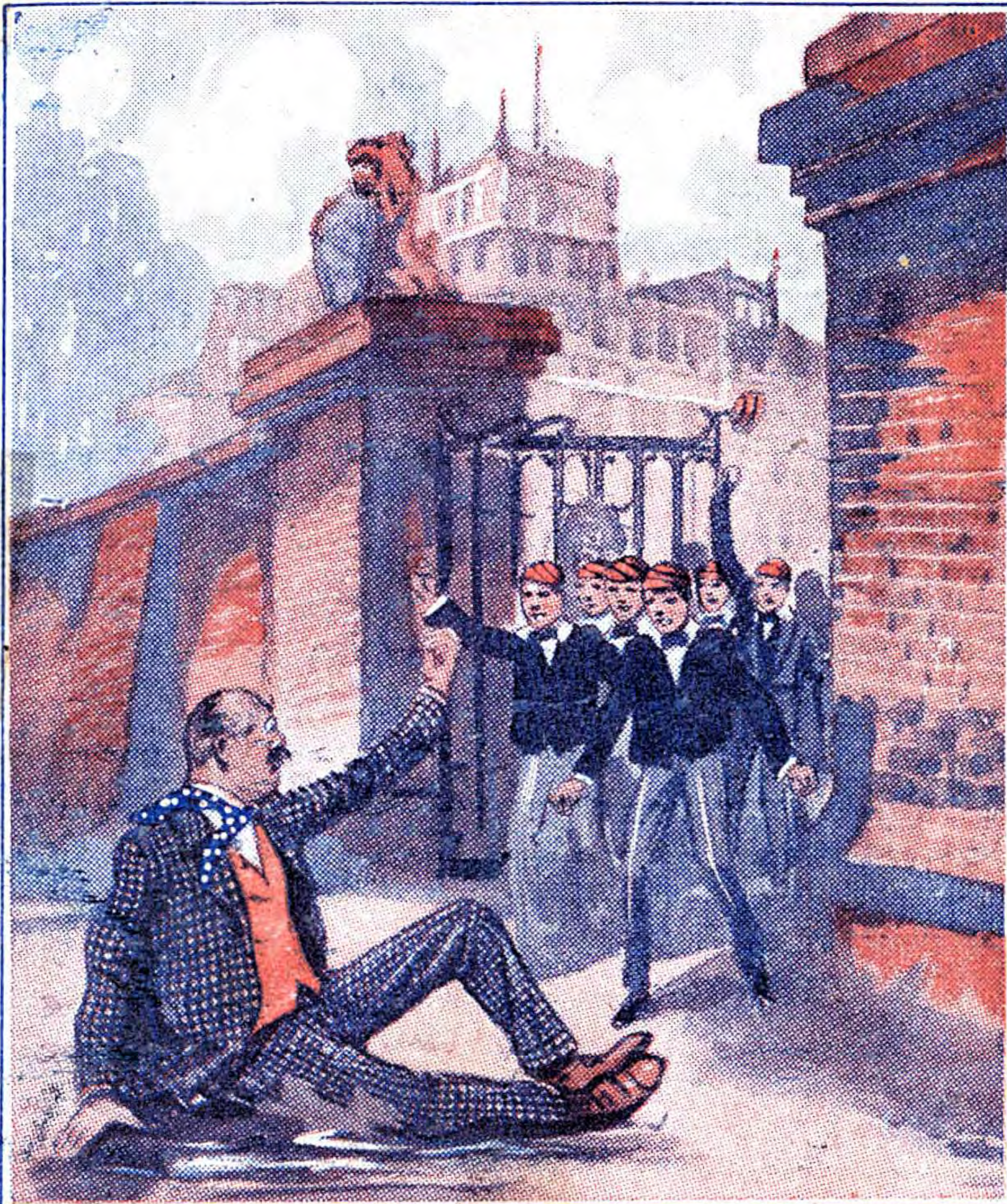


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The above incident occurs in This Week's Stirring Story of St. Frank's.

SONS OF GENTLEMEN!

No. 411.

April 21, 1923.



"Well, I must say as 'ow you've got a nice place, me lad," said the bricklayer, lying back on the lounge and placing his huge, hobnailed boots upon one of Archie's best cushions. "Yus, Alf, a nice place hiff you like!"

Sons of Gentlemen?

or, The Remove Against Him.



Alf as the unfortunate victim of his bitter sarcasm, treating the lad with deliberate contempt and ignominy. So that, in school and out of it, 'Uggins is up against it. But if he seems to lack the refining influence of a gentle birth, he possesses all the grit and fighting qualities of one who has had to rough it in the past. It is this, and his unfailing good nature, which will in the end vanquish his enemies, who, as you will read in the story below, try to embitter the whole of the Remove against him.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

MR. SNUGGS ON THE PROWL.

SIZZZZ-ZZ!

"That," said Archie Glenthorne, "has absolutely done it!"

He jumped off his bicycle and gazed mournfully at the back tyre as it became flatter and flatter. Then the Genial Ass of the Ancient House at St. Frank's turned to his companion.

"I mean to say, rather dashed filthy—what?" he exclaimed in sad tones.

"Lummy!" said Alf Huggins. "Not 'arf, matey!"

The two Remove juniors were just about midway between Bannington and St. Frank's, and the April evening was drawing on. In fact, they had allowed themselves comfortable time to get in before calling-over.

They had been to Bannington to see the pictures, and had quite enjoyed themselves. But this sudden puncture was most annoying, and decidedly awkward. There was no time to be wasted.

"Strikes me as we'll 'ave to git busy an' repair it!" said Alf Huggins briskly. "There's a nice bit of grass 'ere, Archie. It won't take me ten minutes to bung a patch on the old tyre!"

Archie gazed at his strange chum in astonishment.

"But, dash it all!" he observed. "I mean to say, not really?"

"Not really what?"

"This repairing scheme!" exclaimed Archie. "You can't mean to assure me, old lad of the village, that you can actually do the old trick? It can't be poss. that you are an adept at the bally game?"

Alf grinned.

"You ain't 'arf a caution!" he said calmly. "About the most 'elpless bloke I ever seed! O' course I can mend punctures. Wot next! Thank goodness I ain't such a one as you!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie fervently. "I mean to say, we should be dashed well stranded otherwise—what? Congrats, old tulip! I might even remark that you seem to be a somewhat brainy cove! Proceed with the jolly old scheme, and I'll stand idly by, humming slightly!"

The two juniors took the machine on to the patch of grass, and in a few moments Alf was turning out Archie's tool-bag. But his sunny expression became somewhat dismayed as he proceeded with his investigations.

"Ain't you got no solution?" he asked abruptly.

"Dear old chappie, I leave that to you!" replied Archie, in a firm voice.

"Leave wot to me?"

"The dashed solution, laddie!"

"I wish it was left to me!" said Alf.

"I can't quite get the 'ang—"

"I mean to say, this puncture mending stuff strikes me as being a fearful problem," said Archie. "And when it comes to problems, I'm no frightful good at finding solutions—"

"Crikey!" gasped Alf. "I didn't mean that!"

"But, my dear onion, you distinctly said—"

"Solution!" interrupted Alf. "Rubber solution, mate! 'Ow can I mend a puncture without a tube of solution?"

Archie adjusted his eyeglass, and nodded.

"Absolutely!" he said brightly. "Sorrow! I mean to say, it has just dawned upon the old brain. You positively mean the sticking material that smells somewhat fearfully of petrol? Reminiscent of gas, and all that sort of rot! In other words, the doings?"

"Yus!" said Alf. "Wot about it?"

"Really, Alf—really!" protested Archie. "I mean, here we are—stranded. Up you jump, and say that you're going to operate. In other words, you've jolly well volunteered to mend the old tyre!"

"But I can't without no solution, silly!"

"Dash it all!" said Archie. "Is the stuff absolutely necessary?"

"Of course it is!"

"Couldn't you do it without the sticking material?" asked Glenthorne. "I mean, just a kind of temporary scheme. Anything, as it were, to get us along the old path for home and beauty?"

"You ain't 'arf an unpractical chap!" said Alf, with a sigh. "Fust you come out without a tube of solution, and then you expect me to mend the tyre with just a bit o' rubber! It can't be did!"

"Then it seems that we are distinctly for it?"

"We are," said Alf. "We sha'n't be in until arter callin'-over."

"Of course, that's putrid, but worse things happen at sea!" observed Archie, with resignation.

"Things allus happen like this!" growled Huggins. "I ain't got a tool-bag on my bike at all—it's at the school—but the figger only arrived yesterday, and I haven't had time to unpack it proper. We shall 'ave to walk, mate. Never mind. It won't do us no 'arm."

"No 'arm whatever," agreed Archie.

"Dash it! I mean, no harm! So we shall proceed to trickle—what?"

"That's the hidea!" said Alf.

"And a dashed good hidea, too!" said Archie, with a nod.

"It just shows 'ow necessary it is to think o' these things aforehand," went on Alf, as they commenced walking. "Pity we didn't think of it while we was 'aving

that cup of you-and-me in the 'old restaurant."

"Gadzooks! Cup of which?"

"You-and-me—tea!" grinned Alf.

Archie sighed. During the past few days he had been vainly endeavouring to elucidate many of Alf's remarkable expressions. For the boy from Hoxton was full of all sorts of slang terms. Many of them, indeed, were sheer double dutch to Archie.

A more extraordinary pair of friends could hardly be found.

Archie was the biggest swell in the Ancient House—the son of a noble family with a history miles long. And Alf Huggins was the son of a bricklayer! His father was a workman in Hoxton! Yet these two got on famously. They had started by being just friendly, and were now becoming firm chums.

There was one bond between them—a bond which threw them together. They had been sent to coventry by the Remove. Therefore, they only had themselves to talk to. By the rest they were barred.

In addition, of course, they shared the same study.

Of course, Reggie Pitt and Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West and I—and a few other decent fellows—took no notice of the coventry order. We were not barring Archie and his strange chum. But the rank and file of the Remove had passed the decree that the pair should be ostracised.

And why?

Simply because Huggins was the son of a bricklayer—because his talk was common—because he was not of the same class. And Archie was sent to coventry because he was fool enough to be friendly with the outsider. The Remove, in fact, had become unbearably snobbish.

There had been plenty of snobs at the beginning—Fullwood & Co.—Merrell, Marriott, and all their crowd. But juniors like Armstrong and Griffith and Owen major had become infected by the fever of snobbishness.

There was a very fierce feeling in the Remove against Alf Huggins. The boys resented his presence in the school. And they were egged on, more or less, by the sneers and jibes of Mr. Snuggs—the new master of the Remove, who had taken Mr. Crowell's place.

Mr. Snuggs was a toady—a weedy little man who tried to find favour with the rich juniors and those whose people were titled. All the decent fellows loathed Mr. Snuggs. The snobs loved him as one of their own.

So Alf Huggins was having a pretty rough time of it.

But his one true friend—his pal under all circumstances, and at all times—was Archie Glenthorne. I was quite friendly with Alf, and so were a few others. But it was Archie to whom Alf always turned. There was something rather splendid about this friendship.

To most fellows it was frankly amazing. But I was not surprised in the least. For Archie was a good-natured sort—one of the best. And his heart softened for this boy from Hoxton who was being trampled on by the snobs. Furthermore, Huggins was a thoroughly decent sort. He was open, frank, and as honest as the day.

But the Remove would have been astounded if they had known the truth.

For Alf was no more a bricklayer's son than Archie was. He was the son of Sir John Brent—the Chairman of the Board of Governors of St. Frank's College itself!

But not even Archie knew this.

And sometimes Alf felt rather guilty—he felt that he was deceiving the one fellow who was worthy of his full confidence. But Alf kept mum. He wanted to go through with the thing without saying a word.

It was an experiment. At his previous school he had been told that the St. Frank's juniors were not snobs—that even if a bricklayer's son went to the old school, he would be accepted as one of the others, and on exactly the same status.

And Alfred Brent had maintained that if he went to St. Frank's as a bricklayer's son he would be sneered at and cut by the majority of the juniors. So Alf had come, with the consent of his father—assuming the name of Huggins. And Alf was proving that his own contention was right.

For although he had only been at St. Frank's a few days, the Remove was already against him.

Unjust, unreasoning, the bulk of the fellows looked upon him as something unclean. And this absolutely proved that it wasn't the boy himself that they detested—it was the knowledge that he was the son of a bricklayer. To what an extent can prejudice influence the mind.

But Archie was one of those who looked at the fellow himself—and not at his parentage or upbringing. He had found Alf to be a straightforward, likeable fellow. So why bar him? That was Archie's simple logic.

And the pair were getting on famously.

They walked along towards St. Frank's at a smart pace.

"I dessay we shall be late now," said Alf. "I s'pose it'll mean lines?"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "It will be somewhat frightful if Mr. Snuggs gets to know. Mr. Snuggs is a blister, dear old lad. I mean to say, he's absolutely a bally excrecence!"

"I don't know what it is—but 'e's all that!" agreed Alf.

It had been difficult for him to maintain his common method of talk at first. But now he had got into it so thoroughly that it almost came natural.

"Well, never mind—I mean, there's no flashed sense in anticipating trouble," observed Archie philosophically. "Trouble, don't you know, is a most peculiar thing. It generally waits round the corner, all

ready to biff you! Most decidedly frightful, if you grasp the old trend!"

"Oh, well!" said Alf. "What will be, will be."

"Precisely, old dear—what will be we don't know; but it certainly will!"

They continued on their way in the gathering dusk, and at length arrived outside the gates of St. Frank's. They were not at all surprised to find themselves locked out. They were ten minutes late.

"Dashed bad!" said Archie. "Rotten, in fact!"

They shook the gates, and rang the bell. And in a moment or two old Josh Cuttle, the school porter, came out of his lodge. Mr. Cuttle opened the gate, and regarded the juniors in a mournful way.

"There was trouble coming!" he observed. "There was a report going hin about this. Why was there? Ask me! Because a man must do his duty!"

"I mean to say, really?" asked Archie. "Wouldn't it be absolutely poss. to miss seeing us, old darling? Don't you think you could manage to forget all about the dashed——"

"There was somebody nearby," interrupted Mr. Cuttle. "There was a gent walkin' about under the helms! Who says he was a gent? Ask me! And it wasn't possible for me to answer!"

The juniors didn't quite understand what Mr. Cuttle meant at the moment—but they understood a few seconds later. For as they made their way across to the Ancient House a weedy figure danced out from behind the old elm-trees, with his gown flowing in the breeze. It was Mr. Snuggs.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Form-master pleasantly. "What is this? What, may I ask, is this?"

"Absolutely," said Archie. "The fact is, sir——"

"My dear Glenthorne, I have no word to say to you!" beamed Mr. Snuggs, in a wheedling tone. "You may go in, Glenthorne. It is to this wretched boy that I am addressing my remarks!"

"'Op in, Archie!" said Alf. "I'll soon fo'her!"

"Oh, will you?" exclaimed Mr. Snuggs, turning upon him viciously. "Indeed! I demand an instant explanation, Huggins! How dare you walk in at this hour? How dare you act as though the whole school belonged to you?"

"I didn't know as 'ow I was doin' that, sir," said Alf shortly.

"Then perhaps it is just as well that I should acquaint you of the fact!" snapped Mr. Snuggs, secretly delighted at the fact that a small crowd of juniors was collecting. "Who are you, may I ask?"

"'Uggins, sir."

"Impertinent boy!" shouted the Form-master. "Who are you, may I ask, that you should walk in just when it pleases you? No doubt that sort of thing is quite commonplace in your district! Possibly it

is permissible among the young hooligans you have previously associated with. But at St. Frank's you must act differently!"

Alf said nothing—he felt that it was wiser not to do so.

"I must be very severe with you!" declared Mr. Snuggs. "It distresses me to be constantly punishing you, Huggins, but I have no other course. You are a most difficult boy—you are always in mischief!"

"So you says, sir!" exclaimed Alf shortly.

"And it is the truth," declared Mr. Snuggs. "How dare you cast a doubt upon my statement? For being late, you will write me two hundred lines! I shall require them before bed-time!"

"Yes, sir," said Alf. "You'll 'ave 'em!"

He was relieved—he had expected something worse. But even Mr. Snuggs could not inflict a more severe punishment for such a trivial offence. He had been waiting about—on the prowl—spying on the fellows, so that he could drop on them at the slightest excuse. This was Mr. Snugg's favourite pastime.

"Well, that's settled!" said Alf, turning to Archie. "Now we'll get indoors!"

"Absolutely not!" declared Archie firmly. "At least, not yet. I desire to have a few yards of chat with the dear gentleman—in other words, Mr. Snuggs. Absolutely!"

Mr. Snuggs beamed.

"You desire to speak with me, my dear lad?" he asked, rubbing his thin hands together.

"That, as it were, is the scheme!" said Archie. "What, I mean to say, about it? It strikes me, old lad, that the bally business isn't completed—what? If you grasp the trend—"

"I must confess, my dear Glenthorne, that I am at a loss," interrupted Mr. Snuggs. "What is it you wish to say? I need hardly tell you that you are quite at liberty to go indoors at once."

"But, dash it all!" protested Archie. "Doesn't it strike you as being distinctly foul? Even verging on the point of putridity?"

"Really, Glenthorne!" said Mr. Snuggs, shocked.

"What I mean to say is—why, as it were, should this dear chappie receive a large slice of punishment and I go free?" asked Archie. "That, in a nutshell, is the posish. So what about it?"

"You surprise me, Glenthorne!" exclaimed Mr. Snuggs. "My dear, dear boy! A very great gulf separates you from Huggins."

"Well, of course, that's a matter of opinion," said Archie. "A gulf—what? It seems to me that the gulf is frightfully small—only about three feet!"

"No, no!" said Mr. Snuggs softly. "I did not mean literally. You are the scion of a noble house—Huggins is a common youth—"

"You bally fraud!" said Archie warmly.

"Dash it all, the old gore rises and bally well overflows! Common! Kindly allow me to tell you, Mr. Snuggs, that Alf is a particularly priceless sort of chappie! And if you allow me to go free, you ought to ladle out the same treatment to him!"

Mr. Snuggs frowned.

"Much as I should like to remain on pleasant terms with you, Glenthorne, I cannot possibly allow such a liberty!" said Mr. Snuggs stiffly. "You are not intentionally impertinent, I am sure."

"Absolutely not!" agreed Archie. "I mean to say, I'm jolly well worked up! Oh, rather! When it comes to a thing of this kind, I jolly well show you a few things! When I like, I can dash about and do the most drastic things. But to return to the point—to get back to the old posish. Does Huggins write these lines, or does Huggins not?"

"I cannot possibly alter my decision," said Mr. Snuggs curtly.

"And I do no lines at all?"

"Certainly not—you are quite different!" Archie smiled.

"That, of course, is positively ridie!" he observed. "If Alf does two hundred lines—I do two hundred lines! We both came in together, and we both have the same punishment! That's absolutely fair. And now, no further words! Enough! In other words, suffish!"

Archie turned and walked into the Ancient House with his nose high in the air. Alf Huggins accompanied him. And the juniors who had been looking on yelled with laughter.

"What a fool!" sneered Hubbard. "He could have got in scot-free—and he gives himself two hundred lines!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a born ass!"

The juniors yelled again. They didn't seem to appreciate that Archie had delivered a snub that made Mr. Snuggs inwardly squirm.

CHAPTER II.

PALS!



ALf HUGGINS grunted as he arrived in the luxurious study which he and Archie shared together. It was really Glenthorne's study, but he had insisted upon Alf joining him.

"A bright beauty, ain't 'e?" he asked. "Lummy! That bloke fair makes me 'ave the shivers! 'E sends a kind o' creepy crawlin' feelin' down my back!"

Archie nodded.

"Now, that's rather extraord!" he observed. "I mean to say, now I've got it! The old explanash! For some days, dear old lad—ever since the beginning of term—I've had fearful ideas that matters were not all correct in the spine department."

"What are you getting at?" asked Alf.

"I mean to say, I've had spasms," confessed Archie. "Shudders down the old spinal column, as it were. Bally cold shivers, and what not! And they have always happened when I caught sight of Snuggs! Now, of course, the truth dawns. It floods upon the plates of intelligence. Snuggs is the cause of the whole malady!"

"Lummy, that's a good word!" said Alf. "That's what Snuggs is—a malady! 'E's a disease!"

"Worse—far worse!" declared Archie firmly. "To be absolutely exact, Snuggs is nothing more nor less than a bally scourge! He buzzes into the place, and proceeds to pollute the atmosphere! But let us change the sub, dear one. I am breathing with difficulty!"

They sank down upon the lounge, and began to think about doing their prep. That's all it amounted to at the moment. The pair did not commence any actual work.

Archie was about to start getting out his books when Alf stopped him.

"Wot about them lines?" he asked.

"Lines?"

"You know—wot we've got to do for Mr. Snuggs?"

"Good gad!" said Archie. "Absolutely! Possibly it would be as well, dear one, to get busy. Or don't you think so?"

"Best get 'em out of the way!" said Alf.

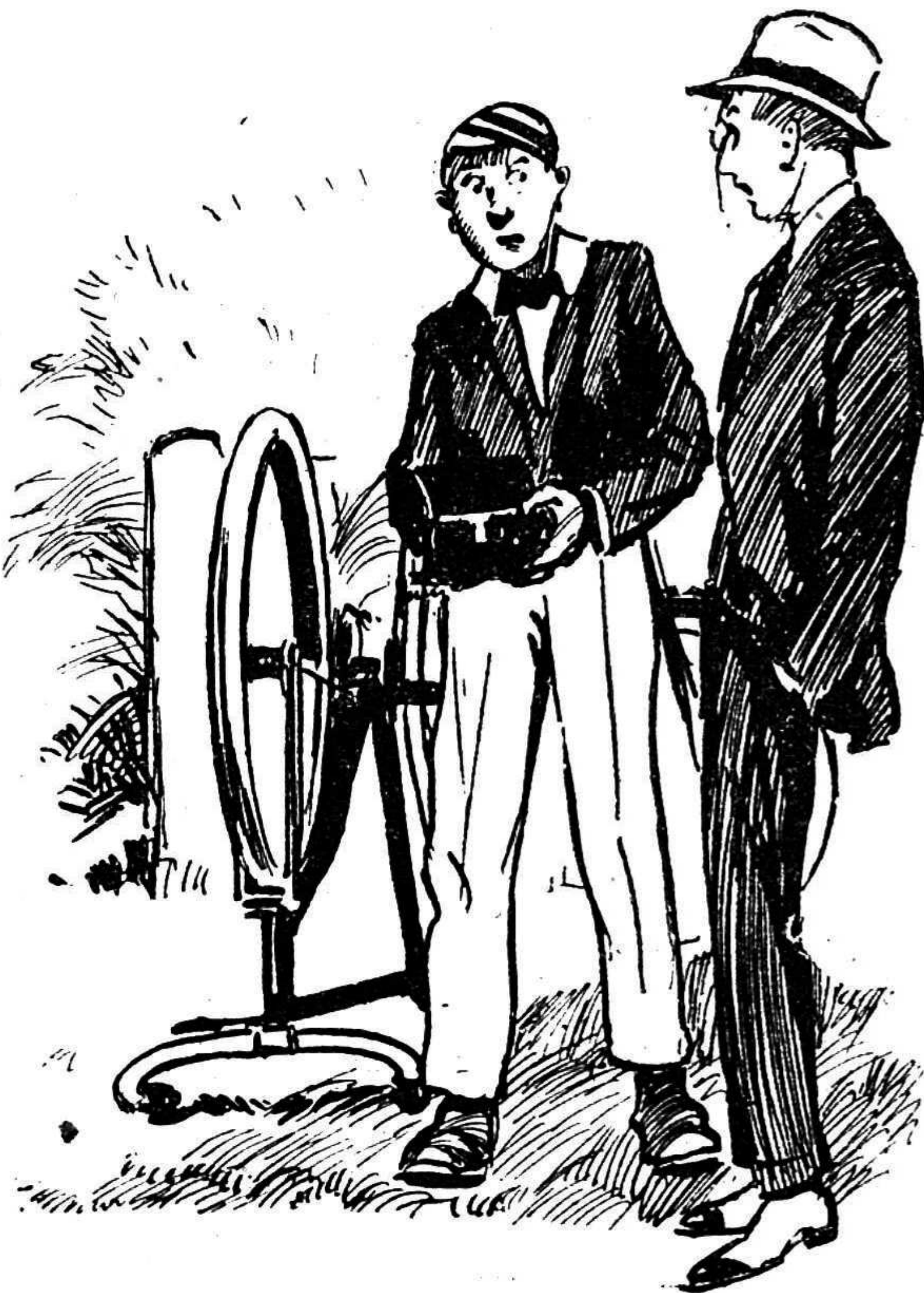
"Good! That's the wheeze!"

And the pair sat down at the table and slogged away at writing the imposition. It was not pleasant work. But it was far better to get it out of the way straight off, so that it would be done with. Mr. Snuggs distinctly said that he required the lines that evening.

"You ain't 'arf a queer cove!" said Alf, looking up. "You're a brick, too! It was fine of you to stick up for me like you did!"

"My dear old carrot——"

"I mean, there wasn't no need for you to do them lines," said Alf. "I knowed



The two juniors took the machine on to the patch of grass, and in a few moments Alf was turning out Archie's tool bag. But his sunny expression became somewhat dismayed as he proceeded with his investigations.

you only spoke to Snuggs like that because you wanted to show 'im hup. But all these 'ere lines——"

"Mr. Snuggs deserves showing hup," said Archie firmly. "I should say, showing up. I don't want to be frightfully personal, but I must confess that your priceless accent is dashed catching!"

"Sorry!" said Alf, with an inward chuckle.

"Don't mensh!" said Archie hastily. "Absolutely not. My goodness! In fact, your goodness, too! You surely don't think that I'd sit here, looking at you doing

lines, and indulging in forty of the best and brightest?"

"Sleeping?"

"Absolutely!"

"Ow could you look at me and be sleepin' at the same time?" asked Alf.

"Well, I suppose it would be somewhat poisonous!" admitted Archie. "But there! I never was any dashed good at riddles! But you grasp the trend, Alf. You had lines—I have lines. Share and share alike—what? So now there's nothing to chat about. Carry on, sergeant!"

They continued their lines, Alf greatly warmed towards his loyal study-mate. And, at length, the two impositions were finished. Alf had done his more quickly than Archie—for Archie was not a speed merchant.

"That, as it were, is that!" said Archie, with a sigh of relief. "And now, I suppose, we must stagger forth and hand them over? It would be just as well to get the foul business completed."

"Right you are!" said Huggins. "Come on!"

They went out of the study, and made their way along the Remove passage. And in a few minutes they were tapping at the door of Mr. Snugg's study. They entered after being invited.

"Them lines, sir," said Alf, putting his on the Form-master's desk.

"What did you say?" asked Mr. Snuggs sourly.

"Them lines, sir."

"Them lines, Huggins?"

"Them wot you've give me to do!" explained Alf calmly.

"Upon my soul!" gasped Mr. Snuggs. "Your grammar is atrocious! I'm absolutely disgusted with you! Indeed, it is astounding that you ever received permission to enter this famous old seat of learning."

"It's queer 'ow some blokes do get in, sir!" said Alf quietly.

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie, beaming. "I mean to say, dashed well said, old lad! How some coves get hold of priceless positions when they don't deserve them is one of life's little problems!"

Mr. Snuggs coughed.

"Ahem! So these are the lines?" he asked, picking up the two impositions. "I told you, Glenthorne, that it was totally unnecessary for you to bother. You should not have troubled."

"Duty, sir—a question of doing the right thing, you know."

Mr. Snuggs looked up, his eyes glinting.

"Really!" he said sneeringly. "Really, Huggins! Do you suppose for one moment that I shall accept this disgraceful piece of work?"

"I thought as 'ow you might, sir," said Alf, looking at the imposition. "It ain't so bad, is it?"

"Bad!" echoed Mr. Snuggs. "It is shocking! Now, the other one is very

different indeed—very different!" He beamed upon Archie. "Although the task was unnecessary, Glenthorne, I congratulate you upon your work. Your handwriting is excellent, and I have no words to say!"

"Well, that's dashed good, sir!" said Archie.

Mr. Snugg's laid the imposition aside, and stared sourly at the other. It was a clear indication of his character. Archie could do no wrong—Huggins could do no right.

"I must refuse to accept this imposition, Huggins," said Mr. Snuggs sneeringly. "It is perfectly atrocious, and wretched in the extreme! You must do it again—and it shall be doubled!"

Alf looked at him steadily.

"Adn't you better 'ave another look, sir?" he asked.

"Impertinent boy!" snapped Mr. Snuggs. "I have looked sufficiently——"

"I thought as 'ow you might like to know that you've made—a bloomer!" went on Alf. "That ain't my impot at all. The one as you've bin runnin' down is Glenthorne's!"

"Gadzooks!" murmured Archie. "How bally priceless!"

Mr. Snuggs started, and hastily examined the imposition again.

"Dear me!" he said, turning red. "So—so this is your work, Glenthorne? Really, I am astonished!"

"Yes, that's mine, sir," said Archie. "I'm frightfully sorry it's so atrocious, don't you know! But, at the same time, I'm dashed glad that Huggins has done fearfully well! You absolutely said so!"

Mr. Snuggs compressed his thin lips. Owing to his blunder, he knew very well that he could not say another word without making himself look extremely ridiculous. Indeed, he looked ridiculous enough already.

"You—you may go!" he stuttered hastily.

"And Huggins is all serene?" asked Archie. "I mean to say, no need to do the old stuff again?"

Mr. Snuggs pointed to the door.

"I'm astounded that Huggins should have written his imposition so well, and there is no necessity for you to do it again!" he exclaimed. "Boys, you may go. I am busy—I cannot be bothered!"

The juniors went outside, and grinned as soon as they had closed the door.

"That was pretty rich, if you like!" chuckled Alf. "Crikey! The rotter didn't know wot to say, did he?"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie, smiling. "The old speech department positively ran dry! It strikes me, Alf, old son, that Mr. Snuggs was caught in his own dashed trap!"

"Rather!" said Alf gleefully. "An' now wot shall we do? Go back to the study, or 'ave a look into the Common-room? Are you game?"

"Well rather, but don't you think—I

mean, really?" said Archie, in a doubtful voice. "The fact is, what about it? The lads don't appear to gather round with much enthusiasm. To be absolutely exact, our popularity is at a deucedly low ebb!"

Alf grinned.

"That's why I suggested goin' to the Common-room," he said. "It don't 'arf amuse me to see them snobs scowlin'! At fust it made me riled, but now I'm blowed if I don't like it! Good as goin' to the pictures! Ain't they a lot of fools?"

"Dear old lad, words are cheap!" said Archie. "I mean, I can't dashed well select the ones I want—there are so many! But, as you say, we will ooze down the passage and flow into the Common-room!"

And they entered the Remove Common-room arm-in-arm. The pair took a keen delight in giving the snobs fresh shocks. And Archie, although he had been rather horrified with Alf at first, was now thoroughly accustomed to all his little ways and methods of speech.

There was a buzz of conversation as soon as they appeared.

The large apartment was pretty well filled, and many juniors skipped out of the way hurriedly as Alf came along—as though they were afraid of being touched. Of late the more caddish of the juniors had got into a habit of this.

"Here they are—the hooligan and the idiot!" sneered Fullwood. "We can't blame Glenthorne—he hasn't got enough sense to know he's makin' himself cheap and silly!"

"Of course he hasn't!"

"The fact that he's chummed up with that cad is proof of his brainlessness!"

"Rather!"

Archie beamed.

"Go on, sweet ones!" he said lightly. "Pray continue! I am most delightfully interested to hear the remarks. I mean to say, I feel somewhat flattered. Scorn from such insects as you is priceless!"

"Go easy, Archie!" said De Valerie, coming forward. "Don't think I'm siding with this crowd. But isn't it about time you acted sensibly?"

"I was under the impress that I always acted in that way, dear old sportsman," said Archie. "Of course, I don't mean to be boastful, but it didn't occur to me that I was absolutely insensible!"

De Valerie smiled.

"You've got plenty of sense, Archie," he said. "That's why I can't understand your attitude with regard to Huggins. I'm not a snob, but you're only making yourself ridiculous by walking about with him arm-in-arm. He's not one of us after all—he's of a different class altogether."

Archie looked at him coldly.

"This, I regret to say, is a shock!" he exclaimed. "De Valerie, old turnip, you have wounded me! I always thought that you were one of the real ones! It was firmly engraved upon the old mind that you

were a decent sort of lad. What's the matter? What's wrong? In fact, what's the trouble?"

"Don't be dotty," said De Valerie. "There's no trouble. I'm not saying anything against Huggins personally, but you've got to admit that he's not one of us——"

"I don't admit anything of the sort!" interrupted Archie. "Huggins is a St. Frank's fellow—and he's thousands of miles ahead of some of the priceless cads. Huggins is a ripper!"

"Yes, but look here——"

"I'll settle this argument!" interrupted Handforth, striding forward. "If you chaps don't dry up I'll punch the pair of you, and jolly well let you know it! Huggins is a good sort!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie.

"But he's not one of us——" began De Valerie.

"If he's not one of us, who is he?" snorted Handforth. "I'm fed up with all this class distinction rot! Fed up! As far as I can see, Huggins is a lot more decent than plenty of these so-called swells! I wouldn't give a penny for the whole crowd of 'em. A penny!—Huh! They'd be dear at a farthing each!"

"Look here, you rotter!" interrupted Fullwood. "I don't see why you should side with this beast from Hoxton——"

"What does it matter where he comes from?" roared Handforth. "Ever been to Hoxton?"

"I'm rather particular where I go," sneered Fullwood.

"Hoxton is a jolly fine place!" snorted Handforth. "In Hoxton you can find some of the best people. And in just the same way you can find rogues and rotters in Mayfair—and hooligans, too! You come from Mayfair, anyhow!"

Fullwood scowled.

"My people live in Kensington," he said sourly. "And Kensington is one of the finest parts of West London!"

"It can't be if your people live there!" retorted Handforth.

"Look here——"

"I don't want to; I've got more respect for my eyes!" said Edward Oswald, with heavy sarcasm. "As for this Coventry business, I'd like to know who started it?"

"I did!" said Armstrong.

"Oh, you did?" asked Handy. "You sent Glenthorne and Huggins to Coventry?"

"Yes; and all the chaps backed me up."

"All the chaps?" repeated the leader of Study D. "All the sheep, you mean! All the worms! A blessed nerve! Making out that you rotters represent the Remove, and sending chaps to Coventry! I'd jolly well like to send the whole crowd of you to Tasmania!"

Handforth stalked up to Alf, and grabbed his hand.

"That's what I think of you, Huggins!" he said, glaring. "You're a good chap—you're

one of the best! And I'd like to be sent to Coventry, too!"

"Why?" grinned Alf.

"Because these howling cads wouldn't speak to me then!" sneered Handforth. "I always thought the Remove was composed of decent fellows. But we live and learn. I'm ashamed to be in the Form!"

Handforth strode out, disgusted. And Alf smiled quietly to himself. One by one the Remove juniors were coming round. One by one they were realising that birth and breeding were not everything.

CHAPTER III.

ALF'S FATHER!



"**E**RE we are, dad!" said Alf cheerfully. "Thought I wasn't goin' to get 'ere, Master Alfred!" said Mr. Huggins. "That there train come along like a snail!"

An' even now I s'pose we're a good way from the skool?"

"Oh, it ain't far," said Alf. "But let's go an' sit in the waiting-room for a bit. I want to 'ave a talk with you fust. There's one or two things as you've got to know."

Mr. Huggins was led into the quiet waiting-room, and the pair sat down.

It was the afternoon of the following day—a half-holiday. And Mr. Huggins, the Hoxton bricklayer, had come down at Alf's

special request. Mr. Huggins was a big, red-faced, rough and ready man of labour. And he was good-natured, bluff, and very likeable.

He was one of Sir John Brent's workmen—had been in the service of Sir John's firm for a great many years. Alf had known him since he was a little child, and that was why he had chosen him as his adopted father.

For, in order to carry his scheme completely through, Alf thought it highly necessary to have a bricklayer father. The junior was not the kind to do things by halves.

And now, after he had got the St. Frank's fellows thoroughly accustomed to him, he had brought Mr. Huggins down—just to see what the effect would be. Quite apart from this, he was bound to have Mr. Huggins here.

"It don't seem right, Master Alfred, to 'ear you talk like that!" said Huggins, shaking his head. "I'm sure I don't know what Sir John would say. Why, it don't appear to be the right thing—"

"Keep your 'air on, dad!" said Alf. "My pater knows everything. And you mustn't worry about me talking in that way. I've got into the habit of it, and I can't help it."

"I 'opes as how you won't learn it too well, sir!" said Mr. Huggins, with concern. "Mebbe you won't be able to get out of it!"

Alf grinned.

"Don't you worry," he said. "When the time comes I'll drop all this stuff like a cloak. At present I find it better to keep it hup—I mean, up! I can't afford to make a slip."

Mr. Huggins shook his head again.

"You allus was a one, Master Alfred," he said. "A fair terror!"

"I explained all the circumstances to you before I came down to St. Frank's," said Alf confidentially. "But you might have forgotten. Those fellows at Houndsley—my other school—made me promise that I'd bring you down to St. Frank's. That's why you're here."

"But I can't see wot good I can do, Master Alfred."

"You're not supposed to do anything; just make yourself affable, and I'll do the rest," replied Alf. "You see, you're supposed to be my father come down here to have a look at me at school. St. Frank's will get a shock; the fellows are an awful lot of snobs."

"Strikes me I sha'n't 'ave a 'appy time," said Mr. Huggins dubiously.

"You can be pretty certain that you'll have a rotten time," replied Alfred calmly. "But don't back out, dad! It's for my sake, you know, and you mustn't take any notice of these idiots. They'll probably insult you right and left, and you've only got to put it down to their ignorance."

Mr. Huggins nodded.

"Right you are, Master Alfred," he said,

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"I'd do anything for you. Besides, Sir John's give me the day off, an' 'e told me to make the wife a present out of a fiver. Too generous, I reckon!"

"By the time you leave St. Frank's, you won't think so!" grinned Alf. "It's going to be a strenuous afternoon, and don't you forget it. I had to get you here, because it's a condition of the wager."

"But don't I say nothing to these 'ere boys?"

"Well, you'll have to say a few things, of course," said Alf. "But there's no need to tell any whoppers. I wouldn't like that, you know. I've kept away from it pretty well. These snobs will assume quite enough without being told. You've only got to breathe a suggestion, and they grab at it as fact!"

"Seems to be a show up for the young gents, sir," said Mr. Huggins.

"It will be—later on!" replied Alf. "My idea is to prove that most fellows become snobs if they are put to an actual test. And I hope this affair will prove to be a lesson to this crowd."

"I 'ope so, too, sir," said Mr. Huggins. "Some'ow, I don't quite like it. It don't seem right."

But Alf soon brought his "father" to a different point of view.

"I'm particularly glad you've come down, because I want to see what effect you will have on Handforth and Pitt and Nipper and one or two others," went on Alf, with interest. "They'll stand me—they've accepted me as I am. Thank goodness they're not all snobs!"

"I don't quite foller, Master Alfred."

"Well, I've got an idea that some of these decent chaps might change their minds after they've seen you," said Alfred. "No offence, Mr. Huggins. Don't think that for a minute."

"Lor' bless you, sir, I ain't offended!" smiled the bricklayer. "I'm a plain man—rough, ready, an' don't pretend to be a gentleman. I dessay I shall be out o' place among all them young swells!"

Alf nodded.

"That's just the idea!" he said, with a chuckle. "When their paters come down everybody knows it. They arrive in big cars, wearing frock coats and top hats, and diamond pins in their ties, and all that sort of thing. They'll find a difference in you."

"I reckon as 'ow they will!"

"So it'll be a shock—you'll be something absolutely fresh!" grinned Alf. "And it'll be a good test for the whole crowd. The Remove's against me at present, but there's no telling what the Remove will do when they see you!"

Mr. Huggins quite understood Alf's line of reasoning. He was not offended in the slightest degree. And, undoubtedly, the bricklayer's arrival at the old school would certainly cause a big sensation.

But Alf was more curious about Archie than anybody else.

How would Archie take it? That was the one question which Alf asked himself. He and Archie were firm friends. Would the arrival of Huggins spoil everything? Would Archie change?

Alf hoped not—he believed not.

Yet there was just a chance of it, and it would be the supreme test for Archie Glen-thorne. If he altered towards Alf after seeing the bricklayer, then he was not such a staunch friend as Alf believed. But Alf was confident in his own mind that Archie would not fail.

And so, shortly afterwards, the pair started for the school.

Mr. Huggins was a lumbering man. He had coarse hands, a red face, and he walked with an awkward gait. And just now he was attired in his "Sunday best."

He wore brown boots of a startlingly yellow colour, a loud check suit, and a bowler hat which was set at a rakish angle. He looked common from top to toe. He was enough to give any snob a shock.

Of course, this was not Mr. Huggins' usual attire. When the bricklayer wished to be smart, he could be smart—in his own modest way. Just now he was exaggerated. Alf had intended that it should be so.

The pair arrived at the school, and turned into the Triangle. And, to Alf's secret delight, he observed that Fullwood and Co. were lounging about the Ancient House steps.

The cads of Study A saw the new arrivals at once.

"What the thunder——" began Fullwood. "Great Scott! Look over there! Look what Huggins has brought along!"

Gulliver and Bell stared.

"By gad!" said Gulliver. "What is it?"

"Goodness knows!" said Bell.

"I'll bet a penny to a quid that this awful looking bounder is Huggins' father!" said Fullwood gloatingly. "Ye gods and little fishes! Look at him! What a sight! He might have come straight out of Petticoat Lane!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Gulliver. "They don't have bricklayers in Petticoat Lane! This clumsy carthorse looks just like those chaps you see hanging about outside the pubs!"

"That's it!" said Bell. "But I can't believe that he's the cad's father! He wouldn't have the rotten nerve to bring him here!"

"That beast would have the nerve for anything!" said Fullwood. "But if he brings him inside, we'll let him know something! We've got to stand Huggins—he belongs to St. Frank's—but we haven't got to stand his filthy father!"

"There's a limit to everything," agreed Gulliver.

The nuts worked themselves up to a state of high indignation. Then they strolled across and stood in a group, staring at Mr.

Huggins in a manner that could hardly be described as polite.

"'Ere, you chaps!" said Alf. "Let me introduce you. Come on, dad! This is Mr. 'Uggins—"

"Your father?" gasped Bell.

"Well, anythink to say?" asked Alf tartly.

"I suppose you've got a father, ain't you? Just come down to 'ave a look round the place, y'see. He's kind of interested in me."

"It's a pity that your father left his seat in the four-alo bar!" said Fullwood sneeringly. "Anyhow, he won't find any beer here! Rotten nerve! Bringin' a common hooligan like that to the school!"

Mr. Huggins went very red.

"Why, you young rascal—"

"Don't take no notice of 'em, dad," interrupted Alf. "These are some of the blokes I told you of! They ain't got no more manners than dorgs in a kennel!"

Fullwood and Co. were just about to break into further hot remarks when they observed Mr. Snuggs standing on the steps of the Ancient House. And, instantly, they hurried up to the Remove Form-master—hot, excited, and indignant.

Other fellows were beginning to come up now. Just as Alf had imagined, the arrival of Mr. Huggins was rapidly causing a sensation. It would not be long before the school began to buzz.

"Are we going to stand this, sir?" demanded Fullwood fiercely.

"Dear me! Dear me!" said Mr. Snuggs. "Really, Fullwood, you quite startled me! My dear boy, what is the matter?"

Fullwood pointed.

"Do you—you see that man, sir?" he asked.

"Are you referring to that extremely low person in the bowler hat?" asked Mr. Snuggs, adjusting his spectacles. "Really, I imagined him to be one of the dustmen, or possibly a farm labourer—"

"It's Huggins' father, sir," broke in Bell. Mr. Snuggs started.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated. "Impossible. Quite, quite out of the question. For such a common individual to be the father of a St. Frank's schoolboy is too appalling for words!"

"But it is true, sir!" insisted Fullwood.

"And yet, upon consideration, I am not surprised!" went on Mr. Snuggs musingly. "The lad himself is hopeless—quite hopeless! He is low-down, and nothing but a common brat!"

"And this is his father—at St. Frank's!" exclaimed Fullwood jeeringly. "We've got to put up with him, sir. But I don't see

why we should stand his confounded father! I think you ought to do something, sir!"

"I?" said Mr. Snuggs. "But my dear boy—"

"Couldn't you order him out sir?" asked Bell eagerly. "By gad! That would be rather rich! It would be worth seein', too!"

"Go on, sir—order him off the premises!" exclaimed Gulliver.

Mr. Snuggs coughed.

"I—er—ahem!" he said hastily. "I—I hardly think such a course would be wise, my boys. I quite appreciate your feelings. I fully realise the natural abhorrence which fills you. But I am doubtful if it would be an act of wisdom to order this—this ruffian away."

Mr. Snuggs was very doubtful indeed. He had absolutely no authority. He was only the Form-master, and if he took it upon himself to order Mr. Huggins away, a most unpleasant interview with the Head might result. And Mr. Snuggs had a very great liking for his own skin.

"Then—then you can't do anything, sir?" asked Fullwood gruffly.

"I am sorry, my boy. I feel this matter as keenly as yourself," said Mr. Snuggs. "But it is really for the Headmaster himself to see that people of this kind do not enter the school. Naturally, this rough workman will contaminate the boys—such a thing is only to be expected. We will see—we will see."

Mr. Snuggs walked forward, and came to a halt close to Alf.

"Who is this—this person, Huggins?" he asked coldly.

"Mr. 'Uggins, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Snuggs. "Can it be possible that this man is your father? Is such a thing credible?"

"Ain't he old enough, sir?" asked Alf. "And supposin' he is me father? Other blokes bring their dads along to 'ave a look at the school, don't they? Ain't I able to do the same?"

Mr. Snuggs laughed unpleasantly.

"It so happens, Huggins, that other boys have fathers who are gentlemen of wealth and position," he exclaimed sourly. "Such gentlemen are welcomed at the school."

"Oh, an' ain't my dad welcomed, sir?"

"I know nothing of your father's financial position, but I judge that he has acquired wealth from some questionable source!" said Mr. Snuggs. "But he is not the type of man that St. Frank's is accustomed to. I advise you, Huggins, to be diplomatic. I should suggest that you take your father away as soon as possible."

"Thanks all the same, sir, but there ain't nothin' doin'!" said Alf calmly. "Mr. 'Uggins 'as come for the afternoon, an' 'e ain't leavin' until after tea. Come on, dad! Let's go an' 'ave a look at the cloisters!"

"Wot's them?" asked Mr. Huggins, producing a pipe.

"Oh, funny old places them are!" said

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Alf. "Goin' to 'ave a smoke? All right, dad. I'll wait until you've filled up!"

The pipe which Mr. Huggins had brought out was a blackened clay, in a very dirty looking condition. It was a favourite pipe with the bricklayer, and in a few moments he was puffing briskly.

Mr. Snuggs was smothered in the smoke. "Good gracious!" gasped the Form-master. "I—I—"

He broke off, and went into a fit of loud and exaggerated coughing. In fact, he did it so well that it became a real cough before it was over. Other juniors were following suit.

"Help!" exclaimed Armstrong.

"Oh, my only hat!" groaned Hubbard.

"It's like poison gas!"

"Horrible, ghastly shag!" said Griffith.

"Boys—boys! Kindly move away!" exclaimed Mr. Snuggs, in a gasping voice. "I cannot allow you to remain in the vicinity of these awful fumes. They are disgusting—intolerable!"

He turned upon Mr. Huggins angrily.

"I must request you, sir, to put that pipe out at once!" he snapped.

Mr. Huggins looked surprised.

"The pipe ain't worryin' you, I 'ope?" he asked. "It's the fust time as I've been arst to put me pipe out in the open air. I can't see as how you can 'ave any objection—"

"I have the most pronounced objections!" shouted Mr. Snuggs warmly. "Indeed, I cannot allow you to smoke that pipe! I must insist upon its immediate extinction! You understand, sir? I am firm!"

Mr. Huggins grunted.

"I don't put my pipe out for nobody—not unless I'm arst in a proper manner!" he exclaimed grimly. "If people treats me proper, I treats them proper. But I ain't going to be herdered about!"

And Mr. Huggins, puffing more furiously than ever, walked away with Alf.

CHAPTER IV.

TROUBLE BREWING!



MR. SNUGGS fairly danced with rage and indignation.

"This is intolerable!" he exclaimed harshly.

"I shall make it my business to seek an immediate inter-

view with Mr. Lee! I shall utter a strong protest against this man's presence in the school!"

"Not much good going to Mr. Lee, sir!" said Marriott. "He probably gave the young cad permission to bring the fellow here!"

"I cannot possibly imagine that to be true," said Mr. Snuggs. "I shall see about this without delay. Pah! That tobacco is foul!"

And Mr. Snuggs whisked indoors, with a vague idea that he had not got the better of the argument. And Mr. Snuggs lived



"'Ere we are, dad!" said Alf cheerfully.

"Thought I wasn't goin' to get 'ere, Master Alfred," said Mr. Huggins. "That there train come along like a snail! An' even now I s'pose we're a good way from the skool?"

for petty triumphs. Failures caused him to be irritable and snappy.

And while Huggins was conducting the bricklayer over the cloisters, a kind of big indignation meeting gathered in the Triangle—up in the corner between the gymnasium and the hedge which divides off Little Side.

Fullwood was leading the meeting.

"We've kept quiet up to now," he shouted. "We've stood this rotten cad in our midst! But now we're going to kick up a fuss!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We won't stand it!"

"This is where we're going to kick!" shouted Fullwood. "And kick hard!"

"Good!"

"I'll come and do the kicking if you like!" roared Handforth, striding up. "And the first chap I'll kick will be you! Why, you

crawling worm, I've a good mind to knock you—"

"Go away, Handforth!"

"You ain't wanted here!"

"Clear off, you interfering bounder!"

Handforth deliberately pushed up his sleeves.

"I can't fight the lot of you, but I'll have a jolly good try!" he shouted. "Why the dickens can't you let Huggins alone? And what if he does bring his father here?"

"His father's a low-down ruffian!"

"A bricklayer!"

"Well, that's nothing new, is it?" snorted Handforth. "We've known that ever since he came here. Haven't you ever seen a bricklayer before? What's the idea of all going dotty, just because the man turns up at St. Frank's?"

"You mind your own business!" snarled Fullwood. "We've got a bit more thought for the school than you have. We're not going to let this man stay!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We're going to hoof him off the premises!"

"Good!"

"Let's go and do it now! Let's pitch him out!"

Handforth gazed at the excited snobs, and his lip curled.

"Oh, yes!" he sneered. "You'll do a fat lot of kicking out! Why, there's not enough pluck among the whole crowd of you to kick a puppy! I'm fed up with this! I'm going to start!"

Biff! Crash! Biff!

Handforth was quite impartial. The three nearest fellows received the full weight of his fists, and they went down howling. Handforth, as a matter of fact, was only too pleased to find some really good excuse for fighting. It was the one pastime he liked more than any other. It suited him down to the ground.

"Yarrah!"

"Hold him!" shouted Armstrong. "Grab the lunatic!"

Handforth stood back, with clenched fists.

"All right—come and grab me!" he yelled defiantly. "You mouldy toads! I told you days ago that you weren't worth wiping my feet on. I'm sick of the whole crowd of you! I'm blessed if I know why I should have all this fighting on account of Huggins; he's not my pal!"

"Then what's the idea of interfering?" snarled Fullwood.

"I'll tell you!" retorted Handforth. "I happen to have a sense of what's right and what's wrong! And it seems rottenly wrong that you cads should make a dead set against a perfectly decent fellow because he happens to be the son of a bricklayer! So now, look out! I'm coming!"

Handforth went in among the crowd like a whirlwind, and the snobs scattered in all directions. And by the time Handforth had finished he had distributed several black

eyes, a number of thick ears, and flowing noses were the order of the day.

But, single-handed, Handforth could not do very much.

He broke up the meeting, but only for a few moments. It gathered again, and Handforth took off his jacket, and flung it on the ground. There was a warlike glint in his eye.

It didn't matter a toss to him now what the quarrel was about. He'd forgotten that. It was a matter of minor importance. Handforth only remembered one thing.

He had threatened to break this meeting up, and he was going to do it!

But Church and McClure seized him, one on either side. Church and McClure were his faithful chums, and they did not want to see their leader find more trouble. They liked him.

"Steady on, Handy!" said Church. "It's no good!"

"Chuck it up!" advised McClure.

Handforth stared at them witheringly.

"What!" he sneered. "Have you joined the snobs, too?"

"No, we haven't!" snorted Church. "But we don't want to see you mauled about! If those cads get hold of you in a bunch, they'll slaughter you! So cool down a bit!"

Handforth sniffed.

"You mad asses!" he said sourly. "Do you think those idiots could touch me? They haven't got enough pluck to go for a fag! Lemme go, or I'll start on you!"

"But, look here, old man," pleaded Church. "There's no sense in making a fuss in the Triangle. It wouldn't do. A master might come along any minute, and then you'll get it in the neck! And, anyhow, you can't fight a crowd of two dozen."

"Can't you help?" roared Handy.

"Well, yes, but—"

"Then don't be such funks! We'll wipe up the lot!" said Handforth. "Come on! We'll soon settle their hash!"

Church and McClure looked at one another hopelessly. They had been fearing something of this kind. Handforth himself never considered the odds; he was the kind of fellow who would dash into a fight without the slightest chance of success. Once he was fairly aroused, nothing could stop him.

"Even three of us couldn't do it!" said McClure. "And, after all, Huggins isn't worth it. These chaps can't hurt him. Why not let them blather? They're only talking to the empty air—making a fuss over nothing! You don't suppose they'll do anything, do you?"

Handforth calmed down a bit.

"Do anything!" he jeered. "They haven't got enough pluck!"

"Then why fight them?" asked Church diplomatically. "If they can't do anything they might as well jaw! When you come to think of it, it's an absolute humiliation to touch the cads!"

"By George, so it is!" said Handforth, rubbing his knuckles.

"It's degrading!" went on Church, seizing his advantage. "It's simply bringing yourself down to their level! Why not be dignified, and look on the whole thing with contempt? That's all it deserves, when you come to look at it squarely."

Handforth took a deep breath.

"Well, of course, that's my idea," he said. "You asses! You don't think I was going to touch these snobs, I suppose?"

"Of course not!" said McClure sarcastically.

"How could such a thought enter your head?" asked Church. "Let's go indoors, and see about tea. It's getting near the time. These cads make me feel bad!"

"They're taking my appetite away!" said Handforth. "Come on! If you chaps stay out here, I'll biff you!"

Handforth was an extraordinary fellow to get on with, but Church and McClure knew every one of his little ways—they knew exactly how to treat him. And, upon the whole, they managed him with surprising tact.

Of course, Handforth had an idea—a firm conviction—that he managed Church and McClure. Actually, it was the other way about. But Church and McClure had too much sense to let him know it.

And the chums of Study D marched indoors, with Handforth having the firm impression that he had given up the fight entirely of his own accord.

In the meantime, Alf was conducting Mr. Huggins to Archie's study. At the moment, Archie was having a few words with Phipps. Relations had been somewhat strained of late between Archie and his valet.

Phipps was a man of regular habits. He was quite satisfied with his position at St. Frank's because Archie was always serene and easy-going. Phipps had his regular times for everything, and he certainly looked after Archie as carefully as a mother looks after her baby.

And now Alf had come along.

For some days past Alf had shared the study. Phipps didn't mind the double work—he was a painstaking man, and very clever in his own way, too. But he was suffering from the same sort of complaint as the juniors—only in a very minor degree. He did not like the thought of Archie having a bricklayer's son as a study-mate. To Phipps' mind, it seemed altogether too incongruous to be natural. And Phipps was worrying intensely.

He could not see this thing panning out well. Sooner or later there would be ructions, and he was horrified at the thought of his young master being mixed up in anything of a common nature.

So Phipps had given Archie several pieces of advice—but Archie, appallingly enough—had turned a deaf ear. And this was quite a new experience for Phipps.

He had always been able to lead Archie with ease. And Phipps was alarmed. He

was losing his grip. Archie was becoming unmanageable. And if this wasn't a bad state of affairs, what could be?

"Phipps!" said Archie, as he paced up and down the rich carpet. "Phipps! Tea, don't you know! Kindly proceed to rally round with large and plentiful supplies of the brew that cheers!"

"For yourself, sir?"

"Well, dash it!" protested Archie. "I mean to say, I shouldn't ask you to get tea for yourself, what?"

"Quite so, sir—but I mean, will you have Master Huggins?"

Archie looked at the valet severely.

"I am annoyed!" he said, pointing an accusing finger at Phipps. "You may not believe it, laddie, but I am annoyed! The young master is dashed near to foaming at the mouth!"

"I am very sorry, sir," said Phipps.

"In that case, dear old sport, nothing more shall be said!" declared Archie. "When a chappie says he's sorry, the old peace is restored. The armistice, as it were, is brought into force. But kindly allow me to protest in fearsome terms regarding your attitude."

"I trust my attitude is not unseemly, sir?"

Archie considered.

"Well, not absolutely!" he replied. "I mean to say, not what a chapie might call unseemly. Dash it all! No! But you have an idea that Huggins is a bally intruder!"

"In a certain way, yes, sir," admitted Phipps.

"Gadzooks! You do?"

"I'm afraid so, sir."

"Then, you fearful bounder, allow me to tick you off!" said Archie, with dignity. "I mean to say, it doesn't matter a dash whether you allow it or not! The ticking off shall proceed!"

"I just wanted to explain, sir——"

"The young master is chatty!" said Archie firmly. "Interruptions are not only frightfully fearful, but they are fearfully frightful! Now, what about it? This ticking off stuff? Don't you think it's rather foul?"

"I see no necessity for your attitude, sir," said Phipps stiffly.

"No need!" ejaculated Archie. "But I say! Look here! Look anywhere you like! Haven't you made frightfully caustic remarks concerning Huggins? You will please understand, Phipps, that Huggins is now a part and parcel of my young life! Why, dash it all, I should wilt away without him! In fact, I don't know how the bally dickins I used to live without the priceless old peach!"

"I am at a loss, sir!" said Phipps sadly.

"Well, that's just as well," said Archie, with dignity. "Huggins, as I must remark, is a part of my very existence. Before he came I lived. But now I absolutely surge with vast supplies of joy! I mean to say, life's positively the right sort of stuff! And

it would be vastly improved by silence from you—to say nothing of cartloads of tea!”

Phipps sighed. It was quite useless.

“Then I am to bring tea for two, sir?” he asked.

“Three, laddie—three!”

“Three, sir?” asked Phipps, with a start.

“Huggins is honouring us with the presence of his pater!” said Archie cheerfully.

“A somewhat large old bird, with a choice supply of odours!” explained Archie. “I mean to say, the dear old lad can’t help it, but I must admit that he reeks!”

“Reeks, sir?” ejaculated Phipps, in horror.

“Shag, don’t you know!” said Archie.

“Bricks—mortar, and what not! Between ourselves, laddie, Mr. Huggins is a somewhat appalling customer. But there you are. We can’t bally well refuse him admittance, what? He’s the father of my pal, and that’s all that need be said! So rally round with the good old brew! And shove in the top speed, Phipps!”

Phipps looked utterly miserable as he left the study, and Archie sank down upon the lounge, feeling that he had done exceedingly well. And he was just going off into a doze when voices sounded in the corridor. Archie always went into a doze if he had nothing to do. It was the most pleasant method of spending time. He allowed his mind to become a blank, he lay back in comfort, and merely lived.

But the visitors were just arriving!

“’Ere we are, dad!” said Alf, opening the door, and ushering Mr. Huggins inside. “This is our little shanty!”

“I mean to say, what?” murmured Archie.

He rose from the lounge, and hurried forward with outstretched hand.

“What-ho!” he said. “Kindly trickle in, dear old things! I mean to say, make yourselves frightfully at home. Take a chair! In fact, take two chairs! Disport yourselves in any old way that pleases you! Don’t mind me in the least!”

Archie shook hands warmly with Mr. Huggins. By a manly effort he succeeded in concealing a wince. He winced for two reasons. Firstly, Mr. Huggins’ hand was like a leg of mutton, and, secondly, Archie became surrounded in a bluish halo of shag smoke.

“Ahem! Absolutely!” he gasped. “Of course, just as you like! Tea will be buzzing in very shortly. Large supplies of the goodly stuff, I mean. I trust you are partial to the brew, sir?”

“Brew?” repeated Mr. Huggins, removing his pipe.

“Tea—tea, you understand!” said Archie, hastily.

For one fearful moment he had an idea that Mr. Huggins was going to ask for beer. In that case, of course, he would have to send Phipps whizzing down to the village.

If Mr. Huggins wanted beer, beer he would have it—while he was Archie’s guest. But this contingency, fortunately, did not arise. Mr. Huggins was well content with tea.

“Well, I must say as ’ow you’ve got a nice place, me lad!” said the bricklayer, lying back on the lounge, and placing his huge hob-nailed boots upon one of Archie’s best cushions. “Yus, Alf a nice place hiff you like! It don’t seem as you do much work!”

“Work!” said Alf. “We’re allus at it, ain’t we Archie?”

“Number fourteen, at least!” murmured Archie. “Absolutely!”

His gaze was fixed in a fascinated kind of glassy stare. He was looking at Mr. Huggins’ boots on the cushion. He couldn’t take his eyes away.

“Gone to sleep, Archie?” asked Alf, giving his noble chum a dig.

“Ouch! What ho!” gasped Archie. “Good gracious! Sorrow! Oh, about the tea? I’ll buzz the tinkler! Kindly reach over, old darling, and tickle the old knob!”

Alf pushed the bell, and Archie beamed upon the visitor.

“Of course, speaking about the size of boots—I—I mean to say, absolutely not!” he exclaimed hastily. “Quite a slip, dear old raspberry! Speaking on the subject of work, how about it? I gather that you fairly wallow in the ghastly business, what? Bricks and mortar, and all that kind of rot? It must be dashed interesting!”

“There’s lots sed about bricklayers wot ain’t true, sir,” observed Mr. Huggins, removing his pipe and blowing a cloud of smoke into Archie’s face. “Bricklayers are ’ard done by.”

“Absolutely!” murmured Archie faintly. “I mean, why not? They dash well deserve it! That is, they dash well deserve to be treated better! When it comes to laying bricks, I should think it’s a frightfully frightful kind of task! I mean, I couldn’t do it!”

“I don’t suppose as you could, sir,” said Mr. Huggins.

“Positively and precisely not!” said Archie. “Just imagine! Bricks, don’t you know! Shoving ’em on the old wall, one on top of the other, and squirting mud in between! Not only a dashed messy job, but foul into the bargain! I gather that the good old pipe helps matters somewhat?”

“The pipe, sir?” said Mr. Huggins, removing it, and knocking the ashes out in the flower-bowl. “Well, I don’t rightly say as it ’elps, but it’s a sort o’ comfort to a man!”

ANSWERS
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(Continued on page 15.)

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THE LEAGUE

OF THE IRON HAND



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Paul Herman, a popular figure in London society, and a millionaire living in a palatial residence in Mayfair, is the head of a secret criminal confederation known as the League of the Iron Hand. To a few of his intimates he is known as "Number One." The series of daring robberies and forgeries that have gone undetected is believed to be the work of the Iron Hand. Nelson Lee, the famous Gray's Inn Road detective, has set himself the difficult task of smashing up the confederation and bringing its formidable leader to justice.

The story opens with a jewel robbery arranged by Number One, when Donald Stuart, who has dared to cross Herman in love, is made to appear the thief.
(Now read on.)

CHAPTER IV.

Herman's Plot Succeeds.

"YOU unutterable scoundrel!" roared Sir George, shaking his fist in Donald's astonished face. "You contemptible blackguard! You ungrateful ruffian! This is how you repay my hospitality, is it?"

"What—what do you mean?" gasped Donald. "I don't understand you! What has happened?"

"Hear him!" cried Sir George, and the veins on his forehead stood out like knotted cords. "He has the effrontery to ask me what has happened! Is that Johnson I see at the door?"

"Yes, sir," said the butler, timidly advancing into the room.

"Go for the constable at once," said Sir George—"at once!"

The butler hurried away. At the same moment Sir George's daughter, Vera, came into the room.

"What is it, father—what's the matter?" she inquired.

"Matter enough!" replied her father, pointing to Donald. "This cur—this man whom I treated and trusted like a son—has repaid my trust by stealing the Marquis of Hummersea's jewel-case and handing it out to an accomplice!"

"What!" cried Donald, his eyes ablaze with indignation. "You dare to accuse me of being a thief?"

"I do!" retorted Sir George. "It is useless to deny your guilt! I know everything, and if I were a younger man, I would—I would——"

"Father, don't excite yourself like this!" pleaded Vera, clinging to his arm. "Remember the doctor told you that if you gave way to excitement you would probably bring on another apoplectic stroke. Do be calm!"

"How can I be calm," demanded her father, "when that—that unspeakable scoundrel has been guilty of the infamy of robbing one of my guests?"

"But I'm sure he hasn't," said Vera confidently. "Appearances may be against him; but you know as well as I do that Donald is incapable of a dishonourable act. There's some terrible misunderstanding here, I'm sure!"

"Not much—aw—misunderstanding about this," said the marquis, holding up Donald's pocket-handkerchief. "I—aw—picked this up off my bedroom floor. And that—aw—wing in his hand is—aw—one of mine!"

"And I myself saw him talking to his accomplice through that window," added Sir George. "And then you ask me to believe that he is innocent."

Vera turned to Donald with a troubled but trustful look in her hazel eyes.

"Tell them all about it, Donald," she said. "I know you can explain everything."

Ere Donald could respond to this invitation, the butler returned with the village constable, whom he had met just outside the gates.

"Mornin', gentlemen! Mornin', Sir George! Mornin', Miss Langford!" said the constable, bustling into the room and visibly swelling with importance. "Wot's all this about? A case of theft, I 'ear! Wot's been stolen?"

"A set of—aw—diamond studs and links, valued at—aw—five thousand pounds," said the marquis. "Also a jewel-case, containing—aw—pins and wings, valued at another five thousand."

"Belonging to you?"

"Yes."

"Name, please?"

"The Marquis of Hummersea."

"And who d'yer haccuse of the theft?" asked the constable, when he had jotted down these details in his notebook.

"Mr. Donald Stuart," said the marquis, pointing to the young Scot.

"It is an infamous lie!" said Donald hotly.

"Haccused denies the charge!" murmured the constable scribbling in his book. "Now for particulars. Who knows hanything about the case?"

"Perhaps I'd better tell my story first," said Sir George. "I was awakened about a quarter of an hour ago by Mr. Mandeville here, who informed me that he had seen Mr. Stuart drop a small black box —"

"No, no," interrupted Paul Herman, alias Squire Mandeville; "I didn't say that. I saw a man drop a box out of one of the windows, but I couldn't see the man distinctly, and I certainly couldn't say, and didn't say, it was Mr. Stuart."

"Wot did yer say, then?" inquired the constable.

"Well, what happened was this," said Herman. "For some reason or other I couldn't sleep, so I got out of bed and

drew aside my window-curtains. To my surprise, I perceived a rough-looking man standing under one of the bedroom windows; and whilst I was watching him, I saw another man lean out of the window and drop a small black box into the first man's hands. I thought this was very suspicious, to say the least of it, so I slipped round to Sir George's bedroom, woke him up, and told him of the strange scene I had witnessed."

Sir George then took up the thread of the narrative.

"After slipping on my dressing-gown," he said, "I followed Mr. Mandeville to his room. The man he had described was still standing under what I knew to be the window of Mr. Stuart's bedroom. And just as Mr. Mandeville and I arrived on the scene, we saw the fellow hold up the box—the jewel-case, in fact—and we heard him say, 'You've put the marquis's studs and links in here? Right-ho! So-long! I'll see you at the usual place to-morrow.'"

"At that moment," continued Sir George, "the fellow caught sight of us and took to his heels. Mr. Mandeville, with commendable presence of mind, sprang to his bedside, thrust his hand beneath the pillow, pulled out a revolver, and fired at the man. But he was too far away, and the light was too treacherous, and apparently unharmed, the man gained the shelter of the trees, and disappeared from view. Now, marquis, tell the constable what you discovered!"

"Alarmed by the—aw—weport of the wevolver," said the marquis, "I—aw—spwang out of bed and switched on the—aw—electric-light. The moment I did so, I—aw—perceived that my jewel-case had disappeared fwom the toilet-table, where I had—aw—placed it on wetiring to west. A moment later I—aw—discovered that my shirt had been tampered with, and my—aw—diamond studs and links had been—aw—forcibly extwacted."

"Was the bedroom door locked?" asked the constable.

"It was when I—aw—wetired to west," replied the marquis; "but I now discovered that it was—aw—unlocked, and the key was gone! Before I—aw—made this discovewy, however, I perceived a handkerchief lying on the—aw—bed-woom floor, as if someone had—aw—accidentally dwopped it. I—aw—picked it up, and—aw—found it was marked with the initials 'D.S.' Here it is!"

He handed the handkerchief to the constable, who examined it and turned to Donald.

"Is this yours?" he asked.

Donald's face was now as white as the sheets on his bed.

"Yes, it's mine," he said, in a husky voice; "but how it came to be in the marquis's bedroom I can't imagine."

The constable smiled a pitying smile.

"We shall want this at the trial," he said, addressing the marquis and thrusting

the handkerchief into his pocket. "Now, wot did yer do when yer found that yer jewel-case 'ad disappeared? Rouse the 'ouse'old, I suppose?"

"There was—aw—no need to wouse them," said the marquis. "Whilst I was examining the—aw—handkerchief, Sir George and Mr. Mandeville knocked at my bedroom door, and after they had told me what they had—aw—seen, and after I had—aw—told them what I had discovered, they and I, and these other—aw—gentlemen made our way to Mr. Stuart's bedroom."

"The door was locked on the inside," said Sir George; "but we quickly burst it open. We then found Mr. Stuart standing in the middle of the room, with that ring in his hand, which the marquis identifies as part of the stolen property."

The constable took the ring from Donald, and held it up for the marquis's inspection.

"You hidentify this as yours?" he asked.

"Certainly," said the marquis. "It was—aw—in my jewel-case when I wetired to west."

"Well, we'll want this at the trial, too," said the constable; "so, if you've no hob-jection, I'll take charge of it for the pre-sent. Now, Sir George, is that hall the hevidence?"

"No," exclaimed Sir George, whose eye had suddenly alighted on a key on the dressing-table.

It was the key which Sir Edgar Fawcett had placed there.

"This is the key of the marquis's bed-room," said Sir George. "If any further proof were needed, the presence of this key here supplies it."

The constable nodded as he placed the key with the handkerchief and ring. Then he turned to the marquis.

"You're the proper pussion to give 'im in charge," he said. "Does yer lordship wish me to harrest 'im?"

The marquis nodded, and without any further ado, the constable pulled out a pair of handcuffs and laid his hand on Donald's shoulder.

"Donald Stuart," he said, after clearing his throat, "I harrest you in the name of the law for the theft of certain harticles of jewellery belengin' to the Marquis of 'Um-mersea. Yer needn't say nothin' now, un-less yer wish, but it's my jooty to warn yer that anythin' yer say will be took down, and may be used against yer at the trial."

Donald looked up with the air of a man awaking from some hideous nightmare.

"Anything to say?" he repeated dully. "I can only say that of course I'm innocent of this foul charge. You may not believe me—"

"I believe you!" interrupted Vera quickly.

"Vera," cried her father sternly. "you forget yourself."

"Nothing in the world would ever make me believe you guilty," continued Vera, ignoring her father's interruption. "I know

that you are utterly incapable of such villainy."

"Thank you," said Donald gratefully. "For the rest, I can only say that this appears to be a vile conspiracy on the part of somebody to ruin me—"

"What!" thundered Sir George, firing up again and quivering from head to foot with indignation and excitement. "You dare to add to your infamy by accusing me of conspiring to ruin you. You dare to—to—to—"

His voice broke, and he stumbled forward. With a cry of alarm several of the guests sprang towards him, but ere they could catch him he collapsed in a huddled heap on the floor.

That which the doctor had predicted had come to pass. The excitement had proved too much for the aged admiral, and had brought on an attack of apoplexy.

He was carried to his room, and one of the servants was despatched poste-haste for the doctor. Three-quarters of an hour later Donald Stuart had been lodged in the village lock-up, and the doctor was saying to Vera:

"It would be wrong to buoy you up with false hopes, Miss Langford. I told your father, when he had that attack last year, that if he had another it would probably prove fatal. He may possibly linger for an hour or two, but certainly no longer."

And again the doctor proved a true prophet; for shortly after daybreak Sir George's spirit winged its flight, and Vera Langford was an orphan.

CHAPTER V.

THE COMING OF "MAC."

IT was at Nelson Lee's rooms, in Gray's Inn Road on the following evening, that the two detectives saw in the papers an account of the robbery at Moscar Grange and the arrest of Donald Stuart.

Both Lee and O'Brien were acquainted with Donald Stuart, and as they perused the account of his alleged crime, exclama-tions of incredulity rose to their lips.

"I don't believe he stole the jewels," said Nelson Lee.

"Sure, I wouldn't believe it if he told me so himself," said O'Brien. "Stuart a thief! It's ridiculous!"

"And yet the evidence of his guilt, according to this paper, seems conclusive," said Nelson Lee.

"Too conclusive," said O'Brien. "Too pretty to be genuine. Don't you think so?"

"I do," said Nelson Lee. "The evidence has the air of having been manufactured to order. There's some villainous plot behind all this."

"Not a doubt about it," said O'Brien. "Bedad, if I hadn't sworn to devote all my time to the League of the Iron Hand, I'd go to Stuart and offer to take up the case—purely out of professional curiosity."

OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION

"Your offer would be declined with thanks," said Nelson Lee, with a smile. "Stuart has no need of our help. His case will be—is probably now—in very good hands. You've heard of Colin Mackenzie, of course?"

Colin Mackenzie, it should be explained, was the leading private detective of Scotland, and lived and practised in Edinburgh.

"Of course," said O'Brien. "Who hasn't heard of dear old Mac?"

"Well, Mac will doubtless take up Stuart's case."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because Mac and Stuart are cousins," said Nelson Lee. "They were at school together, and have always been chums. In fact, they're more like brothers than cousins. Stuart would be sure to wire to Mac first thing this morning, and the chances are that Mac, with his usual energy, is already at work on the case."

He had scarcely finished speaking ere his landlady knocked at the door.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," she said. "Mr. Colin Mackenzie."

The two detectives leaped to their feet with shouts of welcome, and the next instant they were wringing the hands of a sturdy young Scot, whose somewhat rugged demeanour enshrined as warm a heart and as brave a spirit as ever animated a human frame.

In reply to their questions, he explained that Donald had wired for him, as Nelson Lee had predicted he would do. Mac had received the wire shortly after seven o'clock in the morning, and leaving Edinburgh at 7.50, had arrived in London a few minutes after four in the afternoon.

In the meantime, Donald had been brought before the Guildford magistrates, and after formal evidence had been taken, had been remanded in custody. Mac had been down to Guildford, and had interviewed him in his cell, and had then returned to London.

"Ay, ay! The laddie's innocent—there's nae doot aboot that!" he said, when his two companions had assured him of their disbelief in Donald's guilt. "It's jist a maist infernal plot on somebody's pairt to ruin him."

When Mac was deeply moved he invariably relapsed into his native dialect.

"Have you formed any theory on the subject?" asked Nelson Lee.

Mac shook his head.

"I hivna had time to mak' inquiries yet," he said. "I wud have gone to Moscar to-night, but the laddie's anxious aboot the safety of his airship; and he asked me to gang doon to Wimbledon and mak' arrangements wi' the local police to guard the house."

The three detectives chatted together for an hour or so; then Colin Mackenzie rose to go.

"There's lots more I'd like to say to you two," he said, in his best English, "but 'tis

time I was getting down to Wimbledon now. If you've nothing better to do you might come with me. We could finish our crack on the way, and you could have a look at the airship, which, if only half what Donald says is true, is well worth looking at."

"What do you say?" asked Nelson Lee, turning to O'Brien.

"I'm willing," said O'Brien; and five minutes later the three set out for Wimbledon.

Duncan Stuart's residence at Wimbledon Park was a rambling old house which, through age and neglect, had fallen into an extremely dilapidated condition. Owing to this fact, the young inventor had been able to secure the fag-end of the lease on very favourable terms, the chief recommendation of the place to him being the extensive and secluded grounds in which the house stood.

With an old man-servant named Cornforth to attend to domestic duties, Donald Stuart had furnished only two or three rooms, nearly every hour of his time being passed in the straggling collection of wood-and-corrugated-iron buildings at the bottom of the grounds which served as his workshops.

Conspicuous amongst these buildings, dominating all the others by its height and size, was the lofty shed in which the airship was housed.

Outside this shed, at about the same time as Nelson Lee, Colin Mackenzie, and Derrick O'Brien alighted from the train at Wimbledon Park station, Paul Herman and Major Rockstro halted, having just previously bound and gagged old Cornforth in the house, after taking from him the key of the shed.

Inserting this key, Paul Herman unlocked the door; then he and his companion stepped into the shed, closed the door behind them, and locked it on the inside.

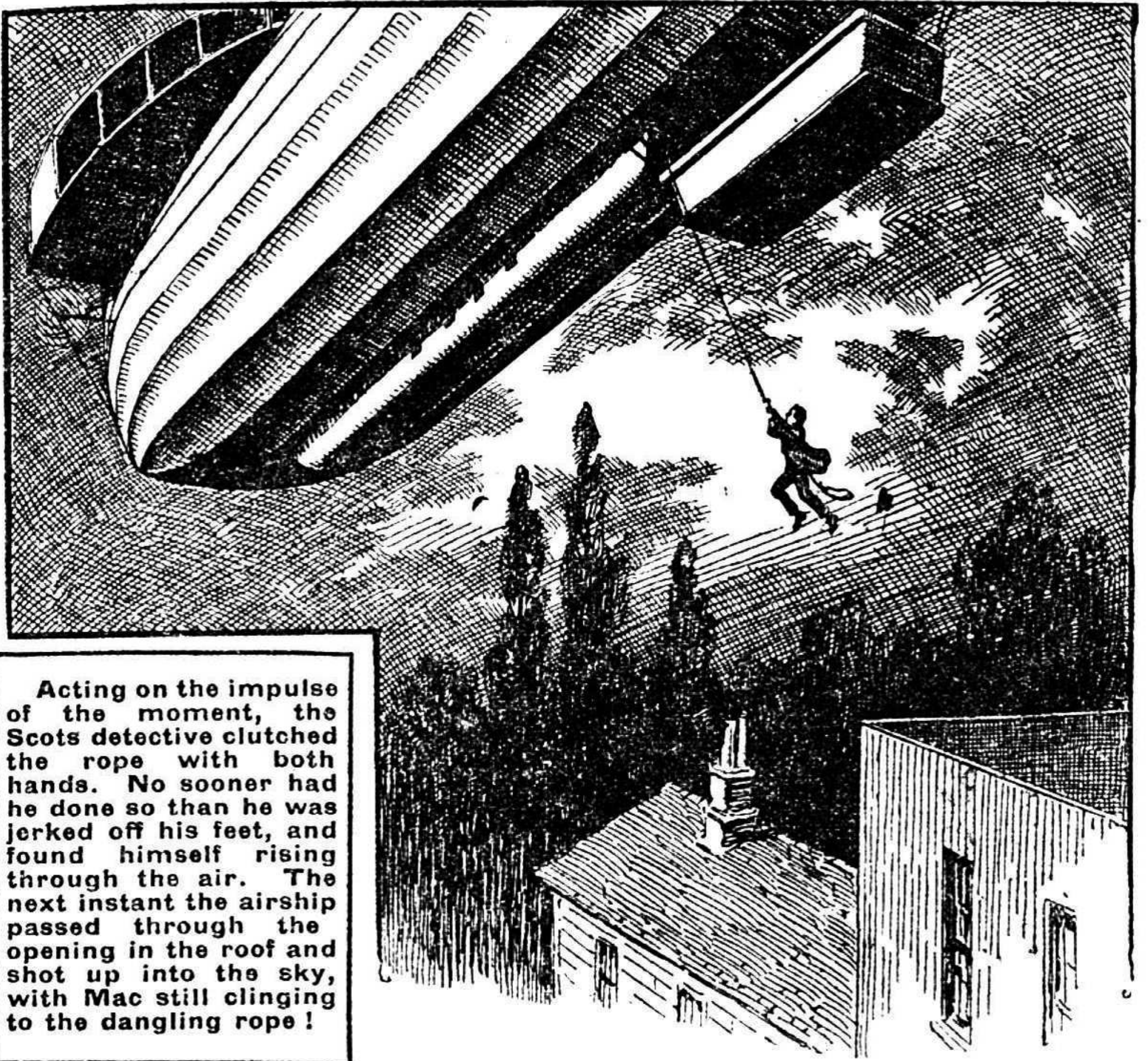
The shed was enveloped in the blackest darkness, but Herman had provided for this, and as soon as he had locked the door he drew out his pocket electric lamp and switched on its small but powerful light.

"There she is!" said the major, pointing to the airship, which rested on a wooden cradle, with everything in readiness for her forthcoming trial in the presence of Government experts. "Isn't she a beauty?"

"She looks very business-like!" said Herman, flashing the light up and down and across the gleaming hull. "But, I say, how shall we get her out of the shed?"

"There is a hydraulic arrangement for opening the roof," answered Rockstro, glancing about him as he spoke. "Ah! that must be the thing that works the contrivance. Let's try it!"

He pointed to a small brass lever on one of the walls. He pulled the lever, and immediately, with scarcely a sound, that portion of the roof above the airship rolled



Acting on the impulse of the moment, the Scots detective clutched the rope with both hands. No sooner had he done so than he was jerked off his feet, and found himself rising through the air. The next instant the airship passed through the opening in the roof and shot up into the sky, with Mac still clinging to the dangling rope!

aside, like the revolving roofs one sometimes sees in modern theatres.

"Now, all we've got to do is to climb aboard and sail away to Ryeroft Hall," said the major rubbing his hands. "Here's a step-ladder at the stern—come along."

Meanwhile, Nelson Lee and his two companions had arrived at Donald Stuart's house. Mac had rung the bell, and, receiving no reply, rang again. As there was still no response, he tried the handle; and, finding that the door was unlocked, he opened it and led the way into the silent house.

On entering the kitchen they were astounded to discover old Cornforth, the caretaker, gagged and bound to one of the chairs. In less time almost than it takes to tell, they set him free, and dragged his story out of him. A moment later the three detectives were racing across the dark, deserted grounds as hard as they could pelt.

When they came in sight of the shed in

which the airship was housed, Nelson Lee was the first to perceive that a haze of light was streaming upwards through the open roof.

"They're stealing the airship!" he yelled. "Spurt, you fellows, spurt! Smash the door down!"

Like one man, they hurled themselves at the outside of the door. With a deafening crash the door burst open, and the three detectives fell sprawling on their hands and knees on the floor of the shed.

By that time Herman had swiftly extinguished his lamp, and in the darkness the airship was as invisible to the three detectives as the three detectives were to those on board of her.

As Mac leaped to his feet, however, his hands encountered a dangling rope. It was one of the trail-ropes of the airship, which Herman and the major had omitted to haul in.

Acting on the impulse of the moment, the Scots detective clutched the rope with both

his hands. No sooner had he done so than he was jerked off his feet, and found himself rising through the air.

The next instant the airship passed through the opening in the roof and shot up into the sky, with Mac still clinging to the dangling rope!

CHAPTER VI.

MAC'S STRANGE ADVENTURE IN THE AIR.

FOR a second or two Mac was too bewildered by the strangeness of his adventure, too dazed by his sudden upward rush, to realise what had happened.

When at last he grasped the situation—when it dawned on him that he had been carried off by the airship, and that the two men on board were ignorant of the fact—it was characteristic of the intrepid young Scot that, instead of being dismayed by the appalling danger of his position, his feeling was one of triumphant satisfaction!

"If I can only hang on till these scoundrels reach their destination," was the thought that instantly flashed across his brain, "I shall find out who they are, where they live, and all about them."

It was obvious, however, that he could not "hang on" very long, for the strain on his arms was too severe to be borne for any great length of time. In fact, his hands were already beginning to slip down the rope, and a feeling of despair was beginning to succeed his original feeling of triumph, when an unexpected slice of luck befell him.

He found that the length of rope by which he was dangling had a looped end.

Having made that welcome discovery, it was the work of a moment for Mac to ascend the rope hand over hand, until he was able to insert one of his feet in the loop. Thus supported, he was able to hang on without fatigue.

Previous to this he had heard the two men in the airship talking to each other, but the distance he was below them and the whirr of the rotating screws had prevented him hearing more than a few disjointed scraps of their conversation. It is hardly necessary to add that both men's voices were unfamiliar to him, and afforded him no clue to their identity.

Now again he heard them talking, but again it was only an occasional word or phrase that reached his ears. For instance, he caught the words "wide detour," and the names "Sydenham," "Woolwich," "the river." A little later he heard one of the men say something about "the league," and out of the other man's reply the detective was able to distinguish the words "unlimited scope . . . with this airship . . . no end of plunder . . . treble our incomes." Then, after an interval, during which Mac could distinguish nothing, the two words "Fairfax" and "Mimosa" were wafted down from the airship's deck.

These two words conveyed no meaning whatever to the listening detective. He was shrewd enough to piece together the other scraps of conversation he had heard. For example, it was evident that the two men in the airship were bound for some place on the other side of "the river," but being afraid to cross over London, for fear of being seen, they had decided to make a "wide detour" by way of Sydenham and Woolwich.

It was also clear that the two men were members of the League of the Iron Hand, and it was equally evident that they meant to use the stolen airship for the purpose of enriching themselves and adding to their ill-gotten gains.

And now, as Mac listened, a new name began to crop up frequently in the conversation—the name of "Sir Edgar."

"Fairfax, Mimosa, Sir Edgar—this is very tantalising!" muttered Mac. "I can hear just enough to whet my appetite for more, and just too little to give me any definite information. If I could only get a bit nearer to the scoundrels and hear what they're talking about—"

He paused and glanced upwards at the dark hull of the airship, fifteen feet above his head.

"And why shouldn't I?" he mused. "If I swarm up about three-parts of the length of this rope, I shall probably be able to hear every word they say; and I can always slide down and rest my feet in the loop for a few minutes when the strain on my arms becomes too great."

Suiting the action to the thought, he grasped the rope firmly and began to haul himself up an inch or two at a time. With all his caution, however, he could not prevent a certain amount of oscillation of the rope, which had the effect of making the airship gently rock from side to side.

"Hallo! what's the matter now?" exclaimed Paul Herman, breaking off in the middle of a remark. "Do you notice how the vessel is rocking?"

"Yes," said Major Rockstro somewhat anxiously. "I don't know what the reason— Ah, it's stopped now!"

Mac had ceased to swarm up the rope, being now sufficiently near the airship to hear all that was said.

"I shall be glad when we're on terra firma again!" said Herman, with a nervous laugh. "I'm not casting any reflection on your management of the vessel—you've done superbly well up to now—but, all the same, I shall breathe more freely when the voyage is over. What are those lights over there?"

"Woolwich," said the major. "We're crossing Plumstead Common now. I'll give her a bit more east, I think, for I don't want to cross the river too near the town."

He altered his course from N.E. to E.N.E.; then Herman resumed the thread of the remark which had been interrupted when the airship had begun to rock.

"As I was about to say just now," he

said. "I've had it on my conscience for some time that we ought to do something for poor old Cuddle."

"So have I," said the major. "He behaved like a brick. He could easily have got off by turning King's evidence, but instead of doing so, he took all the blame on his own shoulders, and went to prison without a word."

"I suppose you know," said Herman, "that he was removed from Wormwood Scrubs last week at the end of his nine months' probation?"

"I heard so," replied the major. "He's at Dartmoor now, isn't he?"

"Yes," said Herman; and it seems to me that it would be a fairly easy matter to——"

"Half a minute!" said the major, interrupting him. "I rather fancy we've struck the river sooner than I expected. I think we're over it now. I'd better go down and make sure."

He touched a lever, and the airship's propeller ceased to revolve. He touched another, and the vessel sank slowly through the air. When she had descended as far as he deemed necessary, he brought her to a standstill, poised in mid-air like some enormous bird. Then, rising to his feet, he stepped to the side of the deck and peered down into the darkness below.

"Yes, we're over the river," he began; then a startled cry burst from his lips. He had just caught sight of the detective's head, no more than a yard beneath him. "Good heavens! There's a man here—clinging to the trail-rope!" he gasped.

As he uttered these words he whipped out a revolver; but even as he leaned over the rail and pointed the weapon at Mac, the latter released his hold on the rope and dropped feet-foremost through the air with the swiftness of a falling star.

In the meantime, Herman had also leaped to his feet, and had whipped out his revolver; but no sooner had he done so than the airship, lightened of Mac's weight, shot upwards with a jerk that threw both Herman and the major off their feet.

"Who was it?" panted Herman, as they hurriedly picked themselves up.

"I don't know," said the major, darting towards the switchboard. "I didn't see his face. Probably it was Nelson Lee. But I'll soon find out."

"What are you going to do?" cried Herman, catching him by the arm.

"Turn on the searchlight, of course," said the major.

"But that will betray our presence to everybody on the banks."

"Can't be helped," retorted the major. "Whoever the fellow was, it's obvious that he must have followed us all the way from Wimbledon; and heaven only knows how much of our conversation he has overheard. At all risks we must silence him before he tells his story to the police!"

Shaking Herman off, he sprang to the

switch-board; and an instant later the surface of the river immediately beneath the airship was illumined by a broad and dazzling circle of light.

"There he is!" cried Herman, when the major had manœuvred the searchlight to and fro, and from side to side for a few seconds.

He pointed to a small black object, almost in the centre of the stream. It was Mac's head. The detective had dropped feet first into the river, without sustaining any serious injury, and was now making for the north bank of the river, swimming as hard as his arms and legs would propel him.

Like a vulture swooping down on its prey, the airship sank swiftly through the air; then——

Crack! Crack!

The two men fired at the self-same moment; but, even as their fingers pressed the triggers, Mac dived, and the bullets ricocheted harmlessly off the surface of the water.

"Curse it! Here's a police-launch!" snarled the major, as a motor-boat, manned by uniformed men, glided into the circle of light. "We'll have to—— There he is again!"

Mac had bobbed up to the surface again, a few yards from the side of the launch.

"That settles the matter!" said Herman philosophically, as the searchlight instantly went out and plunged the scene in darkness. "We can't get the fellow now, that's certain, so there's no use in wasting any more time. Send her up!"

Five minutes later willing hands were dragging Mac into the launch, and the airship was speeding north towards Rycroft Hall.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE.

WE left Nelson Lee and O'Brien sprawling on their hands and knees in the airship shed at Wimbledon. By the time they had scrambled to their feet the airship had vanished through the opening in the roof, but it was not until they had switched on the electric lights that they discovered that Mac had also disappeared.

It was obvious to the two detectives, of course, that Mac must have been carried off by the airship; and the theory they finally adopted was that the anchor of the airship had been dangling overboard, had caught in Mac's clothes, and had whisked him up into the air.

Assuming this theory to be correct, they argued that his clothes wouldn't stand the strain for more than a few seconds, and they concluded, therefore, that they would probably find his lifeless, mangled body within a short distance of the shed.

Actuated by this belief, they searched the grounds and the neighbouring roads and gardens for upwards of an hour, without, of course, discovering any trace of Mac.

They then retraced their steps to the house, told Cornforth what had happened, and sadly started for home.

Almost exactly on the stroke of half-past one they reached Nelson Lee's rooms in Gray's Inn Road, where they found Mac installed in an easy chair, puffing away at his favourite briar, and looking as if trips through the air were a matter of everyday occurrence with him.

"Man, man! Gie a body time to speak!" he protested, as the two detectives overwhelmed him with a deluge of excited questions. "I canna answer fifty questions in ane and the same breath! Sit doon an' light your pipes, an' I'll begin at the verra beginnin' an' tell ye all about it."

When Nelson Lee and O'Brien had complied with this request, the young Scot dropped his bantering tones, and, relapsing into ordinary English, told them all that had happened.

His two companions listened in silence till he came to that part of his story where he had overheard the words "Fairfax" and "Mimosa." Then O'Brien suddenly started, and a look of tense excitement crossed his face.

"Fairfax and Mimosa!" he repeated.

"Yes," said Mac. "I've no idea what they were talking about, or to whom they referred."

"But I have!" said O'Brien. "At least, I've no idea what they were talking about, of course, but I can make a pretty shrewd guess at the man to whom they referred."

"Who?" asked Mac and Nelson Lee in the same breath.

"Willoughby Fairfax, of Rycroft Hall," said O'Brien. "I don't suppose you've heard of him," he said to Mac; "but you have, of course?" he added, turning to Nelson Lee.

"Oh, yes!" said Nelson Lee. "He used to be on the Stock Exchange, but retired about three years ago."

"That's the man," said O'Brien. "I was engaged on a Stock Exchange case at the time he retired, and I heard a good deal about him from the other members. It seems he had been in very low water for some time, and everybody was expecting to hear that he had gone bankrupt, when he suddenly retired, bought Rycroft Hall, and blossomed out as a man of wealth. He gave out that he had made his money by a lucky speculation in American railway stock."

"But what makes you think he's the man the two men in the airship were talking about?" asked Mac.

"I ran down to Southampton last Monday in connection with one of my cases," said O'Brien. "There was a steam-yacht in the harbour, named the Mimosa. I was so struck by her smartness that I asked whose she was, and the harbour-master told me she belonged to Mr. Willoughby Fairfax, of Rycroft Hall, who had arrived at Southamp-

ton that morning from a cruise in the Mediterranean.

"Now, Mimosa is not a common name for a yacht, and Fairfax is not such a very common surname. It seems to me, therefore, that when the two men in the airship uttered the words Fairfax and Mimosa there can't be much doubt that they were referring to Willoughby Fairfax and his yacht."

Both Mac and Nelson Lee agreed with this, and the former then went on to tell how, a little later, he had caught the name Sir Edgar.

"I've already told you," said O'Brien, "that the harbour-master at Southampton told me that Fairfax returned to England in the Mimosa on Monday morning. I didn't tell you all he said, because I didn't think it had any bearing on the question. What the harbour-master really said was, 'She belongs to Mr. Fairfax, of Rycroft Hall. He and his friend, Sir Edgar Fawcett, arrived here this morning from a trip down the Mediterranean.' I don't know who Sir Edgar is," continued O'Brien; "but if the two men in the airship referred to Fairfax and Mimosa, and then to Sir Edgar, I should think there's little doubt they were referring to Fairfax's friend, Sir Edgar Fawcett."

"It certainly looks like it," agreed Mac. "And what may this Sir Edgar Fawcett be?"

"He's a dissolute, ne'er-do-weel baronet, who, by the way, used to own and live at Moscar Grange," said Nelson Lee.

"Moscar Grange!" exclaimed Mac. "Sir George Langford's place, where the robbery, of which Donald is accused, took place?"

"Yes. Sir Edgar, being hard up, sold the Grange to Sir George, and came up to London. For several years, like Fairfax, he was in very low water; then suddenly, about three years ago—like Fairfax again—he suddenly blossomed out as a man of wealth."

Mac wrinkled his brow, and puffed at his pipe for a moment or two in silence.

"A robbery is committed at the Grange," he said at last, "and part of the stolen property is found in Donald's bed-room. When Donald is in custody his airship is stolen by men who talk about Sir Edgar Fawcett. Sir Edgar is a friend of Major Rockstro, and Rockstro is a member of the League of the Iron Hand. Sir Edgar used to live at Moscar Grange, where the robbery was committed. Is it possible that Sir Edgar is also a member of the league, and committed the robbery, and planted it on Donald in order to get Donald out of the way, and thus make it easy for his airship to be stolen?"

"It is a theory worth considering, at any rate," said Nelson Lee. "But we can discuss that afterwards. In the meantime, let's hear the rest of your story. You haven't told us yet how you escaped, and what became of the airship."

THE CASE OF THE

CABINET SECRETS

*The Adventures of GORDON FOX
DETECTIVE*

CHAPTER I.

LORD MARTINDALE'S TROUBLE.

AT eleven o'clock on a summer's morning, in a car that was speeding down Whitehall, sat an elderly, dignified gentleman with florid features and an aquiline nose, shaggy eyebrows, and a fierce, white moustache. This was Lord Martindale, Prime Minister of Great Britain, and more than once he was recognised by persons who wondered why he should be in such an ordinary vehicle, instead of in his private carriage blazoned with a crest that was almost as old as the Tower of London. They might have guessed the reason had they seen the car turn into Queen Street, Westminster, and draw up before the house in which lodged the most celebrated detective of modern times. Lord Martindale hurried across the pavement, pulled the bell, and was quickly admitted.

"Good morning, my lord," said Gordon Fox, as his visitor entered the room. "I rather expected you would come."

"You did, eh? How's that?"

"Well, sir, I have just been reading the 'Daily Messenger,'" was the reply. "For the second time this week, I perceive, it has published Cabinet secrets. I judged that some underhanded work has been going on, and that you might want my help in solving the mystery."

"You are quite right. There is a mystery, and that is why I am here. I hope you will be able to get to the bottom of it, Mr. Fox, as easily as you fathomed my purpose."

"Will you let me have the facts, please?"

"You must be partly acquainted with them," said Lord Martindale, as he paced the floor with nervous steps, "but I had better tell you all from the beginning. You know what recently happened in West Africa? The Sultan of Chard, a native State that is under British suzerainty, boldly disregarded his obligations. A small force under Major Darnell marched up through the hinterland to Chard, and there encountered another force that had hoisted the flag of a certain great European Power. Bloodshed was happily averted, but neither force would withdraw, and both are now encamped on the spot, waiting for orders

from their respective governments. The news was cabled to England a week ago, and at once, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, I opened negotiations with this European Power, insisting, of course, on our rights.

"Last Monday night I laid important papers before the Cabinet, at a secret meeting at the Foreign Office, and the next morning I was horrified to find a full account of the proceedings in that radical paper, the 'Daily Messenger.' How they got hold of it, I could not imagine, but I determined that it should not happen again, so I called the next cabinet meeting at my private residence, in St. James's Square. That was last night, and again this morning, to my consternation, the 'Daily Messenger' published all that transpired. They must have received the information between midnight and the time of going to press, which leaves but a narrow margin."

"This is a serious business, I suppose?"

"Very serious," said Lord Martindale. "Naturally, these negotiations are of a delicate nature, and up to the present the action of the Cabinet, which was meant to be kept secret, might be construed—as the 'Daily Messenger' has impudently stated—as a sign of vacillation. The Government is weak and unpopular, and this Radical rag would like to deal it a deathblow. And the chance may come if anything should leak out at the next meeting, when the affair will have reached a crisis seemingly unfavourable to the Government, though I can assure you that we are standing firm, and that the European Power, which is playing a game of bluff, will ultimately be compelled to back down. But before that, the Government may fall, unless you can help us."

"I am more than willing to do so," replied Gordon Fox. "It may be a difficult task, however. You have certainly been betrayed by a man who is in the pay of the 'Daily Messenger.'"

"Of course; there is no doubt of that. But where are we to look for him? All the members of the Cabinet, you will admit, are beyond suspicion."

"Yes, undoubtedly. We must look elsewhere. You suspect no one, my lord?"

"I did at first," replied Lord Martin-

dale. "I refer to my private secretary, Randolph Weston, who came to me three months ago with the best of recommendations from the Duke of Barminster. He attended the Cabinet meeting with me on Monday night, at the Foreign Office, and he drove home in my car. It occurred to me the next morning that he might have dropped a letter from his window to somebody waiting outside, I tested the theory, and I found it wrong. Randolph Weston was present at last night's meeting in my house in St. James's Square, and, after the proceedings, he went straight to his room. From that time until morning two constables were on guard outside my house, one at the front and one at the rear, while the butler remained awake in the lower hall. No one attempted to slip out, and nothing was thrown from any of the windows. Yet this morning, as you see, the 'Messenger' prints an accurate account of the meeting. As far as young Weston is concerned, I am satisfied that he is innocent."

"There is no telephone in his room?"

"No; that is in my own apartment."

"How many are in your household?"

"My wife and daughter, the secretary, and five servants. The guilty person is not to be found there. The test that I applied to Randolph Weston exonerates the servants as well."

"Quite true," assented the detective.

"This is a very deep mystery, my lord."

"But you will solve it, Mr. Fox? The Government is at stake."

"I will do my best," replied Gordon Fox, "and, meanwhile, don't worry."

CHAPTER II.

GORDON FOX'S DISCOVERY.

NOT long after Lord Martindale's departure, as the detective was puffing clouds of smoke, and puzzling over the mysterious case that he had promised to undertake, his landlady brought him a card. An odd light flashed to his eyes as he read the name.

"Show the gentleman in," he said.

A moment later, Mr. Randolph Weston entered the room—a tall, fair-haired young man of perhaps twenty-five, with brown eyes and a slight moustache, wearing a morning suit of grey tweeds. He came to the point at once.

"I happened to see Lord Martindale leaving your place," he said, "and I can guess what he wanted with you. He suspects me of that wretched newspaper business, Mr. Fox, but I am entirely innocent. That is why I am here—to ask for your help, and to prevent you from wasting your time on any false clue."

"In other words, to work for and not against you?"

"Exactly! I am anxious that the mystery should be cleared up as soon as possible."

"Do you suspect anybody?" inquired the detective.

"I leave that to you," replied Randolph Weston. "You must feel convinced, if you have heard the circumstances, that the guilty person is a member of the Cabinet."

"I can hardly doubt it," said Gordon Fox, truthfully enough. "Everything points to that. I have undertaken the case," he added, "and I may have some news for you in a day or so."

"I hope you will," said the young secretary, who had made a favourable impression on the detective.

He turned to go, and as he pulled a handkerchief from the side-pocket of his coat, a little shower of tiny white objects fell to the floor. He did not observe this. The door closed behind him, and the next instant Gordon Fox was on his knees, his fingers darting here and there over the carpet.

"Breadcrumbs!" he muttered in surprise as he rose, and gazed at the collection in the palm of his hand. "What can they mean? By Jove, I begin to see daylight! I have it! Yes, I think I have the clue! Randolph Weston must have pocketed these at breakfast!"

That Lord Martindale had gone into the country over-night, for a change of air, was the news that greeted Gordon Fox when he called at St. James's Square; but at eleven o'clock the next morning he had an interview with his lordship at the Foreign Office, and, in the course of the afternoon, he went again to St. James's Square.

"The coast is clear," said Lord Martindale. "I have put young Weston to work in the library at the Foreign Office. And I must tell you, Mr. Fox, that I have just received most important despatches. The Government has won its points, and the European Power will withdraw its soldiers from Chard. There will be a Cabinet meeting here to-night."

"We will speak of that again," replied the detective. "Just now I want to see your secretary's room."

They ascended three flights of stairs, and entered a small and comfortably-furnished apartment, used as a bed and sitting-room. Glancing around, Gordon Fox observed that the wall at one side was a painted wooden partition, and that there was a door in it.

"I believe this is the top floor of the house?" he inquired.

"Yes, it is."

"And where does that door lead?"

"To a part of the room that I had partitioned off years ago, when I was Secretary of State for the Colonies. It is full of old Parliamentary papers and Blue Books."

"The door is locked. Have you a key?"

Lord Martindale had. Gordon Fox opened the room, mounted to the top of a great pile of dusty documents and volumes, and found a small trap-door within reach directly over his head. He lifted it up,

drew his head above the opening, and looked for a moment at the flat roof. He quickly returned to the outer room, closing and locking the door.

"Have you discovered anything?" asked Lord Martindale, in a puzzled tone.

"No more than I expected," said Gordon Fox. "I will tell you about it later. By the way, is there another trap-door that leads to the roof?"

"Yes, from the other side of the house."

"Good! You and I are going to make use of it before we are many hours older. I

And as gleefully as a schoolboy, rubbing his hands and chuckling, he briefly explained his plan.

"Splendid—splendid!" cried Lord Martindale. "Nothing could be better! You are an amazingly clever man, Mr. Fox! How simple the trick was, after all! And you solved it by the aid of breadcrumbs! I will do exactly as you say. Come here to-night at eight o'clock. I will smuggle you up to the roof, and join you at the proper time."

For nearly five hours Gordon Fox had



There was a sudden whirr of flapping wings, and a carrier-pigeon darted upwards. Twice, three times, it circled round in the air, and then soared straight away to the eastward.

have solved the mystery, my lord, and I have a certain plan by which the guilty spy and the proprietors of the 'Daly Messenger' will be punished as they deserve. You say there will be a Cabinet meeting here to-night? Very well! That meeting will be a bogus one. You will discuss only matters that are untrue and misleading—pure fiction. To-morrow morning, at another meeting held at the Foreign Office, you will lay the facts of the Chard affair before your Cabinet, and make them public."

"But—but I don't understand!" Lord Martindale exclaimed, in bewilderment.

"You soon will," said Gordon Fox.

been keeping vigil on the top of the big house in St. James's Square, smoking pipe after pipe, and gazing around him at the glowing fiery sea of mighty London, picking out the many thoroughfares by their furnace-like glare, and listening to the incessant roar of traffic. As Big Ben struck the hour of midnight, a trap-door was quietly lifted, close to where the detective sat, and from it emerged Lord Martindale, in overcoat and cap.

"Here I am," he said. "What a time you have been waiting! The meeting passed off all right, and exactly as arranged. We all played our parts well, and I am quite sure that young Weston cannot have had

suspicious. He went off to his room at once. I hope there will be no hitch, for that gutter rag deserves to be ruined."

"It will be so, my lord. But when did the members of the Cabinet leave?"

"Twenty minutes ago. I thought it best, in the meantime, to smoke a cigar in the library."

"Does your secretary write short-hand?" asked Gordon Fox.

"Yes, fluently," replied Lord Martindale.

"Then he may be here at any minute. Come, we must be ready."

The two shifted their position to a row of chimney-pots, and here they silently crouched, peering towards the opposite side of the house for another five minutes. Then the other trap-door was raised, within eight yards of them, and a dusky figure mounted against the sky-line. He stood erect, and the dim light revealed the slender form of Randolph Weston.

"Great Scott!" murmured Lord Martindale.

The young secretary stooped for a moment by the low parapet of the roof, and when he rose it could be seen that he held something white in his hands. It was a bird, and the little creature fluttered and struggled as a thin roll of paper was tied round its neck. For a few seconds Randolph Weston hesitated, as if he was staggered by the final infamy that he believed he was about to perpetrate. Then there was a sudden whirr of flapping wings, and a carrier-pigeon darted upward, twice, three times, it circled round in the air, and then soared straight away to the eastward. After watching its flight for an instant, the secretary turned and climbed down into the trap, drawing the door noiselessly shut.

"That settles it," said Gordon Fox.

"There goes our winged courier, bearing an account of to-night's Cabinet meeting to the editorial-room of the 'Daily Messenger.' To-morrow the storm will burst, to recoil on the guilty parties."

"The scoundrel!" muttered Lord Martindale, as he rose to his feet. "I can hardly believe it. But there is no doubt whatever. Surely this has gone far enough. Let us beard Weston in his room, and confront him with our knowledge of his dastardly conduct."

"By no means, my lord," urged Gordon Fox. "Why spoil the climax? You would have to keep Randolph Weston a prisoner for some hours, and he might possibly escape. No, let us carry out the plan to the end. In the morning you will send your secretary to the editor of the 'Messenger,' with a sealed letter, and when he comes out—which I think will be in a hurry—you and I will have something to say to him."

"Very well," assented Lord Martindale. "That will be best, after all. Are there any more pigeons there?" he added.

"Two more," replied the detective. "But they need not be disturbed at present."

Lord Martindale and his companion descended into the house, and shortly afterwards, having been quietly let out, Gordon Fox was walking across the park to his lodgings in Queen Street.

CHAPTER III.

WESTON'S PUNISHMENT.

EXCLUSIVE news! The Government doomed! The Prime Minister insists on withdrawing the British force from Chard! A stormy Cabinet meeting in St. James's Square! Half the members resign!"

Such, in big type, were the head-lines that confronted Gordon Fox when he opened the "Daily Messenger" at breakfast the next morning. He read the full account that followed with huge delight, smoked numerous pipes to pass away the time, and towards twelve o'clock walked over to Trafalgar Square, and posted himself at the corner of Whitehall. A private car presently drew up before him, unmarked by any crest, and he took his seat beside Britain's Premier.

"What a storm, Fox!" exclaimed Lord Martindale. "The very air throbs with the news! But the pendulum will soon swing! The genuine Cabinet meeting is over, and a report has been issued to half a dozen of the leading journals."

"Including the 'Daily Messenger,' my lord?"

"Yes, I have sent my unsuspecting secretary—he was not at the meeting—with a sealed letter to the Radical rag. He is about five minutes ahead of us in a car."

The car made its way along the Strand, where newsboys were shouting themselves hoarse, and stopped in front of the premises of the "Daily Messenger" in Fleet Street. Gordon Fox stepped out, and for a short time he stood idly on the kerb. Then from the door he was watching burst a young man, as if impelled by a catapult. It was Randolph Weston, though he was scarcely to be recognised. His hat was battered in, his lip was cut, and one eye was turning purple.

"When rogues fall out, honest men agree," said Gordon Fox as he clapped the startled secretary on the shoulder. "I am afraid you have been severely punished, my dear sir. But you can't blame the editor, surely!"

Randolph Weston gaped for a moment, his face white with confusion and fear. Then he turned, and bolted.

The "Daily Messenger" lost prestige and was finally sold for a mere song to a Conservative publisher, who altered its policy. As for Randolph Weston, he is now a penny-a-liner journalist in Melbourne, whence he fled from fear of arrest.

THE END.

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— 2d. —

**OUT ON
TUESDAY!**

(Continued from page 14.)

"Not really?" breathed Archie. "I mean, a comfort! Gadzooks!"

The idea seemed to fascinate him. He stared at the flower-bowl, and was horrified to find a curl of smoke wreathing upwards from the remains. And it was rather fortunate that Phipps arrived at that moment, carrying a large tray. He placed it on the side-table.

"Phipps!" said Archie firmly. "Kindly waltz across the old apartment, and remove the flowers! They're dashed ripping, but I've got a sort of idea that the scent has become somewhat stale. They displease me! Buzz them away like one o'clock!"

Phipps removed the flowers, and Archie breathed with relief. And after that tea commenced. From Archie's point of view, it was a somewhat putrid sort of business. He sat there, smiling in a fixed dreamy sort of way.

And he watched Alf and Mr. Huggins eating with their knives, and drinking tea out of the saucers. But, throughout the whole performance, he kept up a pleasant flow of conversation.

And Alf felt very good within him. He had purposely primed Mr. Huggins to act in the most ill-mannered way possible. And throughout it all Archie showed not the slightest sign of annoyance.

This man was Alf's father—and Archie

treated him in the same manner as he would have treated Sir John Brent himself. It was a fine revelation of Archie's sterling worth.

But only Archie himself knew what it cost. By the time tea was over he felt limp and weak, and his nerves were a wreck.

CHAPTER V.

THE MOB!



BUT while this peaceful scene was being enacted in Archie's study, storm-clouds were gathering outside. By all appearances, the storm itself would break in a very

short time.

The meeting in the Triangle had come to a decision.

"It's quite clear that Snuggs isn't doing anything!" declared Fullwood. "Snuggs is all right, but he's afraid of Lee and the Head. He can't very well act on his own."

"But we can act!"

"Rather!"

"We can!" agreed Fullwood. "And we're going to act now! This rotten brick-layer is a contamination to the school, and there's only one thing to be done."

"Kick him out!"

"Hoot him off the premises!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Huggins brought his rotten father here, and the chap hasn't had the decency to clear off of his own accord," went on Fullwood indignantly. "Therefore, we're going to pitch him out on his neck!"

"Would it be safe?" asked Hubbard, rather dubiously.

"Safe!" sneered Fullwood. "D'you think that cad can stop us? There are two dozen of us here, and we've only got to rush Archie's study, and we'll have the hooligan in next to no time."

"And then what?"

"Why, we'll rush him along the passage, hustle him across the Triangle, and kick him into the road!" said Fullwood. "If he likes to grumble—let him!"

"But he'll only come back."

"Not likely!" said Ralph Leslie. "We shall give him quite enough to be goin' on with! And we sha'n't be in any danger, because there's such a crowd of us. Even if a couple of prefects come along, we shall be safe."

"And do you think we ought to do it now?"

"No time like the present!" said Bell.

"Come on, then!"

Fullwood and Co. led the charge. They were all thoroughly excited and fired with the thought of kicking Huggins senior out of the school. They couldn't do the same to Alf himself, because Alf was a member of the Remove. But his father was only a visitor—an intruder.

The snobs of the Remove did not care anything about courtesy. The fact that Mr. Huggins was a visitor made no difference to them. They considered it would be a good show up for the bricklayer's son to have his father chucked off the premises, and hooted out.

Fullwood and Co. thought they were doing something that was quite right. The one obvious fact was lost upon them. And yet, of course, it was they who were the hooligans.

Rushing into the Ancient House, they arrived in the Remove passage, and they dashed along to the end in a yelling body, and reached Archie's door. Fullwood flung it open, and strode in, followed by a crowd of others.

"Hold on!" shouted Fullwood. "Leave this to me!"

Archie gazed at the intruders mildly.

"What, I mean to say, is all this?" he asked, rising with dignity. "Kindly allow me to remark, you sundry chunks of rubbish, that this is my study! Buzz! In other words, buzz while the buzzing is good!"

"We're not interferin' with you, Archie!" said Fullwood. "We're——"

"Just one moment—to be exact, two moments!" interrupted Archie firmly. "My name, you bally excrescence, is Glenthorne."

I didn't know that I had given you permission to call me Archie!"

"I can't stop to argue with you!" snapped Fullwood. "We've come here to give this labourer—this road sweeper—a fair warnin'."

"What, more trouble?" asked Alf. "Ain't you chaps never satisfied? Ain't it enough that you should pounce on me every minit of the day without comin' 'ere to hinsult my dad?"

Archie squared his shoulders.

"Allow me, dear lad!" he said. "Kindly allow Archie to settle this most unfortch biz! It is fearfully frightful that this collection of—of carbuncles should ooze into the landscape! I mean to say, they're nothing better than a set of germs! They bally well float in the door like a kind of fever!"

"We don't want any insults——"

"The air, in fact, is polluted!" said Archie. "Go! I absolutely refuse to allow——"

"Oh, shut up, you fool!" shouted Fullwood roughly. "We can't waste time on you! We've come to tell Huggins that if his father doesn't clear out now—within ten seconds—we'll boot him out!"

"Ho, will you?" shouted Alf angrily. "You'd best try it on! My dad's goin' when he's ready to go! And not afore! Ain't he got as much right 'ere as any other bloke's father?"

"Is he going?" roared Fullwood.

"No, 'e ain't!"

"All right—you've asked for it!" snarled the cad of Study A. "So don't blame me for what happens now!"

"Grab him!"

"Pile on him!"

Archie gazed at the scene in horror.

"Help!" he gasped. "S.O.S.! Where are all the dear chappies who generally rally round in times of stress?"

But Archie called in vain.

The snobs of the Remove were so excited that they had a kind of borrowed courage. And they swarmed round Mr. Huggins in a noisy, unruly mob.

Before Mr. Huggins could move out of his chair, he was hauled over.

A dozen juniors knocked him down, and his tremendous struggles were of no avail. He was rather elderly, and was not able to fight with the vigour of youth. But he did his best. It was no good. Struggling beneath the excited throng, Mr. Huggins was dragged towards the door.

CHAPTER VI.

KICKED OUT!



ALF looked round with blazing eyes.

"Oh, you cads, you miserable, rotten cowards!" he shouted furiously. "Ain't ye got no more respect for age than to pile on a man like that? All right, dad! I'm comin'!"

Three or four of the snobs gave their attentions to Alf. He struggled wildly, and threw them off.

Crash! Bang! Crash!

"Yow! Yaroo!" howled two or three of the attackers.

"Try to 'old me, would yer!" yelled Alf fiercely. "Why, you miserable rotters, I'll show yer!"

"Absolutely!" gasped Archie. "This, I mean to say, is where we all join in—what? Round the flag sort of stuff! I mean to say, holding the fort against the bally savage horde!"

And Archie sailed in with amazing determination. Although Alf was fighting furiously, Archie's efforts were a sheer revelation to him. He had always looked upon Archie as a helpless sort of chap. But when it came to the point, Archie was nothing of the sort.

"Tally-ho!" he yelled. "In other words, yoicks!"

Biff! Crash!

Archie could fight, and he fought now. The startled snobs were hit right and left, and Archie was so excited that he nearly delivered a fearful punch on Alf's nose.

But, although the two did their utmost, the odds were really too great. Gradually they were being worn down.

"This, as it were, is ghastly!" breathed Archie, as he saw that the battle was going badly. "Kindly rush up the reserves! In about two dashed minutes the old fortress will have fallen. On with the hunt! If we shove one last effort forward, we shall reach the home stretch!"

But Archie's optimism was misplaced.

A minute or two later he and Alf, breathless, torn, and desperate, were held down to the floor. And, in the meantime, fully a dozen other juniors led by Fullwood, were pulling Mr. Huggins down the passage.

The unfortunate bricklayer was getting badly mauled about.

He was fairly dragged along on his back. Some of the fellows pushed, some pulled, and then the mob got a real start. Mr. Huggins was lifted from the floor, he was rushed out through the lobby, and into the Triangle, where dusk was beginning to gather.

Yelling and shouting with triumph, the snobs carried Mr. Huggins across to the gate.

"Kick him out!"

"Chuck him in the mud!"

"Let's show him he's not wanted at St. Frank's!"

"Hurrah!"

And, just behind the old elm-trees in the Triangle, Mr. Snuggs skulked. For the past five minutes he had been aware that a big commotion was going on. He had discovered the truth, but he had made no attempt whatever to put a stop to this deliberate hooliganism.

For Mr. Snuggs approved.

He stood there, fairly gloating over the

misfortunes of Mr. Huggins. It was just what he had wanted to see. But it would never do for Mr. Snuggs to appear in public.

He had to skulk behind the trees—watching with secret approval.

And just outside the gates the excited mob of Removites—snobs every one—hurled Mr. Huggins into the very middle of a patch of mud which adorned the centre of the road.

Mr. Huggins descended with a splash. He lay for a moment—gasping, spluttering, and dazed. When he had come to St. Frank's he had never expected to receive such treatment as this.

Alf had given him an idea as to what the juniors were, but Mr. Huggins was utterly startled. And it said much for his self-possession that he did not utterly lose his temper.

"Yah! Clear off!"

"Go away!"

"You ain't wanted here!"

"Go back to your giddy bricklaying!"

Mr. Huggins rose slowly to his feet.

He was breathing hard. He was smothered with mud, and he was torn about and battered. His collar was unfastened, his necktie was streaming, and blood was coming from a gash at the corner of his mouth.

He shook his fist with grim anger.

"Ye young blackguards!" he exclaimed thickly. "By thunder! And this 'ere place is what they calls a school for the sons of young gentlemen!"

"Yah!"

"Clear off, you mouldy old road-cleaner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ain't you ashamed o' yerselves?" demanded Mr. Huggins furiously. "Is this what you call bein' young gents? Is this wot good breedin' an' larnin' brings to ye?"

The snobs listened contemptuously.

"You better not come back!" said Fullwood grimly. "We've kicked you out, you low rotter, and we'll keep you out!"

"Mebbe you will. I ain't strong enough to fight the whole crowd!" retorted Mr. Huggins. "But one day you'll remember this 'ere scene! One day you'll be sorry for it! I'm only a bricklayer; you're supposed to be young gents of breedin'! Don't you reckon that you've done somethink that's mean an' despicable an' cowardly?"

There was something in Mr. Huggins' seathing tone that made several of the snobs inwardly squirm. If he had sworn at them—if he had raved wildly, they would have cared nothing.

But this contempt—from a man of his station—was like the sear of a red-hot iron.

And, vaguely, some of them knew that they deserved it.

And then Armstrong and Griffith rushed up, carrying a heavy overcoat and a hat.

"There you are!" shouted Armstrong.

"Shove 'em on, and get out of the district!"

The overcoat and hat were flung down in the mud.

There was a yell from the snobs. Mr.

Huggins stood there, still clenching his fists. He looked at his property, and, without a word, he picked the clothing up.

"My lads," he said quietly, "I ain't much of a man to speak. Eddication I never 'ad. An' I don't reckon there's time for it now. You've got the advantage of me. Ain't you feelin' as mean as anybody can feel?"

"We're feeling good!" sneered Fullwood. "You oughtn't to have come to St. Frank's at all; and if you dare to put your beastly carcass inside this gateway again we'll——"

"Look out!" whispered Bell suddenly. "Huggins is coming!"

Fullwood turned and scowled. "Let him come!" he snapped. "Do you think I care?"

But Fullwood looked uneasy.

CHAPTER VII.

STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER!



MR. SNUGGS started. He was still hanging about in the cover of the trees.

And he had just been wondering if it would not be better for him to slip quietly into the Ancient House.

He had had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Huggins thrown out, and that was one big satisfaction. But now Mr. Snuggs stared. For a thick-set boy had come rushing down the steps.

It was Alf Huggins.

And Mr. Snuggs decided to wait—just a little longer.

Alf was almost mad with rage. They could do what they liked with him—they could say anything—they could kick and cuff him about. But to treat old Mr. Huggins in this way was too much! For the first time since his arrival at the school, Alf was in a white-hot, blazing rage.

And this rage of his was justified.

Never, indeed, had anybody more justification than had Alf Huggins at that moment. And he was dangerous.

Only after a fierce struggle had he got free. Archie was still being held a prisoner, but Alf did not think of his chum now. His sole thoughts were for the kindly old bricklayer.

He ran across the Triangle at full speed, and literally hurled himself through the crowd of sneering snobs at the gateway. He was just in time to see Mr. Huggins brushing a smear of blood away from his

lower jaw. Alf came to a halt, his eyes gleaming with fire.

Just that one look at Mr. Huggins was enough. It stamped a picture on his mind that he didn't forget for many a day. Torn, battered, and yet maintaining a quiet dignity that ought to have made these cads wriggle with shame. That was Mr. Huggins.

Alf turned and strode up to Fullwood. "You dirty blackguard!" he shouted hotly. Fullwood staggered.

"You'd better be careful——" he began.

"This is your work!" thundered Alf. "You led the chaps on—you started it! By glory! And you'll pay, too!"

Crash! Alf's fist came round in one swinging blow that caught Fullwood absolutely unawares. The cad of the Remove was lifted clean off his feet, and he crashed upon the gravel.

"And you—and you—and you!" exclaimed Alf fiercely. "Come on! Come on—all of you! I'll take the confounded lot!"

Alf flung himself in the fight. And his fury was so great that three or four fellows were bowled over before they could have time to get away to safety. The snobs were silenced. Alf's anger almost made them frightened. And in the stress of the moment they didn't notice that the new boy had nearly dropped his common method of talking.

Fullwood picked himself up dazedly.

"Keep him back!" he gasped thickly. "Keep him back! The brute's dangerous! He'll—he'll half kill me——"

And then a form came pushing through the crowd.

"Good heavens!" shouted Mr. Snuggs, horrified. "What is this? Indeed! What do I find here? Huggins! Huggins! What have you done?"

Alf swallowed hard, and calmed down.

"I 'aven't done 'arf wot I wanted to do!" he replied. "I meant to knock that blackguard completely hout! 'E's lucky! But 'e'll get it one o' these days!"

"Silence!" screamed Mr. Snuggs. "I always knew you to be a young hooligan—but now I have received even greater proof than ever before! Not content with bringing your ruffian of a father to the school, you even find it necessary to make an absolutely unprovoked attack upon this young gentleman!"

"Young gen'leman!" shouted Alf. "'E ain't no better than a bloke wot cleans the streets! An' that's an insult to all decent street cleaners! As for you, it ain't my place to tell yer wot's in me mind! So I'll keep it there! I can't trust meself just now!"

He closed his mouth, and fought to hold himself in check.

"You impertinent young hound!" shouted Mr. Snuggs. "You are always fighting—always making yourself objectionable! I suppose I can expect nothing else, considering your distressing upbringing."

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"Just one moment, Mr. Snuggs!"

An intense silence fell on the throng, for Nelson Lee came striding up from the rear. Mr. Snuggs turned, startled at first, but rapidly recovered his composure.

Every body stood watching with intense interest. Even Mr. Huggins paused as he was getting into his overcoat, and a wild kind of hope leapt into Alf's heart that justice was going to be done.

"I am glad you have come, sir—very glad, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Snuggs excitedly. "You are now able to see with your own eyes what this young reprobate has done!"

"What has he done, Mr. Snuggs?" asked Nelson Lee quietly.

"He made a dastardly, unprovoked attack upon Fullwood!" shouted Mr. Snuggs.

"Unprovoked?"

"Yes, sir—absolutely unprovoked!"

"I am sorry, Mr. Snuggs, but I must disagree with you," said Mr. Lee curtly.

"You disagree? You—you—you disagree?" stammered Mr. Snuggs.

"Entirely!" rapped out Nelson Lee. "And it appears to me that there are a great

many other young reprobates here at the moment. I am very pleased indeed that I was permitted to see this affair with my own eyes. It has been a shock to me."

"I do not wonder at it, sir—I am not at all surprised!" declared Mr. Snuggs. "The boy is nothing but a young hooligan. It is a pity that he was ever allowed to enter this school—"

"I regret that I must interrupt you again, Mr. Snuggs, but I was not referring to Huggins," said Nelson Lee coldly. "It may interest you to know that I have seen this affair from start to finish. I watched it from my study window—but was unable to intervene in time."

"And are you not ashamed of this boy, sir?"

"I have repeatedly told you, Mr. Snuggs, that Huggins is quite blameless, in my opinion!"

"Blameless?" gasped the Form-master.

"Yes, sir—blameless!" exclaimed Nelson



It was a favourite pipe with the bricklayer, and in a few moments he was puffing briskly. Mr. Snuggs was smothered in the smoke.

"Good gracious!" gasped the Form-master. "I—I—"

He broke off, and went off into a fit of loud, exaggerated coughing.

Lee grimly. "A moment ago you called Huggins a young hooligan. What of these other boys? What of these sons of gentlemen? Boys who have been brought up in excellent surroundings, with every advantage that money can buy?"

"I—I don't understand, sir," said Mr. Snuggs feebly.

Nelson Lee turned away from him, and faced the cowering juniors.

"I am absolutely ashamed of you!" said Nelson Lee, his voice quivering with anger. "I can only call you ruffians. I will be just, and state that you obviously acted under the stress of excitement. But that is no justification. You are utterly—"

"But look here, sir!" shouted Fullwood. "That cad knocked me down—"

"Silence!" interrupted Lee. "It was wrong of Huggins to take matters into his own hands. It was a technical breach of discipline, for which he shall be punished. But the boy would have been superhuman if

he had controlled himself under the circumstances."

"But, sir—"

"I want to hear no excuses, Fullwood—I saw everything!" said Lee. "In your mad excitement, you and your companions acted with the manners of the gutter. What right have you to throw a visitor out of the school premises? How dare you presume to judge him? This is not the time for a lecture, and so I'll deal with you later."

Some of the snobs commenced edging away.

"You need not imagine that you will escape in that way!" said Nelson Lee coldly. "I know every boy who is here. You will be confined to gates for two weeks, and every half-holiday during that period will be cancelled. Later, I will deal with you separately."

The snobs listened, utterly dismayed and staggered.

"Mr. Snuggs!" went on Nelson Lee, turning. "I shall be obliged if you will come to my study in half an hour. There are one or two little points I have to discuss with you."

"Oh, certainly, sir!" said Mr. Snuggs. "Certainly! I shall be quite delighted!"

He danced off, fairly bubbling with rage. This was not what he wanted at all! Things had gone very badly. Instead of Alf receiving a flogging, it was the snobs themselves who were getting it in the neck.

They walked away one by one—realising that it was not quite so funny, after all. And Nelson Lee turned to Mr. Huggins.

"I need hardly tell you, Mr. Huggins, how much I regret this very unfortunate occurrence," said the Housemaster quietly. "On behalf of the boys, I apologise."

"It's all right, sir—you don't need to do that!" said Mr. Huggins, in a low voice. "I understand. These 'ere young gents didn't know wot they was a-doin' of. I wouldn't like to get 'em into no trouble—"

"Considering the way you have been treated, Mr. Huggins, you are exceedingly generous," said Lee. "I can only trust that you will honour us by coming inside at once, and remaining until your own convenience."

The bricklayer walked forward.

"Yes, sir, I'll come in, thank-ye," he said. "I need a bit of a clean-up afore I goes back to the station. Alf, me lad, it's been a bit of a failure, ain't it? I'm sorry—didn't want to cause no hupset!"

"No, dad, it's not bin a failure," said Alf quietly. "It's bin a success. Because I've found out lots o' things to-night that I never knowed afore. Come indoors, dad, an' don't take no notice. Them boys won't touch you agin."

They went indoors, and Nelson Lee followed—after seeing that the Triangle had cleared. The detective had dealt with the matter with quiet dignity, and had distributed the punishments where they were deserved.

When he got to his study, he found Mr. Snuggs waiting there.

"I thought it as well, sir, to come at once," said Mr. Snuggs. "No doubt you wish to speak to me with regard to work?"

"I am sorry, Mr. Snuggs, but that is not the case," said Nelson Lee smoothly. "It is very painful that I should be compelled to remind you that you have failed in your duty."

Mr. Snuggs started.

"I am at a loss, sir!" he exclaimed, looking aggrieved.

"I do not think it necessary for me to go into any details, Mr. Snuggs," proceeded Lee. "But I was absolutely astonished at your behaviour in remaining in the Triangle—inactive—while those young rascals were engaged in the task of attacking Mr. Huggins."

"I—I was not aware—"

"Indeed, Mr. Snuggs?"

"I had no idea of the truth, sir!" said Mr. Snuggs. "The light was poor—and I am unfortunately somewhat short-sighted."

"And yet, Mr. Snuggs, the light was quite strong enough for you to intervene the very moment Huggins made his attack upon Fullwood," said Nelson Lee curtly. "I much regret that you should think it necessary to persecute Huggins in the way you do."

"Persecute, sir?" shouted Mr. Snuggs. "That is a harsh word."

"I have used the word deliberately," said Nelson Lee. "I desire to say no more, Mr. Snuggs. But be good enough to treat your boys with fairness and justice. I bid you good-evening!"

Mr. Snuggs swallowed hard, and went out of Nelson Lee's study, feeling that he had been reprimanded. He writhed inwardly.

And he hated Alf more than he had ever hated him before.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PLOTTER!



RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD sank into the easy-chair in Study A, and scowled ferociously.

"The interferin' beast!" he exclaimed, his voice quivering with rage. "He's always doin' that! Always buttin' in when he's not wanted! By gad! I'd like to see him kicked out after that old bricklayer!"

Gulliver and Bell were rather subdued.

"Oh, what's the good of talkin' like that?" asked Bell. "The thing was a frost—a rotten failure! Huggins has brought his confounded father back, and we're gated for a fortnight!"

"Vile!" said Gulliver. "A jolly fine idea, wasn't it?"

Fullwood sat forward, glaring.

"Do you think it was my fault?" he shouted. "You—you miserable bounder! How was I to know that Lee would come on the scene? He messed the whole thing up!"

"Snuggs was with us, but Lee sided with that navvy!" grunted Gulliver. "My hat! What a giddy fizzle! And that chin of yours doesn't look particularly pleasant, Fullwood." Fullwood rubbed his chin tenderly.

"That's what Huggins did!" he muttered. "Huggins! The gutter-snipe! The filthy brat from the slums! He—he had the nerve to punch me!"

"He knocked you stiff!" said Bell, with savage pleasure. "It was a beauty!"

"That was because he caught me un-awares—a caddish, cowardly blow!" snarled Fullwood. "But he's going to pay for it. By gad! He's going to pay for it. I'll make him suffer!"

"Easy enough to talk——"

"I tell you I'll make him pay!" grated Fullwood. "Before the evening's out, I'll get him flogged by the Head!"

"Don't talk out of you, hat, old man," said Bell. "You can't get Huggins flogged by the Head. It's just the thing that would fit the case, but it's impossible. The ead's too cute."

Fullwood still nursed his aching chin.

"All right—all right!" he muttered. "Just you see! I can't get him flogged by the Head, eh? I'll bet you a level ten bob each I do! Do you take me?"

"To-night?" asked Gulliver.

"Yes—to-night!"

"That's a bet!" said Gulliver. "Ten bob—evens."

"I'll have half a quid, too!" grinned Bell. "Might as well make it easy!"

They shook hands on it—even willing to make bets concerning Alf. Fullwood seemed very confident, and there was an evil, cunning gleam in his eye. He went out of the study at once, before his chums could ask any questions. And it was rather significant that Fullwood went straight to Mr. Snugg's study.

Within that apartment there were kindred spirits.

Both master and pupil hated Alf intensely. And when Fullwood came out, that evil gleam was just as apparent as ever. He did not go back to Study A, in the Remove passage.

Instead, he went to the lobby, and passed into the dark Triangle.

And there he waited.

But it was not for long. For after about ten minutes three figures emerged from the Ancient House doorway. They were Alf, Archie, and Mr. Huggins. The latter was just off to catch the night train.

And Fullwood watched.

"Well, dear old lads, I'll be trickling in, if you don't mind," said Archie discreetly. "I'll leave you to bid the fond good-byes on your own. The fact is, Phipps requires me."

"Not now, does he?" asked Alf.

"Absolutely on the spot!" said Archie. "You see, there's been a bother about one of my suits—a regular kind of mix-up, in fact. Phipps absolutely insists that there's

something wrong with the bally cut. Well, dash it all, he knows! He's got an eye like a hawk when it comes to the cut of a suit! So I'm just dashing upstairs to go into the matter."

"Ain't you comin' down agin to-night?" asked Alf.

"Well, rather!" replied Archie. "The fact is, there's a certain amount of prep. to do. The bally old Snuggs bird might crow somewhat loudly in the morning if the job was overlooked."

And Archie, having said good-night to Mr. Huggins with much warmth and cordiality, passed indoors. Fullwood, watching, caught sight of the elegant junior going upstairs.

"Great!" murmured Fullwood gloatingly.

"Nothing suited his purpose better. In fact, it seemed that Fate was actually playing into his hands. He had been prepared to take measures to get Archie out of the way.

But Archie had saved him the trouble.

Mr. Huggins and Alf went to the gate. Alf could not go further than this because he had no permit to pass out. So he said good-bye there. And Fullwood slipped indoors unnoticed.

He hung about in the lobby.

Five minutes later he became intensely active, for he heard the gate clang, and then Alf came walking slowly across towards the Ancient House. Fullwood turned, and hurried at top speed into the Remove passage.

He opened the door of Archie's study, and looked inside.

The apartment was empty. Instantly Fullwood slipped in, and pulled a cigarette out of his pocket. He lit it, and puffed away furiously, filling the apartment with tobacco-smoke. At the same time, he listened carefully. The door was just slightly ajar.

He heard Alf's footsteps coming along, and he instantly put the cigarette on the edge of the table, still burning. Then, with rapid steps, he passed over to the window, flung up the sash, and slipped out into the Triangle. Even as he pulled the window down the door opened.

It had been perfectly timed. And Fullwood had done his part of the job to perfection. Just before opening the window, he had given a most peculiar whistle—one shrill blast. It was so short that anybody who was not listening especially for it would have been unaware of its exact nature.

Alf came along the passage, and turned into his study. He was deeply engrossed—thinking over the events of the evening. And he did not notice Mr. Snuggs at the very end of the corridor.

Alf entered the study.

"Crikey!" he murmured, coming to a halt. "Who's bin 'ere?"

He sniffed the air, and knew at once that somebody had been smoking. The smell of cigarette-fumes was most apparent. And the air, too, was slightly hazy, in a bluish kind of way.

Then Alf saw a wreath of smoke rising from the table.

"Well, I'm blowed!" muttered the new boy.

There, on the corner of the table, lay a burning cigarette. But Alf was only at a loss for a moment or two. A grim smile came into his eyes as he picked the cigarette up.

"More tricks!" he muttered. "The cads! But they don't catch me this time! It won't work!"

He looked at the cigarette, and prepared to throw it into the fireplace.

Oh, so this is what I find when I glance

the table. Somebody must 'ave come in 'ere an' left it!"

Mr. Snuggs laughed nastily.

"And do you imagine for one moment that such an excuse will be of avail?" he asked. "Good gracious me. I am startled, Huggins. I have caught you with a cigarette actually in your hand!"

"Well, what are you going to do?" demanded Alf aggressively.

"The matter is altogether too serious for me to deal with personally," replied Mr. Snuggs. "I shall take you at once to the Headmaster—and he, you may be sure, will administer a sound flogging!"

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into your study, is it?" came the thin, triumphant tones of Mr. Snuggs from the doorway. "Huggins! What is that you have got in your hand?"

Alf had no time to throw it away.

"It looks a bit like a fag, sir!" he replied steadily.

"You unprincipled young rascal!" exclaimed Mr. Snuggs, with obvious pleasure. "I have caught you red-handed! You have utterly no excuse! I come into your study, and I find you smoking a cigarette!"

"You never!" growled Alf.

"Boy! Do you dare to deny——"

"You never found me smokin'!" said Alf stoutly. "It was in me 'and—it's in it now! But that's because I just picked it up off

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE CARPET!



MR. SNUGGS was fairly enjoying himself.

He was well aware that Nelson Lee had warned him. He distinctly remembered the Housemaster's intimation that he was not to persecute Huggins. But that only made Mr. Snuggs all the more determined to make Alf pay the full penalty.

But Mr. Snuggs would never have acted if there had been the slightest possibility of anything going wrong. This affair was safe—positively safe. He had caught Alf red-handed in his own study, with a cigarette

between his fingers. Even the boy would have to admit it when questioned. Mr. Snuggs' case was complete.

As for Alf, he said little.

As soon as he had heard the Form-master's voice, he knew that some kind of plot had been engineered. That cigarette had been deliberately left in that position—placed there so that Alf should pick it up. And Mr. Snuggs had been prowling about in the passage, ready to peep in through the doorway.

Alf didn't feel very angry. He was filled with a kind of withering contempt. He wondered, with amazement, how Mr. Snuggs could descend to such mean, petty scheming.

And Alf realised, at the same time, that he was in for it.

The trick was a clever one—and its cleverness lay in its very simplicity. Alf could see that trouble was coming. And it would only make matters worse if he made a scene now.

"Give me that cigarette?" said Mr. Snuggs sharply.

Alf handed it over.

"Look 'ere, sir," said Alf. "It ain't any good, I know. But wouldn't it be best to drop this?"

"Drop which?"

"You can't spoof me, sir," said Alf quietly. "This 'ere's a trick. Somethink might go wrong if you tak's me off to the 'Ead. I reckon you'd best let me—"

"Indeed!" interrupted Mr. Snuggs. "Is it possible that you are attempting to plead with me? You will come to the Headmaster's study this instant. I am shocked beyond measure!"

Mr. Snuggs took the cigarette, and extinguished the still glowing end. Then he seized Alf by the arm, and dragged him towards the door.

"Old 'ard!" growled Alf. "I ain't trying to run away! I'll come quiet. You've got the best of me this time, Mr. Snuggs. You've allus bin tryin' to 'ave me—an' now you've got me! You didn't 'ave no satisfaction this evening, an' I s'pose you look upon this as a kind of compensation!"

Mr. Snuggs scowled.

"Your ridiculous words are quite incomprehensible to me!" he said sourly. "Come! I shall stand no more of this dalliance. Come—at once!"

And off they went to Dr. Stafford's study. Mr. Snuggs was really enjoying himself. He was always happy when he was getting somebody into trouble. It was just the kind of thing that made him realise that life was worth living.

Arriving at the Head's study, Mr. Snuggs tapped, and entered. He found Dr. Stafford sitting in an easy-chair, reading a bulky volume. The Head was taking an idle hour.

"I regret, sir, that I should disturb you!" exclaimed Mr. Snuggs, with an air of importance. "But I have brought this boy to you upon a very serious charge."

"Indeed, Mr. Snuggs!" said the Head quietly. "I am sorry to hear this."

"It is scarcely necessary for me to say, sir, that I am grieved beyond measure that such a course should have been necessary," said Mr. Snuggs glibly. "I have a great antipathy to this kind of thing."

"You—you blinkin' hypocrite!" muttered Alf, under his breath.

The Head laid his book aside, and rose to his feet, and adjusted his spectacles. Then he looked at Alf, and gave a little start. The Head, of course, knew full well that this boy was the son of Sir John Brent. The Head was about the only one in the secret.

"Ahem! This—this is a pity!" said Dr. Stafford. "Huggins! I am very distressed to see you in this unfortunate position!"

"You ain't so distressed as I am, sir!" said Alf. "But I ain't done nothink I'm ashamed of. Wot Mr. Snuggs is goin' to tell you ain't true."

"There! There! Do you hear, sir?" exclaimed Mr. Snuggs triumphantly. "That is the kind of thing I have to put up with morning, noon, and night from this wretched boy! In your own hearing he has practically called me a liar! It is terrible, sir!"

"I didn't mean to call you a liar," growled Alf. "I ain't such a silly as that! You may think it's true about that there cigarette—but it ain't. That's what I meant."

The Headmaster frowned.

"Will you be good enough to explain, Mr. Snuggs?" he asked quietly.

"Certainly, sir—certainly!" replied Mr. Snuggs. "I will give you the details in full. Needless to say, if I did not consider the case flagrant enough, I would never have bothered you. But I did not feel justified in administering punishment. Only a few minutes ago I happened to be walking down the Remove passage—"

"Quite by accident, I s'pose, sir?" asked Alf bitterly.

"Huggins, you will please remain silent!" said the Head.

"Thank you, sir—thank you!" said Mr. Snuggs, smirking. "I am delighted that you should protect me from the insults and innuendoes of this young rascal. I was walking down the Remove passage, as I have just said, when I distinctly caught the smell of tobacco smoke. I then observed that one door was slightly ajar."

"Well, Mr. Snuggs?"

"I was naturally suspicious, sir," said the Form-master. "I considered it my duty to investigate without delay. Was I not correct, sir? I trust that I was right in assuming that an inquiry was necessary?"

"You were quite right, Mr. Snuggs."

"Thank you, sir," said the master. "You may well imagine my horror when, on opening the door, I found this boy standing in the centre of the room, surrounded by a haze of blue smoke. And there was a lighted cigarette in his hand. Need I say more, sir?"

The Head looked worried.

"What have you to say, Huggins?" he asked quietly.

"It ain't true, sir," replied Alf.

"Really! Really!" shouted Mr. Snuggs. "I protest, sir!"

"Please, Mr. Snuggs!" said the Head. "Am I to understand, Huggins, that you deny this charge?"

"No, sir!"

"But, my dear lad, you just said——"

"It ain't true that I was smokin', sir," said Alf steadily. "Mr. Snuggs 'as told you 'is part of the story, so mebbe you'll let me tell you mine? That's fair, ain't it?"

"Quite fair, Huggins," said the Headmaster. "Proceed."

"I'd bin outside to see my dad off, sir," went on Alf. "I come back, an' when I got in the study I found the room was full o' smoke, an' a cigarette was burnin' on the table. I picked it up, took one look at it, and then Snuggs pounced on me."

"That is an utter misrepresentation, sir," said Mr. Snuggs excitedly. "I strongly object to the word 'pounce'! I merely looked in, and found the boy with the cigarette in his fingers."

The Head frowned.

"Then you do admit, Huggins, that Mr. Snuggs discovered you with a burning cigarette between your fingers?"

"Yes, sir."

"But you assure me you had not been smoking?"

"I do, sir."

"I should not like to do anything unjust," said the Head quietly. "But I must confess that your excuse appears to be very shallow, Huggins. Was it possible for any other boy to have been in that study immediately beforehand?"

"I don't know about bein' possible, sir. He must 'ave bin there!" declared Alf. "An' it wasn't Glenthorne neither—'cos' he was upstairs, an' 'ad bin for five or ten minutes."

The Head's brow was black.

"Then you are asking me to believe, Huggins, that a perfectly disinterested boy entered this study, puffed at a cigarette, and departed—leaving the cigarette still burning?"

"Yes, sir," said Alf. "Leastways, I don't s'pose he was disinterested at all. It was done as a trick on me—to get me into trouble."

Mr. Snuggs laughed.

"That, sir, is quite ridiculous," he said. "I think you will believe me when I state that no boy came up or down the passage during the previous five minutes. I was there, and Huggins was the only boy who went into that study."

"Thank you, Mr. Snuggs," said the Head quietly. "There is, of course, not the slightest doubt that the boy is guilty. Your own testimony is amply conclusive. Huggins, would it not be better to own up?"

Huggins set his jaw.

"I ain't going to own up to somethink I didn't do, sir," he said doggedly.

"I am disappointed—very disappointed!" said Dr. Stafford curtly. "I can only sentence you to a severe flogging. You will return here at seven forty-five, and I will attend to you. You may go!"

"Yes, sir," said Alf quietly. "I might 'ave knowed it. I'm allus in the wrong! I never git no luck!"

"Go!" said Dr. Stafford sternly.

Alf went, inwardly furious.

"I must commend you, Mr. Snuggs, for your careful attention to duty," said the Head. "Thank you!"

"I trust, sir, that I shall always please you," said Mr. Snuggs, rubbing his hands together. "I have the interests of the school at heart, and only brought the boy because I considered the offence to be a flagrant one."

And Mr. Snuggs left the study.

The Head sat down at his book again, but now he looked rather worried. He did not read, and very soon afterwards Nelson Lee entered. The Head rose at once, rather pleased.

"Ah, Mr. Lee, just the man I wanted to see," said Dr. Stafford. "My right hand—eh? I should like to hear your opinion of this matter."

He told Nelson Lee the little story.

"Yes, it is somewhat peculiar," said Lee. "But you really wish to hear my candid opinion?"

"I do."

"Then I believe that Huggins is quite guiltless."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the Head, startled. "But, my dear sir, I cannot follow! Heaven forbid that I should make such an error as to flog the boy for nothing. But as far as I can see he is unquestionably guilty. Mr. Snuggs caught him with the cigarette in his hand!"

"That, I will admit, appears to be significant at first glance," said Nelson Lee. "But just put yourself in Huggins' place for a moment. Going into the study, and finding a burning cigarette, was it not natural for him to pick it up?"

"Dear me! Yes—yes; most decidedly!"

"And I greatly fear that Mr. Snuggs was only too pleased to pick on the boy at the slightest provocation," went on Lee. "Mr. Snuggs is a very capable Form-master, but he has unfortunately formed a number of prejudices—not that I wish to make any kind of mischief."

"Please go on, Mr. Lee."

"There are many boys, too, who are vindictively inclined towards Huggins," said Lee. "I think it is quite possible that this might have been a petty plot—deliberately arranged so that Huggins was entrapped. Mr. Snuggs, no doubt, was mistaken."

The Head walked to the door.

"I am glad—very glad, Mr. Lee," he said briskly. "I am beginning to see that my first decision was somewhat hasty. That is quite deplorable. Hasty decisions are always to be deprecated. I shall find Mr. Snuggs at once, and have this matter fully investigated to the bottom."

And Dr. Stafford went out—very grim.

CHAPTER X.

THE PLOTTERS CONFOUNDED!



WHEN the Head entered Mr. Snuggs' study, five minutes later, he found that apartment quite empty. He was slightly annoyed, for he did not want to go searching about the whole of the Ancient House.

The Head had just reached the lobby when he ran into Reginald Pitt, who raised his cap respectfully.

"I suppose, Pitt, you have not seen Mr. Snuggs within the last five or ten minutes?" asked the Head.

"Yes, I have, sir."

"Then, perhaps you can tell me where I can find him?"

"In Study A, sir, in the Remove passage," said Pitt. "Anyway, I think he's there, sir. I saw him go in about three or four minutes ago. Shall I go and find out?"

"Thank you, Pitt; you need not trouble," said Dr. Stafford. "I will go along myself."

"It is all right, Huggins," said Dr. Stafford kindly. "I have reversed my decision, having discovered that Mr. Snuggs was unfortunately mistaken. I am convinced of your innocence. You may go."

"Good-night, sir!" said Reggie.

The Head bade him good-night, and then entered the Remove passage. This was a remarkable thing for the Head to do, by the way. It was only once in a blue moon that he came to this part of the building.

He would never have done it now, only he was anxious to repair any slight damage that might have been caused owing to his hasty conclusion. And the Head was rather annoyed.

He did not like chasing Mr. Snuggs about, and he almost began to wish that he had sent a message to the Form-master. However, now that he had run him to earth, it did not matter so much.

The Headmaster of a big school like St. Frank's lives in a world apart from the juniors. He really knows very little of what goes on among the lower Forms. The boys may have feuds, they may have bitter prejudices against one fellow, and the Headmaster will know almost nothing of these things.

And as for a personal visit to the junior quarters, such a thing was well-nigh unprecedented on Dr. Stafford's part. The Head was tactful. He did not care to penetrate the junior quarters, because many things went on there that the Head was not supposed to see. And in a big public school it

is just as well for the Head to wink his eye at lots of small things.

For example, Dr. Stafford merely smiled to himself as he heard sundry bumps and crashes proceeding from Study D. These bumps and crashes were merely a part and parcel of the normal life in that apartment, and passed practically unnoticed among the other juniors. The Head tacitly realised this, and passed on—which was just as well for Handforth and Co.

Arriving at Study A, the Head tapped on the panel, and opened the door. Then he came to a halt just inside the study, an expression of utter astonishment on his features.

And he had every reason to be astounded.

There was Mr. Snuggs, seated in Fullwood's best easy-chair, laughing and chuckling to himself, with a cigarette between his lips. This, in itself, was bad enough. For a Form-master to smoke in a junior's study was a very serious breach of discipline.

But the Head saw far worse.

All this was registered on his vision in one swift glance, for the scene altered a second or two later. Opposite Mr. Snuggs sat Fullwood on the arm of a chair.

And Fullwood was smoking!

This was the appalling fact—the stunning, unbelievable truth! There was Mr. Snuggs, the Form-master, laughing and chatting and joining in a smoke with a junior!

It was hardly surprising that Dr. Stafford was staggered.

Mr. Snuggs nearly fell into the fireplace. He started up with a gasp of surprise that was nearly a yelp. The cigarette dropped from his fingers into the fender. At the same moment Fullwood threw his own cigarette into the grate—where, by some stroke of “cussedness,” the lighted end struck on the top bar, sending out a shower of sparks for all to see.

“I—I—I—”

Mr. Snuggs paused, shaking in every limb. Instant dismissal loomed before him, and he nearly fainted.

“I—I must explain, sir!” he stammered. “The—the fact is, I—I was just pointing out to Fullwood the evils of cigarette smoking! I—I thought it an excellent lesson to make him partake—”

“Mr. Snuggs, I shall be obliged if you will withdraw!” said the Head sternly. “Furthermore, I shall be expecting you in my study at eight-fifteen. I must request you to be punctual.”

Mr. Snuggs had nothing to say; he crawled out, looking like a jelly.

The Head turned to Fullwood with a face that was as black as thunder.

“Come with me, Fullwood!” he said sternly.

“But—but—”

“You need not utter one word, Fullwood;

I refuse to listen!” said Dr. Stafford. “Boy! Have you the audacity to attempt an excuse?”

Fullwood suddenly went limp. He realised how impossible it was to frame any kind of excuse—unless, of course, he tried to put the blame on to Mr. Snuggs. But that wouldn't wash. Fullwood was fully aware of the school regulations. And even with Mr. Snuggs as a bad example, he had committed a serious breach, which could only be dealt with in one way.

They went straight to the Head's study, and Dr. Stafford went to a corner, and produced a cane. He was very grim—very angry.

“Wait—wait a minute, sir!” gasped Fullwood.

“I do not intend to wait—”

“But—but it was Mr. Snuggs' fault!” declared Fullwood. “He—he came into my study and gave me the cigarette—”

“That makes absolutely no difference, Fullwood,” interjected the Headmaster. “In any case, I do not believe your statement. I have had cause to flog you on previous occasions for cigarette smoking. Hold out your hand!”

Fullwood held it out.

Swish!

“Yow—yoo-hoo!” gasped Fullwood, in agony.

The cane descended again and again. Fullwood received six powerful cuts. Then the Headmaster pointed to the door.

“Go!” he commanded. “But for the fact that Mr. Snuggs was in your study at the time, Fullwood, your punishment would have been much more severe. I should advise you to say nothing whatever about this matter to any of the other boys.”

Fullwood turned sullenly to the door. And as he did so there came a tap from the other side.

The door opened, and Alf came in. He had arrived in order to take his punishment. And he was considerably astonished to find Fullwood in there—Fullwood, with his hands tucked under his armpits, obviously in a state of dire agony.

The Headmaster smiled at Alf, in spite of his anger.

“It is quite all right, Huggins!” said Dr. Stafford kindly. “I have reversed my decision, having discovered that Mr. Snuggs was unfortunately mistaken. I am convinced of your innocence. You may go!”

“Oh, thank you, sir!” said Alf joyfully.

Ever since his arrival at the school, this was the first genuine piece of good luck he had. He had grown so accustomed to injustice and tyranny that it came as a great surprise to him to find that justice was possible, after all.

He went out, and rushed back to Archie with the glad news.

As for Fullwood, his feelings were too deep for words. Not only had he received a fearful swishing, but in front of his own eyes, Huggins, the hated outsider, had been let off scot-free!

It was a disaster of the first order.

It seemed that everything was going wrong this evening—all Fullwood's little schemes were recoiling on his own head. And Alf Huggins was tasting the joys of triumph. It was Alf who was having the laugh—Alf who scored at every turn!

There was a look of venomous hatred in Fullwood's eyes as he passed down the passage after his interview with the Head. He was sore, vicious, and in an evil temper.

He didn't go into his study—he went straight outside and paced up and down the Triangle.

And in due course Mr. Snuggs, fairly quivering with fear, presented himself in Dr. Stafford's study. He was pale, shaky, and fully expecting to be kicked out within the hour.

Dr. Stafford had very little to say.

"Mr. Snuggs, you brought Huggins to me with a great show of indignation and anger because you found him smoking," exclaimed Dr. Stafford quietly. "Less than twenty minutes later I find you with another junior boy—"

"I can explain that, sir," gasped Mr. Snuggs.

"Please do so," said the Head curtly.

Mr. Snuggs stammered out a weak, incomprehensible rigmarole which had no sound of plausibility, and which was obviously untrue. Dr. Stafford was naturally disgusted.

"I am astonished, Mr. Snuggs, that you should present such a palpably lame excuse!" exclaimed the Head. "I regret that I cannot possibly accept it. I have nothing whatever to say regarding your scholastic ability. In that department you are highly qualified. But your action this evening has rendered it quite impossible for you to remain permanently in the school."

"If you will just let me explain, sir—"

"As you know, Mr. Snuggs, you were appointed to this post in a temporary capacity," continued the Head. "There was just a chance that you would be retained on the permanent staff. That, of course, will now be impossible. You will continue your duties for a week or two longer, but when Mr. Crowell is ready to return, you will leave the school. And I may add that this regrettable affair will seriously influence any recommendation this school might have

given you. I shall be obliged if you will leave me, sir!"

Mr. Snuggs went out, feeling about as big as a blackbeetle. He felt that Dr. Stafford's eyes were boring a hole in the back of his neck. But as soon as the door closed upon him his whole attitude changed.

"And so I am to be dismissed—thrown out!" snarled Mr. Snuggs to himself. "And this—this has been brought about by that infernal little brute, Huggins! By Heaven! He shall suffer!"

Mr. Snuggs had the same instinct as Fullwood.

He didn't want to go to his study—he wanted to be in the open air—in the darkness. And he had hardly taken twenty paces before another form loomed up out of the darkness, and he found himself face to face with Ralph Leslie Fullwood.

"I hope it's not too bad, sir," said Fullwood softly.

"It is bad enough!" hissed Mr. Snuggs. "A fool—I am a fool, Fullwood! I ought to have known better than to join you in your own study! But it is idle to talk now."

"You—you haven't got the sack, sir?"

"No—oh, no!" said Mr. Snuggs. "Certainly not! How very absurd! But I shall make a point of squaring my account with Huggins!"

"The young beast!" snarled Fullwood savagely.

"He is responsible for all this trouble!" whispered Mr. Snuggs. "He has caused all this—Huggins!"

"I hate him, sir!" said Fullwood.

"Your own feelings, my boy, are on a par with mine!" exclaimed Mr. Snuggs softly. "It may be wrong for me to talk to you in this way, but it appears that there is a bond of union between us."

"And Huggins, sir?"

"Ah, yes!" murmured Mr. Snuggs venomously. "To be sure! Huggins! I rather think, Fullwood, that we must put our heads together."

They paced up and down in the darkness, talking in low tones. And when they went indoors, some time later, they were not looking so savage.

It really appeared that Alf Huggins was booked for something worse than he had so far received. The plots against him hitherto had been petty plots—trivial, vindictive affairs.

But now there was something different in the wind.

It was a bad look out for the boy from Hoxton.



THE QUARRIES

(Edgemoor)

The old, worked-out quarries of Edgemoor, with their catacombs of dark, winding tunnels, have been the scene of more than one mystery connected with the adventures of the boys of St. Frank's. Few boys care to venture far into those forbidding, labyrinthine tunnels, leading, as it would seem, into the bowels of the earth; for it would be an easy matter to lose one's bearings, and then one might wander for days through the pitchy black

passages, twisting and turning in all directions, without finding a way out. Even Nipper, who knows these quarries better than any other boy at St. Frank's, would not trust himself beyond a certain point without uncoiling a ball of string and arming himself with a powerful torch-lamp. The quarries are situated about two miles from St. Frank's, on the other side of Bellton Wood from the school.

Editorial Announcement.

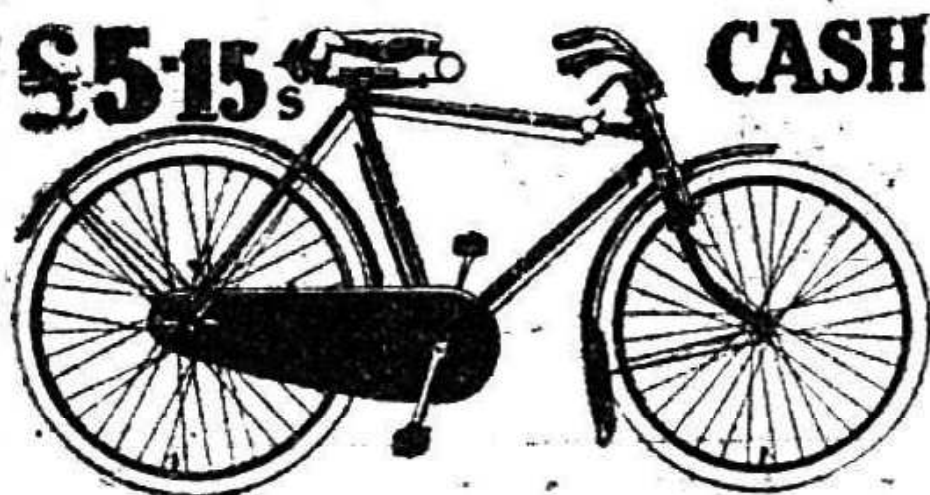
My dear Readers,

Mr. Snuggs has been found out at last, and by no less a person than Dr. Stafford himself. Any hopes of his remaining permanently at St. Frank's are now dashed to the ground. Alf Huggins, Snuggs told himself, was the cause of his downfall, and though he had hitherto merely despised the lad from Hoxton, his contempt now turned to deep hatred. He would get even with Huggins by hook or by crook. A lucky chance comes his way, and Huggins is charged with the grave offence of brutally assaulting the Remove

master, and is expelled there and then from St. Frank's. The whole affair forms the subject of another fine story next week, entitled:— "SACKED FROM THE SCHOOL!"

In addition to the above, there will be another long, exciting instalment of our absorbing new serial:— "THE LEAGUE OF THE IRON HAND!" and a clever, complete detective story of Gordon Fox:— "THE CASE OF THE REFLECTED CLOCK!"

THE EDITOR.



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