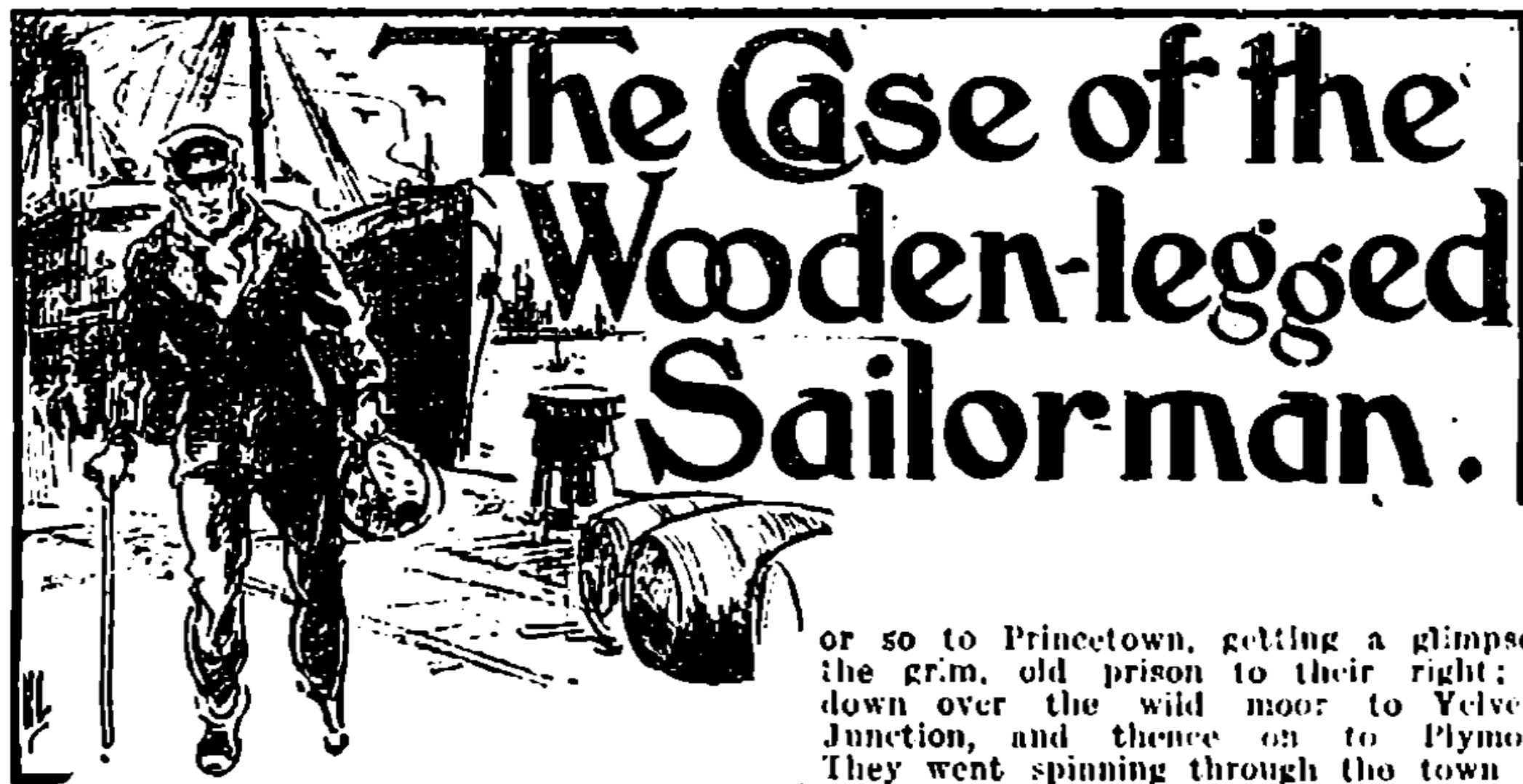
But do not imagine that you are there only to clear and kick. There are many occasions on which a back may turn a stubborn defence into a rushing attack, by feeding his men. Keep your eyes on your centre-forward especially; give him the benefit of as many passes as you can—you will discover plenty of opportunities. And remember, if possible, to make such a transference along the ground. Sky high passes are always dangerous, and very liable to fall into hands for which they are not intended.

Nutshell Advice.

Watch the wind. Don't kick too hard into it, on the other hand, when it is against you don't lift the ball too high into the air. It is liable to blow back upon you, or even past you if the wind is strong enough to carry it. Always clear towards the wings, but try and avoid playing the ball out of touch unless there is no help for it; that form of defence wastes much time and when the ball goes over the line near your own goal the consequent throw-in is likely to have dangerous developments. Never, pass back if it can be avoided, and then not without warning the man between the sticks first; many a goalkeeper has been caught napping by an unexpected back pass from his own back and the result is that the back in question has scored against his own side.

Don't attempt to play the offside game until you have had a few years of experience. Offside, though it is a scientific phase of the game is not good tactics and few people like to see it.

" ROVER."



The Case of the Wooden-legged Sailor-man.

CHAPTER I.

NELSON LEE, Two Bridges Hotel, Dartmoor.--Proceed at once to Plymouth, and meet steamer Zanzibar, from West Africa, due to-day or to-morrow. Arrest a passenger, or sailor, man with wooden leg, Peter Gormey by name, fair, and clean-shaven. Have him detained by authority until you hear further from me. Will wire you. Grand Duchy Hotel. Need of haste,—

“TRENT.”

The above telegram had been sent by no less distinguished a person than Sir Francis Trent, Chief of the Foreign Office, in London; and it had just been delivered to Nelson Lee as he sat at breakfast with Nipper at the Two Bridges Hotel, on Dartmoor, where they were spending a delightful holiday. The famous detective shrugged his shoulders irritably.

“I wish I hadn’t told Sir Francis we were coming here,” he said.

“It’s a blithering nuisance,” grumbled Nipper. “Just when the trout are biting like mad and we were going to Dartmeet to have a try for salmon.”

“Dartmeet will have to wait, my lad. When the Foreign Office says do a thing, it must be done.”

“Right oh, guv’nor! Duty before pleasure. I don’t suppose there is any hurry though.”

“I am not so sure. The vessel may arrive early to-day. The telegram is vague on that point.”

“It nearly missed us, guv’nor. It is a quarter to eleven, and if we hadn’t ever-lept ourselves this morning, we should have been gone more than an hour ago.”

Nelson Lee’s car was at the hotel garage and in less than ten minutes he and Nipper set off. They quickly covered the mile

or so to Princetown, getting a glimpse of the grim, old prison to their right; ran down over the wild moor to Yelverton Junction, and thence on to Plymouth. They went spinning through the town and a little before twelve o’clock they got out of the car at Ocean Quay, at Stonehouse Pool, and glanced at each other in dismay.

“My word, there she is!” cried Nipper.

Yes there was the steamer, Zanzibar, her cables taut. No signs of activity were visible on board of her, and there were only a few persons on the quay. One of them, a man in blue uniform and a peaked cap, hastened to Nelson Lee who shook hands with him warmly.

“Hallo, Duckett!” he exclaimed. “What are you doing here?”

“I came to see you,” replied Inspector Duckett of the Plymouth police.

“Me? How is that?”

“I had a message from the Foreign Office, instructing me to meet you on the quay when the Zanzibar arrived. I have just come. I wasn’t at the station when the message was delivered, so I got here too late.”

“And so have we, Duckett, unfortunately. How long since the vessel docked? Can you tell me?”

“A couple of hours ago, Lee. The passengers have landed, and most of the crew.”

Nelson Lee nodded. He took from his pocket the telegram he had received, and handed it to the inspector, who read it and shrugged his shoulders.

“What the deuce does it mean, I wonder?” he said.

“I have no more idea than you have,” Lee answered. “I am expecting further advice. I got the telegram at Two Bridges, where Nipper and I have been staying, and we ran down in our car as quickly as we could. By the way, do you know of a wooden-legged man of the name of Peter Gormley?”

“No; I have no recollection of such a person. I doubt if he belongs to Plymouth. It is a queer business, isn’t it?”

"Yes, Duckett, very queer indeed. From the fact that the Foreign Office are interested in the matter it must be serious, and is presumably of a diplomatic and international nature. It is a pity Sir Francis Trent did not give me a full explanation."

What was to be done? How was the missing Peter Gormley, the man with the wooden leg, to be found? The situation having been briefly discussed, Nelson Lee went on board of the Zanzibar, and returned to his companions in ten minutes.

"No news of any importance," he said. "Gormley is a sailor, and the vessel picked him up at Luba, a settlement on the coast of Nigeria, where he had been ill with fever. He hadn't money enough for his fare, and the Zanzibar didn't need any hands, but he was allowed to work his passage to England. That is the information I got from the purser. He said the man went ashore after the passengers had left, and the last he saw of him he was crossing the quay." Nelson Lee paused for a moment, his brows knit. "The fellow may still be in Plymouth, whether he belongs here or not," he continued, "or he may by now be on his way up to London by the boat-train. At all events, I will make prompt inquiries at the various railway-stations, beginning with the one yonder. And I will be greatly obliged to you, Duckett, if you will have your men search the town thoroughly for a sailor with a wooden leg. When I have finished with my inquiries," he added, "Nipper and I will go to the Grand Duchy Hotel, where I expect to receive another wire from the Foreign Office. We will engage rooms there, and will come to the police-station after we have had luncheon. Perhaps by then you will have some news for me."

CHAPTER II.

NO second telegram from the Foreign Office was delivered at the Grand Duchy Hotel during the remainder of that day. So far as Nelson Lee had been able to learn, no man with a wooden leg, answering to the description of Peter Gormley, had booked at any of the Plymouth railway-stations, and the search for the sailor throughout the town had been futile, the police having failed to discover any trace of him.

Such was the situation that night, when Nipper and the detective were at the police-station, discussing the mysterious Peter Gormley with Inspector Duckett. They had not lost hope of success, for a number of constables were still engaged in the search.

They sat there for several hours, and at length, when the clock had struck ten, and Nelson Lee had risen from his chair, there came into the charge-room a big, burly

man, with a weatherbeaten complexion and a fair moustache, who wore oilskins, and was obviously a chauffeur.

"I am a cab-driver, sir," he said to the inspector, as he stepped forward and pulled off his cap. "Osborn is my name—Joe Osborn."

"Yes?" murmured Inspector Duckett. "I have seen you before. What is it?"

"I was told this evening by a pal of mine, sir," the chauffeur answered, "that the police were trying to find a wooden-legged sailor-man, who landed from the steamer Zanzibar to-day."

"Quite right. Do you know anything of the man?"

"I do, sir. I had him as a fare. He had a wooden leg, and I don't doubt he was the person of the name of Gormley, from the description of him that was circulated. He left the Zanzibar after the other passengers had gone ashore, and walked straight across the quay to the railway-station, where I was standing, and hired my cab."

"And where did you take him?" the inspector asked eagerly.

"He told me to drive him to Number 17, Lark Street," Joe Osborn replied. "It is in the old part of the town, close to the Barbican. It is a cheap lodging-house. The landlady was in the doorway, and I saw the man speak to her, and saw him follow her to a room at the back of the hall, as I was turning my cab round."

"Was the man a stranger to you, Osborn?"

"Yes, sir. It was the first time I'd laid eyes on him."

"Did he appear to be frightened, or in a hurry?" Nelson Lee interjected.

"It struck me that he was afraid of something," said the chauffeur, "as he told me to drive as fast as I could."

"Did any other cab follow you, can you tell me?"

"None could have, sir, for my cab was the only one at the station. There wasn't another near."

"Yet one might have followed, without your knowledge, after you left the station."

"It is possible, sir. I drove through crowded streets."

"Well, here is something for your information, my good fellow."

"Thank you kindly, sir. It is very good of you."

With that, slipping into his pocket the Treasury note for ten shillings that had been given to him, Joe Osborn departed. The inspector nodded cheerfully.

"I am glad we have located the fellow," he said. "It is evident that he was afraid of being arrested when he landed."

"Or of something else," Nelson Lee quietly answered.

"Something else? What do you mean?"

"Nothing in particular. I was thinking of the instructions from the Foreign Office. The man Gormley was merely to be de-

tained until further orders, you will remember, which vaguely suggests that—" Nelson Lee paused. "We will be off now to arrest the sailor," he went on, "and we will take one of your constables with us."

"Four persons to arrest one man?" Inspector Duckett exclaimed.

"More than one, perhaps," Nelson Lee replied, in an absent tone. "We had better not waste any time, for I have a dim idea that Peter Gormley is in danger. It is a mysterious and sinister affair that we have to deal with, unless I am greatly mistaken. Come along, Duckett. Fetch a revolver with you."

CHAPTER III.

A QUARTER of an hour later Nelson Lee and Nipper, and the Inspector and a constable, got out of a cab in the vicinity of their destination, and walked for a couple of hundred yards to Number 17, Lark Street.

It was half-past ten o'clock, an hour when the residents of this neighbourhood were mostly asleep. The street was gloomy and almost deserted, and the lodging-house was in total darkness at the front.

The entrance to it was open, and at once the little party stole noiselessly along the narrow hall, to the rear of it, and stopped by a door from which shone a glint of light. Within they could hear low and angry voices, and the scraping of feet.

"What did I tell you?" Nelson Lee whispered. "I was right. The door is locked, and we'll have to force it," he added. "Here goes. All together."

The first combined assault failed, but the second, delivered the next instant and more vigorously, burst the door from lock and hinges, and hurled it to the floor with a crash.

And as the detective and his companions sprang over the threshold, into a poorly-furnished room where a candle was burning on a shelf, they had a glimpse of a motionless figure lying on the bed, and were confronted by three startled men who all wore masks. One, who had a grey beard, leaped with an oath at the constable; and, having dealt him a blow that knocked him down, he was seized by Inspector Duckett. He promptly wrenched himself free, however, and sped along the hall to the street.

Meanwhile, the other two men, with Nelson Lee and Nipper at their heels, had dashed to an open window. As they dived headforemost through it, Nelson Lee snatched one by the ankle, and tried to drag him back. But after a brief struggle the fellow broke from him, and he and his companion went racing along a narrow passage, in the opposite direction to Lark Street.

The constable had scrambled to his feet,

and now Inspector Duckett hastened to the window and looked out.

"They're gone!" he cried. "I can't see or hear them! It would be no use giving chase in pitch darkness! The other rascal has escaped, too! I had him, but he was as slippery as an eel!"

"It can't be helped," Nelson Lee replied, shrugging his shoulders. "They were too quick for us. And now let us see to the prisoner, Duckett."

The man, who was fully clothed, was Peter Gormley. He was stretched, bound and gagged, on the bed, his pockets turned inside out, and his wooden leg lay near-by on the floor. The room was in a state of disorder, and there were indications that it had been thoroughly searched.

A closet and a chest of drawers were open, the grate had been shifted from its place, and from the quantity of soot in the fireplace somebody must have been poking up the chimney.

Nelson Lee observed all these details while Nipper and the Inspector were releasing the prisoner, who sat up and looked around him. He glanced at Inspector Duckett and the constable, and bent his furtive grey eyes on Lee and the lad, as if he was puzzled by their presence.

"Did these scoundrels escape?" he asked in a husky voice.

"Yes, all of them," replied the Inspector. "They got away."

"And what brought you here, sir?"

"We heard angry voices as we were passing, and came in to investigate. We burst your door open because we thought there were burglars inside."

"Who are these two persons in plain clothes?"

"They are friends of mine from London. The constable and I have been showing them through the slums."

The explanations were plausible. Inspector Duckett had deceived the man, having been instructed by Nelson Lee not to mention the telegram from the Foreign Office, or the information that had been gleaned from the chauffeur.

The shade of apprehension, which Nelson Lee had not failed to observe, had faded from the sailor's eyes. He was a man of middle-age, with a bronzed and gnarled face. He asked for his wooden leg, and when it had been given to him by Lee, who had a moment before picked it up and peered into the hollow interior of it, the man strapped it to its place and rose.

Hobbling to a table on which were a glass and a bottle of rum, he poured a stiff measure into the glass, and tossed it off at a gulp.

"I've had a streak of bad luck these last few months, sir, what with one thing and another," he said in a grumbling tone to the Inspector, as he sat down in a chair. "Gormley is my name—Peter Gormley—and I am a seafaring man. I sailed in a

cargo-boat from Liverpool to Luba, on the coast of Nigeria, and I was left behind there with an attack of fever. I was ill for weeks, and I had no more than recovered when the steamer Zanzibar touched at that port, and the captain let me work my passage back to England, though he didn't need an extra hand. The vessel reached Plymouth this morning, and I came to this lodging-house, where I had been before, a year or so ago. I've been in all day, and as I was sitting here to-night, feeling drowsy, the three masked men crept quietly into the room. One of them shut and bolted the door, and before I could call for help the other two had me by the throat.

"I put up a good fight against the three of them, but they bound and gagged me, and threw me on the bed. They went through my pockets, and stole about three pounds in silver and notes, which didn't satisfy them. Thinking I might have more money hidden somewhere, they ransacked the bed, and searched everywhere in the room, including the fireplace and the chimney; and when they had finished they took off my wooden leg, and looked into that. Then you turned up, sir, and the scoundrels escaped."

With a shaky hand, a savage glitter in his eyes, Peter Gormley poured out another measure of rum. Inspector Duckett started to speak, but Nelson Lee promptly checked him by a furtive gesture.

"I am sorry for you, Gormley," he said, in the slow, drawling voice that had so often put criminals off their guard. "You have lost your all, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, every penny," the sailor assented, shaking his head sadly.

"Robbery was the motive of the men, of course. That is to say, it was your money only they wanted?"

"It couldn't have been anything else, sir."

"It is rather strange that they should have taken the risk and trouble to steal from a poor sailor man, living in cheap lodgings."

"It is, sir. Very strange indeed. I don't know, though. Perhaps they saw me land from the Zanzibar this morning, and shadowed me here, thinking I might have been paid off after a long cruise, and had a pocketful of money."

"Have you no idea who the men were?" Nelson Lee inquired.

"I have not, sir," Peter Gormley fiercely declared, a ring of truth in his voice. "How could I? Even if the scoundrels hadn't been masked I shouldn't have known them, as I have no friends or acquaintances in Plymouth."

Nelson Lee was silent for a moment. "I put it to you," he flashed out abruptly, "that the men took off your wooden leg, and examined it, before they ransacked the bed and searched the room."

The sailor showed a trace of confusion. "No, sir, they—they didn't," he replied. "It was after they had searched the bed and the room that they removed my wooden leg."

"Well, the point isn't of any importance," Lee murmured. "By the way," he continued sharply and quickly, "did you walk here from the Ocean quay, or did you take a cab?"

"I—I took a cab, sir."

"Wasn't that an unnecessary luxury for a man in your position, Gormley?"

"I was tired, sir, for one thing, and I had pains where my lost leg used to be, so to speak. It was bitten off by a shark in the Caribbean Sea a couple of years ago."

"Did you observe if another cab was following yours after you had left the quay?"

"I didn't notice one, sir, though I looked back once or twice."

"You looked back, did you? Why was that?"

"Not for any particular reason, sir."

The sailor changed colour as he spoke. Nelson Lee nodded vaguely, as if he had no further interest in the subject, and lit a cigarette.

His expression was one of utter indifference, though he had learned something from the questions he had put. They tended to corroborate a shrewd theory which he had previously formed.

"Good-night, Gormley," he said. "Perhaps the police will succeed in arresting the thieves, and will recover the stolen money, but I fear there isn't much chance of it. Come, Duckett, let us go," he added.

The fallen door having been lifted, and placed against the wall, the detective and his companions left the room, and passed out of the building to Lark Street. There was a look of bewilderment on Inspector Duckett's face.

"What about your instructions from the Foreign Office, Lee?" he asked, when they had gone for a few yards. "I expected you to arrest the sailor."

"Not yet," Nelson Lee replied, as he stopped. "It will be to our advantage to let him alone for the present."

"I can't understand why. It seems that the mystery is deeper than before."

"On the contrary, my dear fellow, it is clearer than it was."

"Clearer?" repeated the inspector. "Do you mean that you can account for—"

"I have a clue," Lee interrupted. "That is all. There will probably be surprising developments in the course of to-morrow, and meanwhile Peter Gormley had better be kept under surveillance, though I think he will stay where he is through the night. At all events, have your constable watch the lodging-house until you have sent a plain clothes man to relieve him. And at

eight o'clock in the morning the second man will be relieved by Nipper, to whom I will give certain instructions."

"Very well," Inspector Duckett assented. "I'll be guided by you in the matter."

The constable remained behind, with instructions that he should be careful not to let the sailor discover his presence. The others walked on towards the police-station,

CHAPTER IV.

INSPECTOR Duckett was at his desk in the charge-room, busily writing, when Nipper entered the police-station at the close of the next day. At a sign from the inspector the lad passed through to a private room at the rear, and here he



The other two, their escape cut off, offered a frenzied resistance when Lee and the inspector and the two constables flung themselves upon them.

and they had got to the end of Lark Street when Nelson Lee stopped again, and uttered a low exclamation.

"By Jove, something has just occurred to me!" he said, with a keen sparkle in his eyes. "The chauffeur Osborn! I wish I had thought of it before he went off with his cab! But never mind. I daresay it won't be difficult to find him."

"What do you want with the fellow?" the inspector inquired.

Lee shook his head. "You may know to-morrow," he answered.

found Nelson Lee, who was lounging on a couch with a pipe in his mouth.

"You are late, Nipper," he remarked, as he sat up. "I expected you would be at the station, whereas I have waited for you a quarter of an hour."

"There was no time fixed," said the lad. "How could you have expected me?"

"By a simple calculation," Nelson Lee replied. "Let me have your report now. Make it brief."

"After I relieved the plain-clothes constable in Lark Street early this morning,"

began Nipper, whose features were thinly disguised. "I waited until ten o'clock before Peter Gormley appeared from his lodging. And a pretty dance he led me, guv'nor. For hours he stumped about the main part of the town on his wooden leg, from street to street, looking at every cab that passed him, and stopping to make inquiries at different cab-ranks. Only once was I close enough to hear what he said, and on that occasion he asked a chauffeur if he could tell him where to find a cab that bore the number, 1187. He had something to eat and drink in a public-house, and set off again, going as far as Stonehouse in one direction and Devonport in the other."

"Number 1187 is Joe Osborn's cab, as it happens," said Nelson Lee. "But go on."

"There isn't much more to tell you," the lad continued. "Gormley finally gave up the search, and returned to his lodgings in Lark Street. That was less than an hour ago. I loitered in the neighbourhood for a little while, and then I came on here. And what have you been doing? Taking it easy, I suppose?"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"On the contrary," he said. "I have tramped as far as you have. I also was in Lark Street this morning, and when you and the sailor started off, I followed you. I was wearing a false moustache. I had a theory, and it proved to be right; for I presently discovered that while you were shadowing Peter Gormley, somebody else was shadowing the two of you."

"He was an elderly Jew with a hooked nose, and a grey beard and moustache. To cut a long story short, the Jew and I hung on to the trail, separated by a number of yards, during the whole of the day; and when you and the sailor turned off the Citadel Road, towards Lark Street, the Jew stopped, and so did I. We were on opposite sides of the road. The Jew retraced his steps, and at that moment, as luck would have it, I saw cab number 1187 standing a little beyond me. It had just put down a fare. When I had given hasty instructions to Joe Osborn, he turned his cab around, and drove slowly in the direction in which the Jew had gone. And as I was watching, he overtook the man, who at once called to him to stop, jumped into the cab, and was driven westwards. And then I came to the police-station."

"You expected the Jew to get into that cab?" asked Nipper, in a puzzled tone.

"I was sure he would if he noticed the number, as he must have done," said Nelson Lee.

"Who the deuce is he, and why did he and the sailor spend the day in searching for the same cab?"

"Can't you guess, my boy?"

"No, guv'nor, I'll be hanged if I can. It's too deep for me, though I can usually follow your deductions. I don't doubt

that it's all clear to you, but I can't imagine why—"

"That must be the chauffeur," Nelson Lee interrupted, as a cab was heard to stop in the street. "I've been waiting for him."

They rose, and went into the charge-room, and the next instant the chauffeur came in. He glanced at Inspector Duckett, touching his cap, and turned to the detective.

"Well, sir, here I am," he said. "I lost your man."

"You lost him?" Nelson Lee exclaimed in consternation. "How is that?"

"It wasn't my fault," declared Joe Osborn. "The Jew had me drive him to Devonport, where he got out. But he didn't enter any house, as I thought he would. When he had walked for a few yards, he crossed the road, and stepped into another cab, and drove back as he had come."

"You followed him, didn't you?"

"No, sir, I didn't. I thought there was no need of doing so, for I knew the man, as it happened."

"You know him? Who is he?"

"Mr. Joseph Solomon, a pawnbroker, of Drake Court, off King Street."

"You are certain of it, Osborn?"

"Absolutely, sir. I have often seen the Jew before."

"Ah, that's all right, then! No harm has been done by losing the man. Did you come straight here from Devonport?"

"Not at once, sir. I took a lady to Millbay Station first."

Nelson Lee's eyes sparkled with satisfaction. He went out to the street, and when he returned, four or five minutes later, he was rubbing his hands with delight.

"Osborn," he said, "I perceive that a hole, a narrow slit, has been worn on the seat of your cab. It goes through the leather to the stuffing."

"Yes, I know," the chauffeur assented. "I've been meaning to have it repaired."

"How long has it been there?"

"For two or three months, sir."

Nipper and the inspector had been listening in perplexity. Joe Osborn departed, with an ample reward for his services in his pocket, and Nelson Lee glanced at his watch.

"Come, we may as well be off at once," he said.

"Off?" repeated Inspector Duckett. "Where to?"

"To arrest Mr. Joseph Solomon, the pawnbroker."

"What on earth for, Lee?"

Nelson Lee laughed.

"To disclose the mystery of Peter Gormley's wooden leg," he replied. "It might be advisable to take a couple of constables with us, Duckett," he added.

CHAPTER V.

THE dusk of evening had fallen when Nelson Lee and Nipper, and Inspector Duckett and two policemen, turned off King Street into Drake Court, at the bottom of which Mr. Joseph Solomon's pawbroking establishment, with his name on the window, and three golden balls suspended over the doorway.

The shop was dark within, and the door was found to be locked; but at the rear, behind a pair of thick curtains that were closely drawn, a light shone. To the left of the building was a narrow alley that ran to another street.

Nelson Lee slipped into this, leaving his companions crouching in shadow against the wall of the court, and he did not return for nearly ten minutes.

He brought interesting news.

"Come, now, and be very careful," he bade. "I believe there are three men, including the pawnbroker."

"The three who robbed the sailor last night?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, no doubt about it," Nelson Lee assented.

With stealthy tread the little party glided along the alley, and through the gate, into the yard; and as quietly they entered the building by the rear door, and groped along a narrow hall to another door beneath which a light shone. It was not locked.

Lee threw it open, and as he and his companions sprang into a small room they took in the scene at a swift glance. Joseph Solomon, and two rough-looking men, were seated around a small table, on which lay a green jewel that flamed and glittered, a great emerald that was twice the size of a plover's egg.

The three jumped up, startled by the sudden intrusion, and the pawnbroker tottered against the wall, shaking with terror, as Nelson Lee levelled a revolver at him.

The other two, their escape cut off, offered a frenzied resistance when Lee and the inspector and the two constables flung themselves upon them. They fought desperately for several minutes, and at length, overcome by superior numbers, they submitted to arrest, and handcuffs were locked on their wrists.

"I know these fellows," declared Inspector Duckett. "They are two crooks, Fowler and Deane by name."

Nelson Lee lowered his revolver, and picked up the big jewel, which blazed like green fire when he examined it.

"This is what we came for, Solomon," he said sternly. "I warn you, that any statement you make may be used in evidence against you."

"I—I will tell you everything, sir," the pawnbroker replied, in a tremulous voice. "It will be better for me if I confess. An old friend of mine, of the name of Lopez, a Portuguese, who is a trader at the Port

of Luba, on the Nigerian coast, stole the emerald from a native chief. He was afraid of the jewel being found on him, so he hid it one night in the wooden leg of a sailor, Peter Gormley, while the man was asleep. I had a letter from him, telling me what he had done, and that the sailor was shortly sailing for Plymouth by the steamer Zanzibar. He said that I was to contrive to steal the emerald and sell it, and send three-quarters of the proceeds to him.

"Peter Gormley landed yesterday morning. He hired a cab at the Ocean Quay, and I got into another one, and followed him to the house in Lark Street. I went there last night with these men, Fowler and Deane, and we bound and gagged Gormley. But the jewel wasn't in his wooden leg, and we couldn't find it anywhere in the room. Then you turned up with the police, and—"

"I know the rest," Nelson Lee interrupted. "You suspected that Peter Gormley had concealed the emerald somewhere in the cab. You had noticed the number of it and so had the sailor, and you and he spent to-day in searching for it. You discovered it late in the afternoon, but I was on your track at the time, and I instructed the chauffeur before he picked you up in the Citadel Road. He drove you to Devonport, where you gave him the slip and took another cab; but he had recognised you, and when he returned to the police-station he told me who you were.

"That accounts for our visit this evening. I had little or no doubt that you had found the jewel where Gormley had concealed it, in a hole in a seat of the cab."

"It has been a very simple case, Duckett," he went on, turning to the inspector. "During the voyage, of course, Peter Gormley discovered the emerald in his wooden leg, knew what it was, and determined to keep it. And I naturally suspected, after what occurred last night at Lark Street, that the stone was hidden in the cab in which the sailor drove from the quay. I also suspected that both he and his assailants were aware of the number of the cab, and would search for it to-day, and I was right. I don't think I should arrest Gormley. Though he is a rogue himself, he outwitted these three worse rogues, and thus enabled us to get possession of the emerald. As for the action of the Foreign Office, that will be made clear to you later." Nelson Lee paused. "I will keep the jewel, Duckett," he continued. "Go out and fetch a couple of cabs, Nipper, and we will take our prisoners to the police-station."

"I will wire Sir Francis Trent at once, and in the morning I will send the emerald to the Foreign Office by registered post, and give this letter to Inspector Duckett. And then, Nipper," he added, "we will return to our quiet, little hotel on Dartmoor, and finish our holidays."

THE END.

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(Now read on.)

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Bouoar in Desperate Straits.

HEARTILY glad that this mission was over, Perks was preparing to trot homewards, when the sound of hurried footsteps coming up the lane reached his ears.

He paused for a moment, half-terrified—hardly knowing which way to go.

"Hurry up!" said a voice. "There's no time to lose!"

It was the voice of Ralston, of whom Perks stood in great fear. He bolted towards the gate that led into the meadow, and clambered over.

In the act of doing so he was seen, and instantly a cry was raised.

"There he is! Stop him!"

Ralston, with several men behind him, came tearing up the lane, and climbed over the locked gate one after the other.

The alarmed Perks sped across the fields, unconsciously going straight for the river. He was in a state of mortal terror. Imprisonment, or perhaps worse, might be in store for him if he were caught. So across the meadow he scudded, like a deer before the hounds.

At the further side of the meadow he blundered into a ditch, but scrambled out of it somehow, and forced his way through a hedge.

On came his pursuers. There was only one

thing for it now. He must cross the river or be captured.

The youth was desperate, and there must have been a lot of grit in him, otherwise he would never have done as he did—make straight for the river and plunge in.

Down he went into the ice-cold water. Then he rose pulling to the surface, and struck out vigorously, for he was a tolerably good swimmer.

It was a part of the river known as the Horseshoe Bend that Perks had plunged in, and there the current ran swift and strong. Perks knew the spot well, but he had never swam there before. He knew, however, that the easiest way to get to the other side was to swim across at an angle with the current. So he struck out accordingly.

The men came hurrying to the bank, and he heard one of them cry out:

"Who was the chap?"

"Don't know," replied the voice of Ralston; "but whoever it was, he'll be drowned. Come back, you fool! Even if you don't take cramp you'll never get across!"

Perks heard the warning, but shouted back no reply. He meant to get across or die in the attempt. It was literally a case of sink or swim!

The water was bitterly cold, but the excitement seemed to keep his blood warm and give him strength. His clothes impeded him somewhat, but as each stroke carried him nearer to the opposite bank, he became more confident of success.

The cry of warning from behind now became a threat.

"Come back, or I'll shoot you!" yelled Ralston.

"Shoot away!" muttered Perks to himself. "If you hit me I don't care! It will then be all over, and maybe folks will say that I died as brave as Tom Tartar would have done!"

Ralston did indeed produce a revolver, and point it towards the head that was dimly seen bobbing up and down in the

water. But he really had no intention of shooting, and he replaced the weapon in his pocket.

"Let the beggar go!" he said to his companions. "Whoever he is, he has pluck, and deserves to escape!"

Perks managed to get to the other side, but only with extreme difficulty. He was terribly exhausted, and when he set foot on the towing-path he went blundering on like a drunken person.

But the joy of having eluded his pursuers acted as a restorative, and very soon he was trotting home at a good pace.

As the towing-path was a short cut to the village compared with that which Ratston and the others must take, Perks reached the schoolhouse in safety, and without being seen by anybody.

Entering the doorway, he stood upon the mat and divested himself of his soaked clothes. Depositing these in a box in the lumber-room, he crept softly to his bedroom, and, rolling himself tightly up in the blankets, went to sleep almost immediately.

By post, next morning, came a letter to Tom Tartar. It was from his younger brother, Ned, who had not as yet left his parents' home for the rough-and-tumble of a boarding-school.

Thus ran young Ned's brotherly epistle:

"DEAR OLD TOM—I have some news for you, but whether you will like it or not I can't say. The governor thinks you have been at school long enough, and is looking about to find some crib for you. How do you feel over it? He will write to you soon, but I can give you the tip that he don't want to hurry you, for a little while. There's a lot of us, as you know, and the girls are awfully expensive. I get on all right at school, but lickings now and again. I fought Bill Pullen, and fairly knocked him out in the second round. He doesn't crow over me as he used to do. How do you get on for pocket-money? I'm kept rather short, for the governor says I spend it wastefully. Can you lend me two bob?—Your loving brother,

"NED."

Tom was amused with this letter, but also touched.

He did not desire to be called away from school just yet, although he certainly felt that it was time for him to be thinking of going out into the world.

After breakfast he wrote a short letter to Ned, and got a five-shilling postal order to enclose in it, telling him, as all elder brothers do, not to squander it.

Later in the day he wrote a long letter to his father, telling him of many things which had happened at the school, and expressing a desire to leave when certain mysteries were solved.

He said nothing about the letter he had received from Ned, or of the small sum of money he had sent to him.

Meanwhile, Bouncer's Select Academy for

Young Gentlemen was going through a time of stress and trouble.

Mr. Bartholomew Bouncer was in dire financial difficulties—on the verge of bankruptcy, in fact. Not only was he heavily in debt to the local tradespeople, but he was unable to pay the wages due to Mrs. Chickley, his housekeeper and general factotum. In consequence, that worthy woman one morning struck work, and refused to even make a bed until her long overdue money was paid her.

As Mr. Bouncer was quite unable to meet this demand, the housekeeper packed up her belongings, and went away to live with some relations, threatening that county court proceedings against her employer would be instituted forthwith.

Naturally, Mr. Bouncer was somewhat upset at first by this "base desertion"—as he called it—but being a man of resource, he at once took steps to cope with the domestic problem which faced him.

As there was very little food to cook, breakfast was soon prepared, and then the boys were informed that for a few days the usual "curriculum of study" would be suspended, to enable each pupil to do a share of the domestic work.

"Deserted for base, sordid reasons by the woman called Chickley," he said, more in sorrow than in anger. "It is now for us to rely upon our own energies, and so thwart the evil intentions of those who would bring to ruin the select educational establishment which I have built up and brought to its present high reputation by the sweat of my brow!"

The hungry boarders displayed no enthusiasm at this oracular flight. They did not give vent to one solitary encouraging "hurrah." As a matter of fact, they looked sulky and mutinous.

The question of provender was getting a serious one.

Bouncer's name was no longer good for credit in the village, and ready money was fearfully short.

"We've got to pinch a bit, boys," he told them, "but only for a while. A wholesome semi-fast won't hurt us. It's healthful."

The boys took a different view of it, and there was much grumbling among them.

"Isn't there short commons enough now," said Snacks, "without making them shorter?"

After some thought Bouncer hit upon a scheme for temporarily raising the wind.

Having looked up an old volume of the peerage, he searched it for the names of men to whom an appeal for help would possibly be successful.

After he had made his selection, he wrote about a dozen letters of distress, each varying from the other in the details of his misfortune.

To one philanthropic nobleman he wrote that he had lost his "wife and children" by fever, and his whole school had fled to another, that he had been burnt out,

to a third, that the bursting of a reservoir had flooded his house, making it uninhabitable, and so dispersed his school.

And so he went exercising his ingenuity until the list was completed.

"I'm bound to get something," he said, as he closed up the last letter, "and those who suspect me will simply burn the letters. It's too far off to send the mendicinity officer to make inquiries."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Chopps Covets Freshly Hall.

It was about a fortnight after the party given at his mansion, that Sir Claude Freshly became acquainted with the story of the skeleton discovered in the secret chamber by Tom and Cecil.

That it was a confirmation of an old family story, looked upon as a legend, was beyond a doubt.

The description given of the rings worn by the unfortunate woman when she disappeared tallied with those found upon the bony fingers of the dead.

Arrangements were made for the proper interment of the skeleton in the family vault.

It was put into a coffin, with all the dust and hair found in the room, so that no portion of the dead might be treated with irreverence.

Then there was a day appointed for a survey of the secret ways of the old house.

As much curiosity was excited on the subject, Sir Claude invited a few people to be there.

Tom was, of course, one of the number, as he was in the position to act somewhat as a guide.

Before the general body of guests were admitted, the passages already traversed were well watered and a great portion of the dust removed.

The full details of the wandering that day would only weary the reader.

Suffice it to say that the hidden passages permeated nearly the whole of the building, and at least a score of little nooks or chambers, evidently places for the concealment of refugees, were brought to light.

A mass of papers were found, among them the first title-deeds of the estate, given to the Freshly family by one of the Edwards.

The last, and, to the thinking of some, the strangest discovery of all, was a passage leading from the house right under the park, to some unknown place.

The air was too foul to admit of exploration, and the assumption was that the other end was blocked up.

Chopps was among the visitors who inspected these interesting discoveries, and he grew quite excited.

"A house like this," he said, "would, in itself, be worth ten thousand a year to some people."

"It would be a very good rental," replied Sir Claude, with a smile.

"I think you take an exaggerated view of the value of romance," remarked Mr. Wrasper.

"I was not thinking of it in a romantic light," replied Chopps. "I am not that way inclined. I am essentially a modern man, with modern thoughts, and a love of modern things. I believe there is a lot of humbug in 'the-good-old-days' talk."

"Then how would you make the house worth ten thousand a year?" asked Sir Claude.

"As a show place. But it would not bring in two hundred a week," said Chopps. "I see I spoke hastily. One does at times, without reckoning."

But notwithstanding his drawing back, he more than once said to himself that day:

"Ten thousand, twenty thousand, thirty thousand—any price it would be worth, in the right hands. What a crib for my work! I've looked for one for years without any luck, and now I've found it I might as well ask for the moon as hope to get it!"

That was true enough.

Nothing would induce the Freshlys to give up their ancestral home.

It was part of themselves. To give it up would be as bad or worse than yielding a limb.

It was rarely that Chopps was so excited as he was that day.

When the time came to leave he was loth to go, and hung about the panel entrances to the passages—they all stood open—peering into the dark ways and muttering to himself all sorts of eulogies on the place.

He was absolutely the last to leave the hall, and Tom lingered behind a bit, so that they might come together.

"Wonderful place, sir?" said Tom.

"Invaluable," replied Chopps, absently. "Why, in those little chambers above one could— Tartar, I'm talking nonsense! The sight of those curious places has quite upset me."

"I think I could guess how the hall would be valuable to some people," said Tom.

"It's no use guessing," returned Chopps curtly.

"Oh, there is no harm in it!"

"There is no good in it, Tartar, so don't do it."

Tom laughed as Chopps strode on to catch up Mr. Wrasper.

"I've got nearer and nearer every day," Tom muttered, "and the end cannot be far off."

Ralston was of the party, and he, too, had taken great interest in the discovery, like Chopps.

Whether it struck him that the hall was

(Continued on page 111 of cover.)

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particularly valuable for any purpose, he did not say, but he was very thoughtful. They parted with him near his lodgings, Chopps and he not so much as looking at each other.

Silence was general, and very few words were exchanged on the way home.

CHAPTER XL.

More Trouble for Snacks.

BARTHOLOMEW BOUNCER being called away from home on pressing private matters—to wit, to attend the county-court at the suit of John Gibbons, baker and confectioner—exhorted his pupils to behave themselves in his absence.

"I may be away for an hour, or for two, or all day," he said; "the time of my coming back is uncertain; but if, when I do come back, I find you up to any games—I mean disorderly conduct—I will give you a castigation all round."

As he had of late showed a tendency to threaten in this manner, and to keep his word if he got half a chance, several promises of good conduct were given him.

Eased by this assurance, and armed with his umbrella, he went his way.

As soon as the pedagogue started, Snacks stole up to a disused attic, watched his retreating form until it was well down the road, and then went back to his friends with the tidings that "old bottle-nose had cleared out."

"What shall we do?" asked Snacks. "It's awful dull, anyway. Here, I'll keep school. First class, stand up. That's you, Winks."

"Stand up yourself," growled Winks.

"I'll examine you sitting down," said Snacks. "How many bottles of rum will it take to make a Bouncer bottle-nose? Speak up, first class, Winks."

"As many again—as half, and one over," growled Winks. "Do you call this fun, Snacks?"

"Yes; it's harmless fun. Don't it suit you?"

"No; I want something more lively. Let's set fire to the house!"

A general gasp of surprise followed this suggestion. Raddle's eyes came nearly out of his head.

"You don't mean that, Winks?" he said.

"I do," replied Winks furiously. "I feel as if I wanted to set fire to something. What a beastly life it is here! Let's break out, and go a-pirating. Let's take to the highway and rob somebody."

"I wouldn't mind robbing anyone if I didn't get into trouble," said Snacks. "If Bouncer doesn't come back before dark, we can go out and rob him."

"He's got nothing to be robbed of," returned Jebbs contemptuously.

"It would give him a jolly good scare, anyhow," said Snacks.

"We've got the whole day before us," said Winks. "Let's do something. I've got an idea."

"Hooray!" roared Snacks. "At last—at last, Winks has actually got an idea!"

"Shut up, will you!" growled Winks. "Now, my idea is this. Wrasper's boys are in the class-room from nine to twelve, and from two to half-past four; what do you say to invading their playground either in the morning or the afternoon?"

"All right," said Snacks, half-heartedly. "But if they catch us, I reckon it will be warm."

"How can they catch us?" demanded Winks. "We needn't go far in—only just a few yards. Then we can begin to yell until we see them coming out, and after that we can run."

"And do you call that fun?" demanded Raddles sneeringly.

"Yes—can you think of anything better?"

"Yes. Let's go out and take what turns up."

"But supposing Bouncer comes back while we are away?"

"Not he. When he gets off for an hour he's good for the day—the beastly old drunkard!"

"Let's stop out all day," suggested Jebbs. "We can take some grub with us."

This suggestion, finding general favour, they adjourned forthwith to the larder, and quickly transferred to a green baize bag a piece of neck of mutton—scrag end—two pounds of Dutch cheese, and three loaves of bread.

The feeding at the Bouncer Academy had of late been on the most frugal scale.

It was about ten o'clock when Snacks and his companions sallied forth, and, passing through the village, reached the gates of Wrasper's school.

They peeped through the gate and saw that the place was deserted, while not a solitary face could be seen at the windows.

Snacks tried the gate, and it opened, being merely on the latch.

"Why shouldn't we go in?" he said.

Presently they went inside in rather straggling order, the bold Snacks leading the way, but keeping his eyes open for the rush of anyone from the house, so as to make good his retreat.

But nobody appeared, and, emboldened, they went on further and further, until they were within a few feet of the front door.

"I think this is far enough," said Winks.

"Let's go into Wrasper's garden," suggested Snacks.

"You daren't do it."

"Oh! daren't I? Hold this bag, and see."

(To be continued.)

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