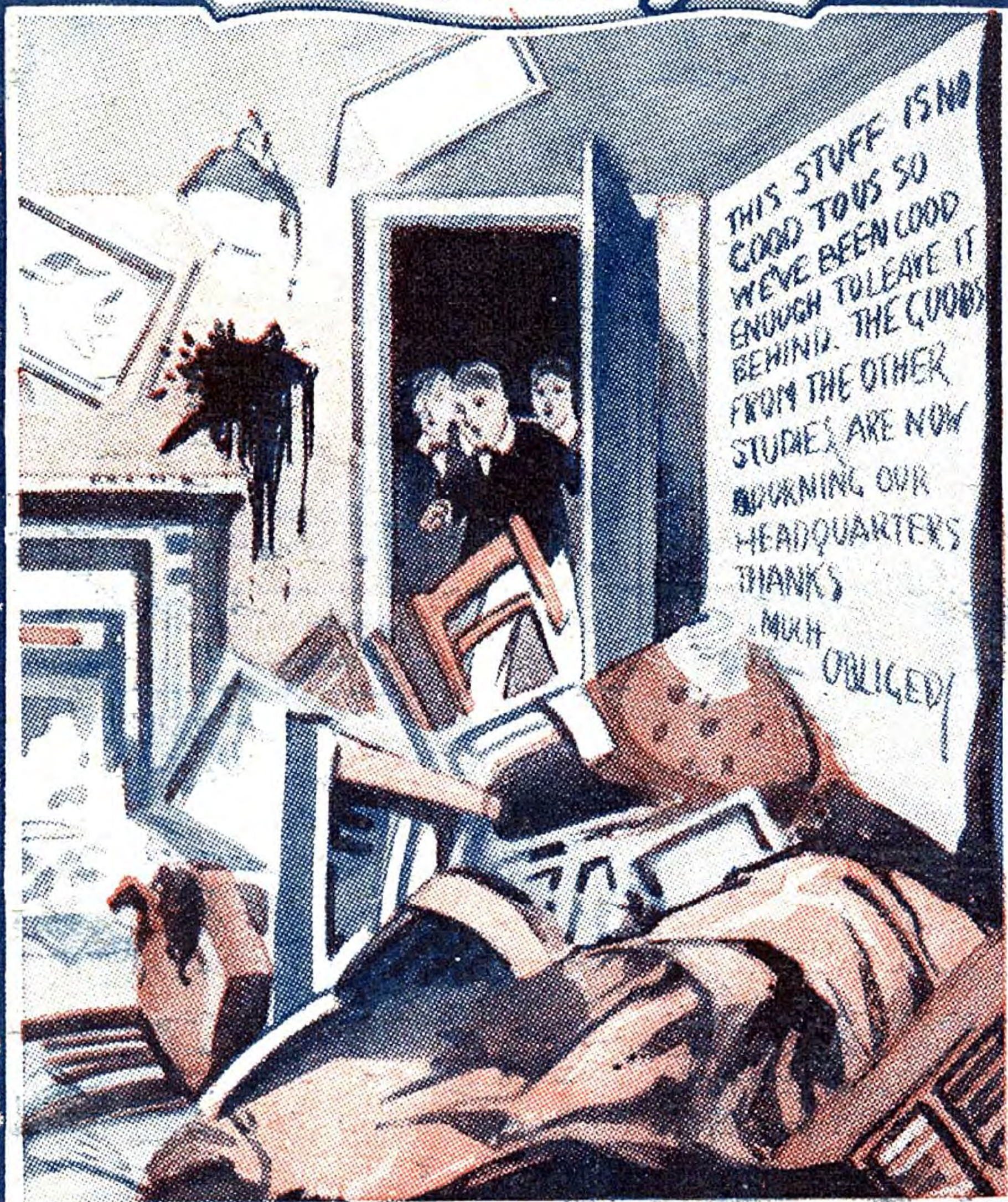


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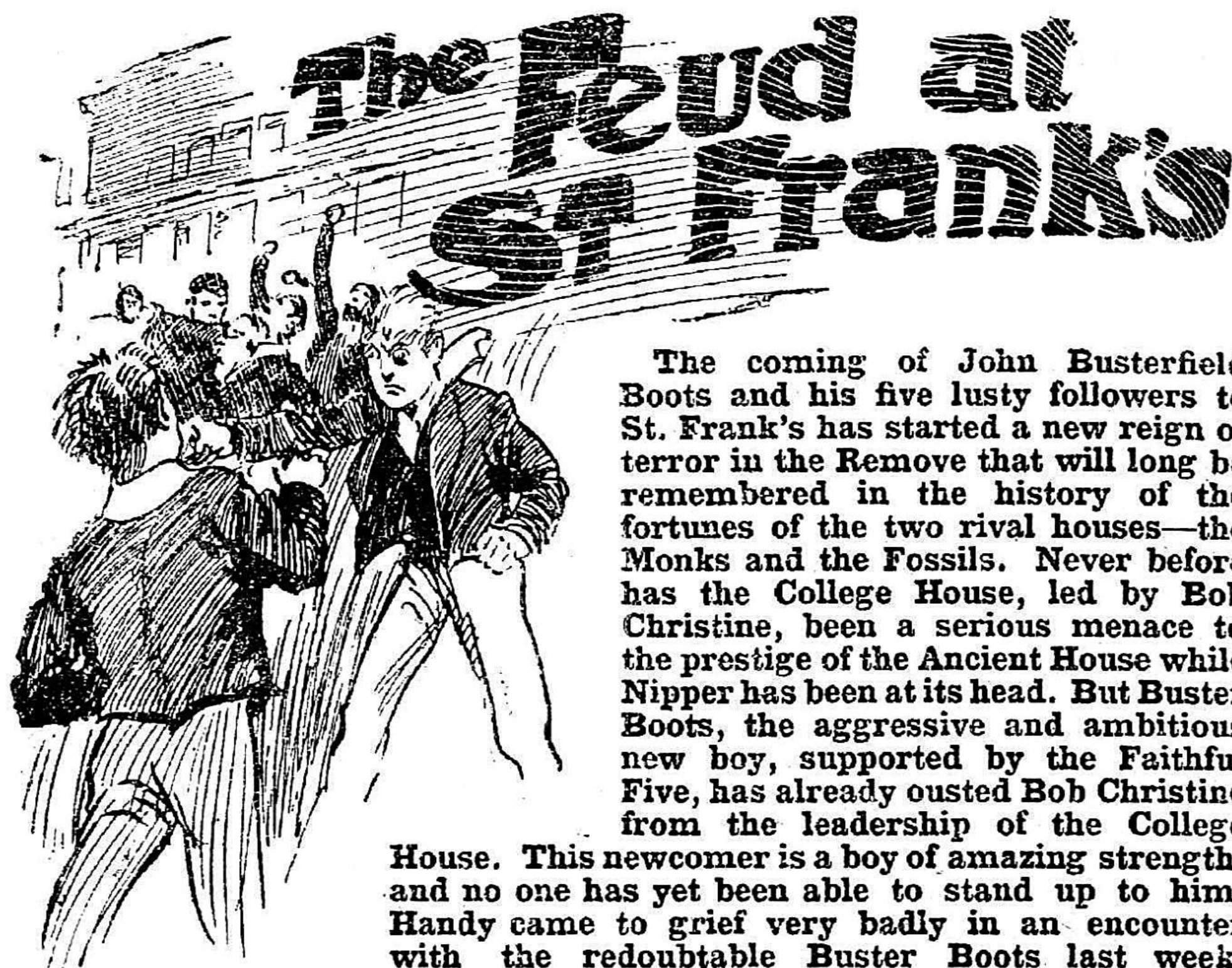
BUSTER'S LATEST!

See This Week's Great Story:—

THE FEUD AT ST. FRANK'S!



The other two looked, and gazed at the window of Study A. It was wide open, and things were being hurled out into the night. Books and papers were shooting through—bags, overcoats, and all sorts of other personal articles.



The coming of John Busterfield Boots and his five lusty followers to St. Frank's has started a new reign of terror in the Remove that will long be remembered in the history of the fortunes of the two rival houses—the Monks and the Fossils. Never before has the College House, led by Bob Christine, been a serious menace to the prestige of the Ancient House while Nipper has been at its head. But Buster Boots, the aggressive and ambitious new boy, supported by the Faithful Five, has already ousted Bob Christine from the leadership of the College

House. This newcomer is a boy of amazing strength, and no one has yet been able to stand up to him. Handy came to grief very badly in an encounter with the redoubtable Buster Boots last week.

Having reduced the Monks to submission, he is now turning his attention to the Fossils, with the result that the two houses are in a state of relentless war, and Nipper's position as Captain of the Remove is likely to be challenged. The following story describes the exciting battle between the two rival houses.

THE EDITOR.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER I.

WAR TO THE KNIFE!

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE, the dandy of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, paused and adjusted his monocle. Then he gazed over the landscape with entire approval. It pleased him.

"Absolutely!" he murmured. "I mean to say, evening and sunset, and all that sort of jolly rot! Rose-pink sky and what not! Gadzooks! That was dashed near to poetry!"

Archie was rather startled.

"Poetry, what?" he went on blithely. "Bally queer how a chappie lapses into the good old stuff when peace barges round in large chunks! Here we are, as it were, surrounded with nothing else but serenity! It makes a cove feel somewhat loving to the populace in general!"

The genial ass of the Remove was leaning gracefully against a gateway in Bell-ton Lane, gazing over the meadows towards the River Stowe. He could see the willow trees lining its banks, the boat-house, and on his right lay the dark bulk of Bellton Wood.

In the other direction the noble pile of St. Frank's rose its towers and turrets towards the golden evening sky, where light fleecy clouds were tinged with the orange rays of the departed sun.

Hardly a breath of wind stirred, and it was, indeed, a beautiful September evening. And Archie was gazing upon a scene such as can only be seen in the rural districts of England.

On the previous day there had been a good deal of rain, but the landscape was

looking all the better for it. And as the sun had been shining with glorious brilliance since early morning, the lane was now dried and perfect for walking, without even a speck of dust.

Archie proceeded on his way gaily.

"I mean to say, all this peaceful stuff makes me feel somewhat warm towards the enemy," continued Archie. "Dash it all, that sounds bally queer! Hardly right, what? After all, the dear old lads of the College House can hardly be called enemies!"

Archie shook his head firmly as he walked along.

"What-ho!" he murmured. "An idea! In fact, the good old brain storm! I shall bally well get the chappies together, and talk about this, and talk about that, and arrange all sorts of peace."

Archie's eyes sparkled as he decided upon this move. It didn't seem right to him that the juniors at St. Frank's should be at loggerheads. The gentle sweetness of the evening had transferred itself into Archie's kindly heart. Strife seemed abhorrent—something that ought to be done away with.

And he thought deeply on the subject. He lounged onwards towards St. Frank's elegantly, pondering over the events which had taken place since the beginning of term. Only in a brief week the most remarkable happenings had occurred.

And Archie didn't like the state of affairs. A gentle, genial soul, he loved everything to be quiet and orderly. He was particularly elated because he had the services of Phipps once again—Phipps, the faithful valet. Archie had missed Phipps exceedingly during the summer holidays.

But now all was right—except for the feud.

For that's what it amounted to. It was becoming almost perilous for any junior to venture out without an escort. Archie had done so this evening quite unthinkingly, and even now he had no foreboding of evil.

All his thoughts were concerned with bringing peace.

It seemed a difficult problem, and Archie's brain capacity was not capable of dealing with it. He was the first fellow to admit that his brain was somewhat comatose; he freely confessed that his top floor was rather unfurnished.

And this thing was too much for him. Of course, John Busterfield Boots was at the root of all the main trouble. And Archie started slightly as the name occurred to him. He seemed to wilt.

"I mean to say, a dashed poisonous name!" he told himself. "The poor chappie can't help it, of course—but I really think his parents ought to be sent to penal servitude, or something! The John is not so bad—absolutely not! But Busterfield—Well, there you are! What can one expect?"

Archie was quite ready to excuse the misdeeds of John Busterfield Boots simply because he possessed that remarkable name. Archie didn't delve into matters very deeply.

The great J.B.B. was a new boy at St. Frank's. He had come from a place known as Kendis College, and he had brought with him five companions who had helped him to stir up a vast amount of strife. The newcomers always stuck together like glue, and were known in the College House as the Supreme Six.

And John Busterfield Boots, the leader, was a fellow with glaring red hair, a tremendously powerful punch, and a personality that was amazingly magnetic. With supreme ease he had wrested the leadership of the Monks from Bob Christine.

And Buster Boots was now the recognised head of affairs in the College House—that is, in the Remove. His word was law. He expected fellows to fly at his very command—and they did.

For they knew what would happen if they failed.

John Busterfield Boots had brought about a new regime in the College House. If anybody flouted him, or refused to obey an order, that unfortunate individual was knocked down on the spot. Boots was known as a bully—but he declared that he wasn't.

It was just his little way. If he wanted a thing he had it. If he met with resistance he used force. And he was the son of a famous amateur boxer, and had startled the whole junior school by giving Handforth the knockout in a fair fight.

That, in fact, had been the start of the chief trouble.

Edward Oswald Handforth, one of the champion fighters in the Remove—the aggressive leader of Study D—had been hopelessly beaten in a refereed contest. The result can be imagined.

For many terms the College House had played second fiddle to the Ancient House. Bob Christine, the former leader, had been content to let things go on in the same old matter-of-fact course. He had taken it for granted that the Fossils lead in everything, and the Monks had accepted this, too.

And John Busterfield Boots had fired them with sudden ambition. His defeat of Handforth had given the College House fellows the impression that they were now the top dogs. For days the Monks had swanked about as though they owned the whole school.

They had been jeering at the Fossils, and there were many recorded incidents where the Monks had fallen upon an unwary Fossil, and badly mistreated him. This was not done in a vindictive spirit, but just because Buster Boots had been preaching the doctrine of supremacy. The

Monks wanted to show their newly acquired power.

This, of course, had led to one or two minor squabbles. And affairs had become so bad during the past day or so that a mass meeting of Fossils had been called. As Captain of the Remove, I had presided over this affair. I was called upon to state my policy.

John Busterfield Boots was the leader of the Monks, and I was the leader of the Fossils. And my position was really much stronger than his, for I was also the skipper of the whole Remove.

It was therefore up to me to take action—brisk and decisive.

It was a serious step, but my only course was to declare open warfare. Peaceful methods had failed. The Monks would take no notice whatever of reasoned talk. They had determined to show their absolute power, and they were applying the methods that Buster Boots had advocated. And these were methods of force—aggression—open hostility.

To remain passive was impossible.

If I had suggested such a thing the Fossils would have disowned me—and, besides, such a policy would have been fatal. The Monks would have triumphed at once. The only course, therefore, was to return blow for blow. We had to organise the feud on grim, determined lines.

And this feud had broken out into deadly warfare during the past day.

Fossils found it very risky to go into the Triangle unless they were in groups. Monks were in the same position. Any isolated junior was always in peril of being pounced upon and mercilessly ragged.

Buster Boots and his supporters had commenced this system. They had ill-treated several Ancient House fellows. And it was only natural that the Fossils should retaliate in the same manner.

And, of course, at the very first sign of retaliation, the smouldering fire broke into a fierce blaze.

And now the two sections of the Remove were bitter enemies.

It was astounding how former friends had grown to positively hate one another. Bob Christine had many friends in the Ancient House, and other Fossils had been quite pally with College House boys. But that was all ended now. Within the space of twenty-four hours they became harsh and bitter enemies.

To a fellow like Archie Glenthorne, this was lamentable. He couldn't quite understand it. He wasn't like the other juniors, who were generally out after mischief and as much as they could get. All Archie wanted was peace.

And he had fully made up his mind to go straight back to the school, get the leaders of the Monks and the Fossils together, and to arrange an armistice. This warfare had to be stopped before it actually grew.

It was rather unfortunate that six Monks should appear at that moment. With Archie so full of peace, he was in no mood for violence. But he certainly paused doubtfully as he saw the oncoming juniors.

They had appeared without warning from the hedge—obviously an ambush. There were six, including Clapson Freeman, Oldfield and Nation. And the Monks were looking very much in earnest.

"What-ho!" murmured Archie. "It appears that large lumps of trouble are brewing! Dash it all! These foul blighters wouldn't dare to shove it across me? I mean to say, the dashed idea is ridic.!"

He walked on as carelessly as ever. And then the Monks swooped. They descended upon the unfortunate Archie like a ton of bricks. They surrounded him, seizing him roughly and with deadly intent. Archie was too startled to even struggle.

"I mean—really!" he protested. "Kindly desist, dear old tulips! Be good enough to remove the old paws!"

"Gag him!" said Freeman curtly.

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "Dear old lads, I was about to suggest a long and everlasting peace. All this feud business, don't you know, is frightfully wrong. We chappies ought to be hobnobbing together—"

"Quick—in with him!" said Nation. "No time to lose! Some of these rotten Fossils might appear at any minute!"

Archie gave himself up for lost! He gave one bleating cry for help, but it was drowned almost before he could get it out. He was yanked off his feet with frightful abruptness.

He was wearing a particularly elegant suit—one that Phipps had selected for him that afternoon with great care—a favourite of Archie's. And he was otherwise attired in his usual state of spotless perfection.

His head and shoulders were seized by three of the Monks, and his feet were held by the other fellows. Then, swiftly, he was borne to the side of the road. Archie gave a hopeless gurgle as he realised what the Monks intended.

His peaceful feelings vanished. His one desire was to be on his feet, fighting. For the first time he realised that the Fossils' policy of retaliation was the only possible course.

For the Monks were becoming really dangerous. Their rags were no longer harmless, but positively wicked and vindictive. Archie protested in vain. In fact, he had no time to protest.

"One—two—three!" said Clapson sharply.

Archie Glenthorne swung through the air, rose in a graceful curve, and then descended, with legs and arms flying, into the ditch. And it was no ordinary ditch. After a dry period it was half filled with a kind of thick, slimy mud. And after a

heavy rain the ditch became full to the brim with water.

And Archie was pitched into this!

He descended below the surface, splashing and gurgling. And the six Monks stood looking on without even a smile. These feuds were no laughing matter now. At other times the juniors would have yelled with laughter. But now they had nothing but bitterness within them.

Archie rose to the surface—a horrible spectacle.

His fall had stirred up the mud so much that he was now wallowing in a thick, soupy kind of mass. It was nearly black, and Archie staggered out on to the bank, unrecognisable. From head to foot he was coated with awful smelly mud. His beautiful suit was ruined.

And there had been no provocation for this caddish deed—for Archie, of all fellows, was the most harmless of any. He hadn't touched a fly, and was not liable to. For the Monks to pick upon him as a victim was a piece of real dirty work.

The six of them, satisfied with their job, vanished behind the hedge, leaving Archie alone.

"Gadzooks!" gurgled the unfortunate junior. "This is not only foul, but absolutely ghastly! The dashed cads! And I was thinking of making peace with them! Huns, by gad!"

Archie staggered towards the school, fearful lest he should be seen. He was fearfully sensitive on his personal appearance, and for any of the other fellows to spot him in this condition would be a catastrophe.

His one hope was that he might be able to get indoors unseen. He couldn't conceal the tragedy from Phipps, of course—but Phipps would understand. Phipps, indeed, would clean him. Without Phipps Archie would be lost.

Archie arrived at the main gateway, and gazed inside. The Triangle, to his infinite relief, was deserted. This, at all events, was something to be thankful for. Archie crossed over towards the Ancient House at a run—a most unusual procedure for him.

And he came to an abrupt halt, breathing hard. He was staggered—he was startled. For no less a person than Mr. Crowell had appeared like some wizard on the steps of the Ancient House.

Mr. Crowell was the master of the Remove and he gazed at the oncoming apparition with startled eyes. He adjusted his spectacles, and gazed again. His wrath arose. He strode down the steps, and halted in front of Archie—but took good care to keep his distance.

"Boy!" he said sharply.

"Absolutely, sir!" mumbled Archie, beneath the mud.

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Crowell. "Can it be possible?"

"I mean to say——"

"Is that you, Glenthorne?" thundered Mr. Crowell.

"Dash it all, I wouldn't be absolutely certain, but I fancy it is, sir!" replied Archie. "Kindly allow me to stagger past. I am in a most frightful condish, and require the assistance of a few hose pipes!"

"One moment, Glenthorne!" commanded Mr. Crowell angrily. "How did this happen?"

"Yes, sir," said Archie.

"Don't be absurd, boy!" snapped the Form master. "That is no answer to my question! How is it that you are in this—this appalling condition? Answer me at once, Glenthorne!"

"Absolutely, sir!" said Archie feebly. "You see, sir, I am frightfully muddy. In case you don't know it, sir, I fell in the ditch!"

Mr. Crowell looked at Archie very closely—in the way which the Remove had learned so well. It was not without reason that Mr. Crowell's eyes were sometimes likened unto gimlets. They had a way of boring into you.

And Mr. Crowell was very suspicious. He was not a fool. And during the last days he had observed an unusual atmosphere in the Remove. Even in the class-room this had been noticeable. Many fellows had changed their ordinary desks, and the College House juniors kept strictly to themselves, in one bunch.

But, surprisingly enough, the feud was not general knowledge among the seniors and masters. The affairs of the junior school did not interest the lordly Fifth and Sixth. The feud was entirely a lower school affair.

"Did I understand you to say, Glenthorne, that you fell into the ditch?" demanded Mr. Crowell curtly.

"Yes, sir," said Archie. "A dashed unfortunate affair. You see, I slipped, sir—I—I mean somehow or other I got in there, having all sorts of arguments with the mud, and so forth. A poisonous accident, sir."

"You make no complaint against any person for this accident?"

"Absolutely not, sir," said Archie hastily.

"Very well—you may go indoors and change," exclaimed Mr. Crowell. "When you are in a more presentable condition I hope you will have enough sense to walk well away from ditches. I am surprised at you, Glenthorne! Go indoors at once!"

Archie went, thankful to escape. In this feud it was one fixed rule that no matter what the nature of the outrage—no matter how serious it was—no sneaking was to be permitted.

But this little incident was not quite over yet!

CHAPTER II.

HANDFORTH ON THE JOB!



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH came along the Remove passage briskly, accompanied by Church and McClure—as usual. It was

very seldom indeed that these three juniors were found separately. They clung together like glue.

"I tell you it was one of our chaps!" Handforth was saying. "Anyhow, I'm going to see! And I'll bet he was chucked in the ditch, or something by those rotten Monks!"

"But we can't do anything."

"Can't we?" said Handforth. "You wait!"

They entered the lobby, and were just in time to come face to face with Archie Glenthorne, who was doing his best to slip upstairs—without attracting attention. Archie left a trail of mud behind him, so it would not have been at all difficult to get on his trail.

"Great pip!" said Handforth blankly.

Archie paused, and took a deep breath.

"I mean to say, what?" he murmured.

"Dear old lads, kindly allow me to pass! Pray don't detain me here! I'm in a frightful condish, and——"

"Who did this?" roared Handforth.

He strode forward, and gazed into Archie's face. Then he staggered back slightly, rather overcome by the odour of ditch mud. It exuded from Archie like a kind of poison gas.

"Help!" murmured Handforth. "How—how can you live in that atmosphere?"

"Dear old lad, I don't know!" panted Archie. "It's too ghastly for words! I want to whizz upstairs like anything, and dive head first into the good old bath! You gather the trend?"

"Yes, but wait a minute!" said Handforth grimly. "Who did this?"

"Dash it all!" protested Archie. "You don't suppose I enjoy this kind of thing, what? The Monks, dear laddie—the awful bounders from the College House!"

"I knew it!" roared Handforth.

"Kindly refrain from using the good old roar!" protested Archie. "The tissues, as you'll understand, are in a dashed weakened condition. With your permish, I shall proceed to trickle upstairs."

"And I suppose the mud will trickle downstairs, after you," said Church.

This is no matter to make fun of!" said Handforth curtly. "It's a filthy rotten trick to chuck Archie in that ditch. There's only one thing to do—and that is to give those blessed Monks a taste of their own medicine!"

"How do you mean?" asked McClure.

"Follow me—and I'll show you!" said Handforth.

He didn't exactly know what scheme he had in mind, but he passed out into the Triangle. His general idea was to get hold



Mr. Crowell adjusted his spectacles and gazed again. His wrath arose. "Boy!" he said sharply. "Is that you, Glenthorne?" he thundered.

of a solitary Monk. This, if Handforth had only known it, was likely to be a difficult task. For the Monks were now taking care to move out in groups of three and four.

The Triangle was not quite so deserted as it had been. For now that Mr. Crowell had gone, the coast was clear. A few Monks had appeared on the other side, but there were no Fossils.

Of course, it was quite possible for the members of the two Houses to mix together when masters or prefects were in the vicinity. But directly the juniors were left to themselves—well, it was wise to be on the lookout.

Bob Christine and Yorke and Talmadge were just going out through the gateway. They were keeping a sharp eye open as they did so. Handforth eyed them hungrily, but decided that it would be unwise to make an attack.

Until the previous week, he had been one of Bob Christine's best pals. Even now, Handforth rather liked Christine privately. But all private matters had to be drowned in the cause of justice and duty. A Monk was an enemy. Even a fellow's own brother would have been an enemy, just the same.

And then fortune favoured the leader of Study D.

Fenton and Morrow of the Sixth, came strolling through the gateway. They paused to have a word or two with Christine and Co., and then leisurely went on towards the prefects' private doorway. Yorke and Talmadge looked round, and hurried off towards the College House, leaving Christine leaning against the gate.

Bob gazed serenely over towards Handforth and Co., who were waiting like hawks to pounce. But Christine knew they daren't pounce, and that's why he looked serene. With the two most important prefects of the school in sight, Bob Christine was safe.

At least, he thought he was—but he didn't know Handy.

"Come on!" said Edward Oswald darkly.

They couldn't think of letting their leader go alone.

"Monks to the rescue!" shouted Bob Christine desperately.

But all the Monks in view dared not move, for Fenton and Morrow had paused by the fountain, and were comparing notes in a little pocket book. They would have made instant inquiries if a rush of juniors had started.

By good luck they took no notice of Christine's shout—they didn't even see Handforth and Co. whizzing towards the gates. And Bob, finding that he was in a pretty bad position, fled. Handforth and Co. were at his heels. And although Christine was fast, Church and McClure were faster. Handforth

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"You—you ass!" gasped Church. "Fenton will see us—"

"Blow Fenton!" snapped Handforth. "Christine thinks he's safe—look at the ass gloating! My hat! I'm going to make him pay for treating Archie like that!"

"But it may not have been Christine at all—"

"What do I care?" snorted Handforth. "Archie was ducked by the Monks—and Christine's a Monk! That's good enough for me!"

And Handforth started rushing across the Triangle towards the startled Bob. Church and McClure followed Handforth, because it was necessary for them to protect him.

was falling behind—owing, as he afterwards explained, to a tight shoe. Considering that he was wearing cricketing shoes, this was a rather lame excuse.

Church and McClure seized Christine, and pulled him up.

"I say, pax!" panted Bob. "We've got no quarrel, you chaps—"

"Who chucked Archie Glenthorne into the ditch?" demanded Handforth, rushing up and grabbing Christine so violently that they nearly both pitched over. "You—you rotter! You dangerous ruffian!"

"Cheese it!" gasped Christine. "I didn't touch Glenthorne! I don't know what

you're talking about' Look here, Handy, we've always been pals——"

"I know it!" said Handforth. "You're not such a bad chap, Christine. In fact, I rather like you."

Christine looked greatly relieved.

"But that doesn't make any difference!" went on Handforth. "You're a Monk, and that's your misfortune! Some of your cad-dish pals chucked Archie into the ditch—and you're going into the ditch, too!"

Christine looked at the ditch, and shuddered.

"Here, I say!" he yelled. "Don't be such an ass! I didn't—— Hi! Leggo! You—you rotten Fossils!" he hooted, as he was firmly seized. "Monks to the rescue! Help!"

But Christine's voice cried in the wilderness, as it were. There was no answering call—no grateful sound of running feet. The unfortunate Christine was absolutely at the mercy of these three avengers.

He put up a good fight, but it was no good.

Once he nearly succeeded in getting away, but Handforth was lucky enough to deliver a terrific punch in the chest which sent Christine staggering back. Bob even did better than Archie.

He fell into the ditch backwards, head first.

Splash!

He went in, with his legs waving wildly in the air, and then the rest of him vanished.

"Good!" said Handforth callously. "That'll teach him!"

"It's a bit hard on Christine, but it doesn't make any difference," said Church. "He's a Monk, and he's got to suffer for the sins of the other fellows, and Archie's avenged!"

Handforth strode up to the ditch, and stood gazing down.

"I'm going to push him back when he comes up!" he said grimly. "I'll show these rotters—— Wow! What the—— Help!"

At that moment Christine had appeared. At least, something came up—something black and awful. It splashed about wildly, and Handforth was fairly covered. And then, before Handy could back away, a groping hand reached out, and grasped his left ankle. The clutch was like the clutch of a drowning man.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Handforth. "Quick, you chaps——"

Before Church and McClure could go to his assistance, Handforth received a fearful pull, which sent him flying forward. He landed in the ditch with a dull, sodden splash.

"Oh, my goodness!" gurgled Church.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled McClure.

They saw nothing funny in Christine getting ducked—but, somehow, it struck them as being distinctly humorous that Handforth should fall in, too. And it was entirely his own fault, for being so rash.

But, fortunately, Handforth didn't go completely in. He managed to scramble out, only smothered as far as his waist. Bob Christine crawled on to the bank, and he slowly rose to his feet.

"You—you cads!" he muttered thickly. "We'll make you pay for this! I thought you were decent chaps—but I was wrong! We'll make you squirm before long! Beastly Fossils!"

Bob Christine stumbled away, and Handforth gazed at Church and McClure fiercely.

"You—you miserable fatheads!" he exclaimed. "Look at this?"

"It's not our fault!" said Church indignantly. "You shouldn't have gone so near——"

"Couldn't you have helped me?" demanded Handforth. "And who was that I heard laughing?"

"Laughing?" said Church and McClure innocently.

"Yes, laughing!" snorted Handforth. "A fine pair of chums—I don't think! For two pins I'd chuck you in the ditch, too."

"Hi! Look out!" gasped Church abruptly. "Monks!"

"Good!" said Handforth. "We'll have some more sport——"

But he paused abruptly when he saw that about a dozen College House juniors were bearing down upon them. To stay in the vicinity would have been madness. Handforth and Co. fled.

By great good fortune they managed to scramble over the wall, and they bunked for the Ancient House at top speed. And they arrived in safety, feeling that they had done well.

But the feud at St. Frank's was only just beginning!

CHAPTER III.

THE RAIDERS!



JOHN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS nodded calmly.

"Upon the whole, the campaign is going well," he said. "We must expect a few setbacks—that's only to be anticipated. But we're going to beat the Fossils, and beat them hollow!"

"Beat them hollow!" declared the Faithful Five.

"We've been applying our intensive methods for two or three days now, and we have met with complete success," went on Buster Boots. "But the time has now arrived for something bigger—something more important."

"Absolutely!" said the Faithful Five.

The six juniors were in Study Q, in the College House—the headquarters of the Monks. Study Q was nominally occupied by John Busterfield Boots and Percy Bray. The others present were Crowe and Webb of Study P, and Crooks and Denny of Study R.

These fellows were known as the Supreme Six.

They had all come to St. Frank's together. At their previous school, it seemed, they had run the entire show. They had had everything their own way, without the slightest opposition.

And they had come to St. Frank's determined to carry on the good work. With such a powerful leader as John Busterfield Boots, it had not been a difficult matter to obtain the control of the College House Remove.

But Buster aimed higher.

He wanted to be the complete leader of the entire Form. He knew, however, that he would have to wait. It would not be an easy matter to gain his end. The feud had been started by Buster, and he was ready for it.

"Of course, this fellow, Nipper, is a bit of a thorn," continued Boots thoughtfully. "I didn't think he would cause quite so much trouble. In fact, I had an idea that the Fossils would be easy game."

"Nipper's a hard nut," said Percy Bray. "He's the fellow who led the Remove in the big barring out last term. He conducted the whole campaign, and by what I can hear it was a pretty wonderful piece of work."

Boots nodded.

"Yes—Nipper's the only chap we've got to fear," he said. "There's no other fellow on the other side who can take Nipper's place, if he's deprived of the leadership. But we'll concentrate on that later. For the next few days our plan will be to exhibit our power."

"Good!" said the Faithful Five.

There was a tap on the door, and Clapson and Oldfield and Christine came in. These three juniors were representative of the rest of the Monks. They fully recognised Boots as the leader, and relied upon him.

"Come in!" said Buster languidly. "All welcome! Make yourselves at home—if you can find room!"

The three entered, and the door was closed.

The study was now rather packed, and this wasn't very surprising.

Even Bob Christine was resigned to the fact that he had completely lost his own former sway. He accepted Boots as his own leader.

In his heart, Bob Christine didn't quite agree with Buster's methods. And he was hoping that he might be able to modify some of the new leader's schemes. And, anyhow, Christine was a Monk, and he couldn't be antagonistic towards his own House-fellows.

"I see you've cleaned yourself now," yawned Buster, as he eyed Christine.

"Yes," growled Bob. "Those rotters absolutely ruined one of my best suits!"

"All in the game," said Buster. "We must expect these little drawbacks. And we have the consolation of knowing that Archie

Glenthorne's suit was a lot better—and that's ruined, too."

"Not much satisfaction to me!" said Christine tartly. "But we won't talk about that now. Haven't we come here for a discussion?"

"We have," replied Buster. "Our campaign has been progressing well, and we have opened out better than I had expected—"

"But you didn't quite think that Nipper and Co. would declare war, did you?" asked Oldfield. "You've got to be wary of Nipper—he's hot stuff! And now that the Ancient House chaps have broken off diplomatic relations, so to speak, we can look out for squalls. They'll soon be up to something big."

John Busterfield Boots nodded.

"There are two who can play at that game," he replied. "And it so happens that we shall get up to something big first. That's why I've called you fellows here. To-night, my sons, we're going on a raid."

"A raid?" asked the others, staring.

"Over to the Ancient House," said Buster languidly.

"But—but that'll be going right into the enemy's camp!" said Bray. "Don't you think it's a bit too risky, old man?"

"If I thought it was too risky, I shouldn't suggest it," said Buster Boots. "The time has come when we must do something big. When I say big, I don't mean anything else. Petty affairs are no good any more."

"Do you call everything that's happened petty?" asked Christine.

"I do," replied Buster Boots. "Our activities have been confined to ragging. We have seized certain members of the enemy, and have put them through the hoop. That's all very well in its way, but it doesn't go far."

"What else can we do?"

"Lots!" declared Buster. "For example, we're going to venture out to-night, after light's out. We're going to do certain things in the Ancient House. And to-morrow the Fossils will awaken to find that we're a powerful force—far more powerful than they ever dreamed of."

And the new leader of the Monks proceeded to give his orders like a general in the field. He told off Bray for certain duty; he gave Crooks definite orders; he instructed Bob Christine in other ways. And all his plans were concise, cut out, and completed in detail.

There was none of the usual haphazard plotting which was customary in junior raids. John Busterfield Boots had prepared everything, down to the minutest detail.

And he gave his orders in the same way—clearly and concisely, but in that same calm tone of his. Buster did everything calmly. He was never excited, never flurried. It seemed as though next week would do—but things were done, actually, with extraordinary rapidity.

It was just the character of the fellow.

He was efficient from his toes to his red hair. And this very efficiency of his gave all the other Monks a sublime confidence in his powers.

There was, indeed, something about Boots that could not fail to inspire complete trust. Somehow, the Monks knew that everything would go all right if Buster Boots was in charge.

The Monks had never had a leader like this before, and they revelled in it. They were slaves to Buster Boots. He knew it. And he was faithful to them as long as they remained faithful to him.

Soon afterwards no one would have guessed that any plotting had taken place.

The various studies were occupied with juniors quietly doing their prep. St. Frank's went on in just the same way as ever. There was nothing to indicate that a deadly feud was in progress.

The Triangle was deserted—or seemingly so.

But there, near the College House, two scouts were on duty. Buster had placed them there, and they were relieved at certain intervals. Their duty was to give instant warning in case any Fossils were seen.

But Buster was not the only fellow who took precautions.

It was I, in fact, who had first instituted this scouting scheme. In the vicinity of the Ancient House we had our own men posted. And it would have to be a smart Monk, indeed, who came anywhere near.

It may be thought that I was lax in not preparing any antagonistic moves. Some of the Fossils, in fact, were already accusing me of slackness. But there was a method in this policy of mine.

It was the Monks who had started this whole bitter business. They had started out to gain the supremacy—not by fair means, but by foul. And I wanted to see how far they would go.

They had interfered with Ancient House boys at every opportunity, and we had retaliated. But although I had several plans in mind for something bigger, I did not put these into execution. I was waiting—on the look-out for what the enemy would do.

I was somewhat relieved when bedtime came for I had been half anticipating some violent raid or other. But the evening had passed without this. And it was hardly to be expected that the Monks would attempt anything at night.

But, even so, I was ready.

I had no intention of being caught napping. Such a thing as a night raid was possible. Buster Boots was a daring fellow, and quite capable of swooping down with his men on the Ancient House Remove dormitory.

And so, when lights were put out, two juniors remained on duty. It was their business to do sentry-go up and down the dormitory aisle, between the rows of beds.

They were not allowed to sit down, or to rest. They had to keep on the move all the

time. This was a precautionary measure, so that they should remain awake. As the spell was only for half an hour, this was not difficult.

They were then relieved by two others.

And so until one-thirty in the morning. In this way, nobody lost more than half an hour's sleep, and that wouldn't do any harm. And the dormitory was thus closely guarded until all danger of a raid was over. For nobody would dream of visiting us with warlike intentions after one-thirty.

The first two fellows on duty were Reginald Pitt and Jack Grey.

"Those cads of Study A will get it in the neck when they come in!" whispered Pitt, as he and Grey paced up and down. "I'll bet they went to Bannington, or somewhere, on the razzle."

"Suppose so," murmured Jack. "They'll have to give an account of themselves."

Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell had not turned up at bedtime. They had gone out earlier in the evening, and had not been seen since. It was a favourite trick of theirs to slip away on these night jaunts.

Merrell and a few others had successfully faked up the beds of Fullwood and Co., so that the late prefect had been deceived. Lights had been put out without the fact being disclosed that Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell were absent. Probably, Fullwood had arranged things with Merrell beforehand.

The next two juniors on duty after Pitt and Grey, were Handforth and Church. They took up their spell willingly. And they, too, were waiting for the return of Fullwood and Co. Handforth was particularly keen upon the Nuts coming in during his period of duty, because he wanted to bill them.

And, in the meantime, Buster Boots and his crowd were getting ready.

They left the College House by a rear window—slipping down a ladder that had been placed there in readiness—a ladder which had been cunningly concealed in the ivy.

The night was dark and rather chilly. In pairs the Monks made their way towards the Ancient House. Boots did not allow a crowd to go at once. He would not take any unnecessary risks.

And all the fellows had to make a long detour so that the Ancient House could be reached without any actual crossing of the Triangle.

There were twelve Monks altogether on this raid, and they collected together, at length, outside the window of Study H, which was occupied in normal hours by Farman and Owen major. The window was closed and locked. All the study windows were closed and locked, in fact.

But the catch of this particular window was loose—as Buster Boots had ascertained by previous investigation. And it was only the work of a moment to conquer that loosened piece of metal. The window was

soon softly opened, and the twelve raiders noiselessly slipped inside.

There was no confusion—no questioning as to duty.

Every junior in the party had been thoroughly coached, and knew exactly what he had to do. The whole affair had been rehearsed again and again, until there could be no possibility of a hitch.

It went like clockwork.

John Busterfield Boots and his men entered that window, and vanished like shadows. Not a suspicious sound was heard—not a tiny light showed. It was as though they had disappeared into smoke.

But an hour later the raiders began to reappear. One by one they came back. They silently slipped out of the window, and waited there, by the wall. There was no conversation—not even a whisper. Boots had particularly warned his men against talking. And such was their discipline—and their faith in Boots—that they obeyed to the letter.

The whole twelve were out at last. The window was quietly closed again, the catch was replaced. And during the time that had elapsed since the commencement of the raid, a great deal had happened.

But nobody would have believed it, so silent had these invaders been.

They were just preparing to creep round in the same way as they had come when Buster Boots stared hard across the Triangle. Three figures had come within view.

They crept along from the direction of the school wall, and were now making their way across the Triangle towards the rear premises of the Ancient House. Even in the gloom, Buster Boots could see that they were juniors.

Here was an unexpected development.

But Buster Boots was prepared for it, and he lost no time in taking advantage of the fact that three Fossils were walking right into his hands. He would be able to improve upon his original scheme.

It would indeed be a great victory if he could make an example of these three juniors—fellows who had evidently been out, possibly scouting for an enemy. They little realised what was awaiting them!

Boots quickly gave some whispered orders, and the College House force moved away in a kind of fan, unseen against the dark wall of the building. Consequently, the three unknown juniors practically walked right into the enemy.

There came a quick scuffle, a few gasping grunts, a smothered exclamation of alarm, and it was all over. The three were held down, their mouths were muffled by handy caps or handkerchiefs, and they were swiftly carried away.

In the vicinity of the old monastery ruins, the three prisoners were inspected.

They were Fullwood, Gulliver, and Bell!

CHAPTER IV.

THE BARGAIN!



JOH N BUSTERFIELD BOOTS gazed at the prisoners with satisfaction.

"This is better than we hoped for," he murmured.

"Three of the Ancient House crowd—and not Nipper's spies, either. Nipper wouldn't choose fellows of this sort to go on scouting duty."

Fullwood tried to struggle up, glaring.

"You—you rotters!" he panted. "What's the idea of springin' on us? Spies for Nipper? We've just come back from Banninton. We went to the pictures, an' we were delayed! If you touch us—"

"Went to the pictures and were delayed—eh?" repeated Buster. "Playing cards, I suppose, or billiards? Or hobnobbing with a few choice bookmakers? You see, I know all about you—I've got your records. I've made it a point to become acquainted with the habits and doings of every Fossil!"

Fullwood scowled.

"Wouldn't it be better to mind your own business?" he asked sourly. "An' look here! We don't want to have any rot! We're not mixed up in this feud! We loathe Nipper an' all his crowd!"

"Rather!" said Gulliver and Bell eagerly.

The three rascals of Study A were now allowed to speak. They were sitting up, surrounded by the Monks. There was no fear of them making any outcry—for they had far more to fear than Buster and Co.

"My intention is to make an example of you!" said Boots calmly. "It is your misfortune that you should be the victims. Whether you hate Nipper or not is quite beside the point. You belong to the brood of Fossils, and that is all that matters."

"Hear, hear!" said the Monks softly.

"But—but it's all piffle!" said Fullwood frantically. "Look here, if you do anythin' to us, you'll be harmin' your own pals."

"Absolutely!" said Gulliver and Bell.

"Our own pals—eh?" repeated Buster.

"Yes; we're with you!" said Fullwood eagerly. "We hate Nipper like poison, an' we've secretly admired your game all the time. Ask any of these other Monks! They'll tell you how we regard the fossil crowd!"

J. B. B. nodded.

"There's no need for me to ask—I know," he said. "I always obtain such information in advance. You are quite right—your attitude towards Nipper is not exactly genial. But it makes no difference. You're all Fossils—"

"Yes, but we shan't be for long!" interrupted Fullwood quickly. "We've applied to our Housemaster to be transferred to your side."

"Yes, we asked Mr. Lee about it to-day!" said Bell eagerly.

Buster looked at them closely.

"Oh!" he said. "Well, of course, that makes a difference. But you fellows are such liars that I don't know whether to believe you!"

"Liars!" said Fullwood hotly.

"Liars!" repeated Boots. "In case you didn't hear me distinctly, I'll say it again—liars! My sons, your characters are an open book to me. I don't trust you, and I'm not altogether sure that we want you in the College House!"

"Of course we don't!" said Clapson. "We wouldn't own these cads! They're absolute rotters——"

"One moment," interrupted Buster. "I'm dealing with this matter, Clapson. Now, let me see. We have before us three unmitigated cads—three unscrupulous bounders

pared to let you go—you and your delightful companions. But, if I grant you this concession, I shall expect a good return."

"What's the idea?" growled Fullwood acidly.

"You are to act as my spies," replied Buster shortly.

"Your spies?"

"Exactly."

"But I don't understand——"

"If you will give me a chance to explain, I will go into details," said Buster. "You three fellows are to keep your eyes and ears constantly open. Being Fossils, you will not be suspected. The instant you learn of any plan that Nipper may prepare—any move against the Monks—you are to make a prompt report to me. In other words, you



"Those cads of Study A will get it in the neck when they come in!" whispered Pitt, as he and Grey paced up and down. "I'll bet they went to Bannington, or somewhere, on the razzle."

who are willing enough to betray their own House!"

Fullwood gritted his teeth.

"Better go easy!" he snarled.

"Three unprincipled young rascals who are even now preparing to desert the Fossils," continued Boots calmly. "Much as I should like to make a shining example of this trio, I think we can use them. They are, in fact, just the type of sneaking cads we require."

Fullwood and Co. writhed at Buster's candid statement. But they were not in a position to protest.

"What do you mean—use them?" asked Freeman softly.

"We will make a bargain," said Buster Boots. "Look here, Fullwood. I am pre-

are to keep me supplied with full information regarding the Fossils."

Fullwood took a deep breath.

"All right—I agree!" he said eagerly.

"Same here!" muttered Gulliver and Bell.

"Your agreement is rather too swift to be genuine," said Boots. "I suspect that you are simply over-anxious to get away. But let me make it quite clear. Let me tell you what your fate will be if you fail——"

"You needn't worry—we shan't fail!" said Fullwood. "Look here, Boots, I admire you! I shall be jolly glad if you can topple Nipper off his perch, an' completely smash him. I'm ready to bring you all the information I can get hold of. An' so are my pals."

Buster nodded calmly.

"Yes, I believe you," he said. "In fact, I'm beginning to realise that this meeting was pretty fortunate. With you fellows in the Ancient House as constant spies, I shall be able to know every one of Nipper's plans as soon as they are thought out."

"By Jove! That's a good idea," said Clapson. "And I don't think Fullwood will play us false, either—he's a cad all right, but he hates Nipper. He'd rather work for us any day!"

"Quite apart from that, I shall make these young gentlemen fully understand the risks they take," went on Buster. "Any failure will mean a punishment that they won't easily forget."

"Oh, stop threatening——" began Fullwood.

"One moment," said Buster coolly. "We might just as well get the thing perfectly clear. I always like to have a thorough understanding at the beginning. Then there can't be any possibility of questions later. I dislike the idea of dealing with any members of the enemy; but it's a question of necessity. We've got to put aside our personal feelings."

"These chaps are all right," said Freeman. "It's notorious that Fullwood and Co. hate Nipper and the rest. They'd do anything to give Nipper a knock. And they ain't too scrupulous, either."

Buster nodded.

"That's all to the good," he said. "But it's just possible that these fellows may be unscrupulous in another way. What guarantee have we got that they won't go straight to Nipper, and tell him the whole thing?"

"Can't you take my word?" demanded Fullwood hotly.

"Unfortunately, no," replied Boots. "And, therefore, my only remedy is to suggest force. If you play us false, Fullwood, and this applies equally well to your pals, we'll seize you at the first opportunity, and put you through such a process of torture that you'd rather die!"

"Don't talk out of your hat——"

"When I say torture, I mean a certain secret method that will somewhat startle you!" proceeded Buster imperturbably. "There'll be no getting away, no escaping us. I think you have seen enough to realise that we are determined. Keep faith, and we shall be your friends. Betray us, and the consequences will be utterly disastrous."

"Finished?" asked Fullwood sarcastically.

"Nearly," said Buster. "I think we are beginning to understand one another. And now that we have got that over, we'll go into business details. I suggest that we adopt a system of special signals."

"Signals?" said Bell.

"Exactly," replied Boots. "It may not always be convenient for you to communicate direct. In that case, you will make a

certain sign in your study window. For example, you will pull the curtain back in a pre-arranged manner. This will show us that you have some news to communicate, and we will at once employ measures to find out what your information is."

Fullwood nodded.

"That's not a bad idea," he said. "Yes, we can do that."

And they went into other details.

By the time they had finished they were all on very amiable terms. The chums of Study A were no longer regarded as Fossils. They were the spies of John Busterfield Boots, traitors in the camp of the Ancient House.

And Buster Boots knew well enough that these three, unscrupulous though they were, would never sneak. For it was more than they dared do. The consequences would be too grave.

And soon afterwards Fullwood and Co. slipped in.

But they didn't creep into bed as easily as they had expected. They managed to get to the Remove dormitory without causing any commotion. They sneaked in, and were making their beds when two dim forms loomed out of the blackness.

And half a dozen other juniors were at once awakened.

A bright shaft of light from an electric torch shot out, covering the startled trio.

"My only hat!" gasped Bell. "What the ——"

"Oh, so here you are?" exclaimed De Valerie, who was doing sentry duty with Somerton as a companion. "The black sheep returned to the fold! Give an account of yourselves, you bounders."

Fullwood was relieved. At first he thought his mixing with the enemy had been discovered.

"Mind your own business," he said sourly.

He looked round with that calm, supercilious expression of his. Gulliver and Bell copied their leader. They found that other fellows had got out of bed, too. The three Nuts were surrounded.

"Very pretty!" sneered Fullwood. "I suppose you think this is clever! We're not answerable to you chaps for what we do. I suppose we can go out on the giddy razzle if we like, without askin' your permission?"

Fullwood was quite cool now. During the summer holidays he and his chums had been fairly good, and many of the decent chaps in the Remove had been hoping that the experience had brought about a permanent improvement. Obviously, Fullwood and Co. were unchanged.

"We don't want to inquire into your guilty secrets," said Reginald Pitt curtly. "But we're just going to show you that it isn't always healthy to go out on the tiles! You need a lesson, my lads! And if you make any commotion a prefect or a master might come down on us. Then some explanation

would be needed, and that would be very awkward—for you!”

Gently but firmly, Fullwood and Co. were seized. They were frogmarched up and down the dormitory in turn. They were then liberally soaked in cold water, and their beds were unmade, and all the bedclothes were hurled into a corner.

Before the Nuts could get any sleep they were obliged to make their beds completely. And then they had to unmake them, discovering, too late, that tintacks and other nasty articles had been placed between the mattress and the under-blanket.

By the time they finally got into bed they savagely came to the conclusion that going on the razzle wasn't so very entertaining, after all. It had its drawbacks.

But this treatment from the Fossils had one definite result.

Fullwood and Co. were grimly determined to betray the Ancient House at every opportunity. They were staunch to the Monks and John Busterfield Boots!

CHAPTER V.

GETTING SERIOUS.



“**W**HAT-HO!” said Archie Glenthorne, stretching himself. “Morning, with sundry bursts of sunlight and what not! Phipps, dear old lad, I’m feeling dashed braced! I mean to say, the old tissues are fairly bulging with energy!”

“Yes, sir,” said Phipps. “You’re looking very well indeed, sir.”

“Absolutely,” said Archie. “Of course, a chappie looks frightfully frightful in the morning, before partaking of the old tub! Therefore, if I’m looking decent now, I must certainly be in priceless condish!”

“Yes, sir.”

And Phipps, with his face as grave as a judge, walked across the bedroom and pulled up the blind. The morning sunshine came in with delightful warmth and brilliance.

And Archie Glenthorne was revealed sitting up in bed, partaking of his usual early cup of tea.

“Dashed good!” he pronounced after several sips. “Somehow, Phipps, a taste of the good old brew shoves large supplies of life through the old veins! I can feel the good old stuff whizzing about like anything!”

“Quite so, sir,” said Phipps. “What would you suggest for this morning, sir?”

“What-ho!” said Archie. “Business, what? The dashed serious matter of selecting the day’s attire! Good, Phipps! You, old lad, are the boy! How about the old tweed, with the green and red checks?”

Phipps shuddered.

“I hardly think so, sir,” he replied. “I have already remarked, Master Archibald,

that the tweed suit is in very bad taste. I exceedingly regret that you purchased the clothing—”

“But, my dear old lad, I got the bally thing in Bond Street!” said Archie. “The tailor Johnny told me it was positively the last word! Absolutely the cat’s whiskers, or words to that effect! The lad was enthusiastic, he enlarged upon the suit in the most elaborate way. I mean, he went into a dashed lecture on the subject!”

“I have no doubt about that, sir.”

“Then what’s the old objection?” asked Archie. “I’m a reasonable chappie, and as a rule I take your word, Phipps. But here we have a bally Bond Street tailor pitting his judgment against yours. I mean to say, Phipps, the blighter surely ought to know what he’s talking about?”

“Precisely, sir,” said Phipps, nodding. “I understand that you would not even consider any other material for that suit.”

“Absolutely not! I was firm,” said Archie. “I saw the chunk of cloth lying over the bally shop like a dashed piece of carpet! You know, Phipps, it took my eye! In fact, it nearly dazzled me, by gad!”

“I imagine it did, sir.”

“And I said to myself—here’s the bally suit I’ve been looking for,” proceeded Archie. “So I grabbed the old tailor by the button-hole and pleaded with him to take the old measurements. He tried to shove me on to other cloth, but there was nothing doing! And when he found that out, it was amazing how the chappie enthused! Changed his opinion completely, Phipps. Told me that the stuff was priceless!”

“Considering the charge for that suit was in the neighbourhood of twenty pounds, the tailor was not far wrong, sir,” said Phipps gravely. “He saw you coming, Master Archibald.”

“Absolutely, I whizzed right in!”

“I mean, sir, that he was anxious to obtain your order,” went on Phipps. “You see, the tailor was not prepared to allow a good customer to go. He sold you the suit, although he knew it was not quite the thing. Take my advice, sir, and discard it!”

Archie sighed.

“Well, of course, there you are!” he exclaimed. “You know best, Phipps—you’re the chappie who does these things. I suppose I shall have to gracefully give way. It’s a wrench, but there you are!”

Phipps smiled with quiet triumph. He had been trying to get Archie to discard that diabolical suit for several days; and now, at last, he had succeeded. And when Archie emerged he was beautifully attired in a lounge suit of grey worsted. He looked neat from his shining boots to his well brushed hair.

For once in a way he had turned out quite early.

And he sallied downstairs whistling blithely. He had got over the terrible disas-

ter of the previous night. Phipps had helped him to get rid of all that mud, and it seemed, indeed, that the experience had done Archie a bit of good. For he was feeling great.

He strolled towards his own study, deciding that he would lounge in the easy chair, glancing over some magazines. He would be able to take quite a nice little rest until the bell rang for prayers.

Archie had a study at the very end of the Remove passage—indeed, it was nearly in the Fifth Form passage. And this study of Archie's was wondrously furnished.

It contained nothing but the best. It was the most luxurious study in the whole school. Not even the most lordly member of the Sixth could boast of a study like this.

Archie entered, and his whistle died away. His monocle dropped out of his eye, and several gasps came from his open mouth. His eyes bulged outwards.

"Gadzooks!" he gasped faintly. "Help, and all that sort of thing! S.O.S. I mean to say, kindly hold me up, somebody!"

Archie clutched at the doorpost, and clung there limply.

For one hopeful second he half believed that he had come into the wrong room by mistake. But a second glance told him that this was not so. He was actually gazing into his own study.

And it was not surprising that he was feeling faint.

For the glories of that wonderful place had gone. Instead of the deep, soft carpet on the floor there was nothing but cold, bare boards. In place of the wonderful furniture there now reposed on the floor, a packing-case and two soap-boxes!

The pictures had gone, too; the massive club fender, the writing-table, the bookcase, the numerous silken cushions. All had gone, all had vanished into thin air.

And the room was as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard, except for those ghastly soap-boxes and the poisonous packing-case.

Archie was so staggered that he was helpless for a few moments. Then he turned round, and looked down the passage with glassy eyes. He was hoping that somebody would come along, and he bleated for Phipps.

Just at about this time the youthful Duke of Somerton was entering Study M, further down the passage. Cecil De Valerie was with him, for these two shared this apartment. They were intent upon bringing out a football, and having some kicks on Little Side before prayers.

They entered Study M, and paused.

"What the—how the—" De Valerie paused.

"Good heavens!" said Somerton.

Study M had been one of the best equipped in the Remove passage, although not comparable to Archie's, it had nevertheless been beautifully furnished. But now it was barren.

Everything had gone, and nothing remained except a little dust. But there were two soap-boxes and a packing-case. It was a kind of hideous travesty upon the former furniture which had reposed there. The packing-case was evidently intended to serve as a table, and the soap-boxes as chairs.

"What the dickens does it mean?" gasped Somerton.

"Blessed if I know!" said De Valerie, in a startled voice. "This—this is amazing! I can't understand who's done it, or why it's been done! All our furniture pinched! Hi, Singleton!"

De Valerie had spotted the Hon. Douglas Singleton just coming backwards out of Study N, next door. And Singleton was looking startled. His study was the third one in the Remove which was superb. All the rest were more or less commonplace, for the other fellows didn't happen to be rolling in riches.

"Come and look here!" roared De Valerie.

"I—I'm dazed!" said Singleton. "Something—something's happened! All my furniture's gone!"

"What!" howled De Valerie and Somerton.

"Gone!" said the Hon. Douglas. "There's nothing but a packing-case and two soap-boxes—"

"It's—it's impossible!" gasped De Valerie.

He dashed up, and gazed into Study N, and, sure enough Singleton was right. His study, too, was bare. It had been entirely stripped of all its luxurious furniture. The affair was a complete mystery.

"Look! Glenthorne's coming along!" said Singleton, in a weak voice. "Better call some of the others, we've got to inquire into this."

Archie came along the passage staggering slightly from side to side. He walked as though in a dream, with a fixed, dazed look in his eyes. He stared into Study N, and sagged at the knees.

"Gadzooks!" he murmured faintly. "The dashed old removers have been here, too! Dear old lads, it's a somewhat priceless time for spring-cleaning, what?"

"Spring-cleaning!" shouted De Valerie. "But—but it's autumn, you duffer! By jingo! I wonder if the servants have been clearing out the studies—"

De Valerie didn't finish.

He dashed into Study L, and then into Study K, but everything was normal there. It was clear, therefore, that the household

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(Now read on.)

CAPTURED BY BLACKS.

WHEN Nelson Lee recovered consciousness he found that his captors had placed him on a bar-backed horse, and lashed him down, Mazeppa-wise, with leathern thongs. What had happened whilst he had been unconscious he could only guess, but it was evident that he had been insensible for some considerable time, for when he opened his eyes he discovered that he was no longer at Macpherson's station, but was back at Barnby Coppice.

By cautiously moving his head from side to side, he perceived that the bushrangers were busily employed in loading their horses with the plunder they had taken from the coach.

"Hi, Sam!" called out Bush Billy. "Come 'ere!"

Sam sprang on his horse's back, and rode over to his leader's side.

"This gentleman is impatient to be haff," said Bush Billy. "You know wot you've got to do, don't yer?"

"Yes," said Sam. "I've got to ride with 'im to Nymagee, and stay with 'im till he gets the oof from the bank, and then I've got to bring 'im to the Glen."

"That's right," said Bush Billy. "Haff yer go, both of yer, and we'll look out for yer at the Glen about midnight to-morrow."

The professor and Sam accordingly took their departure, and a few minutes later the gang re-formed, and started out on their forty-miles' ride to the Glen.

By two o'clock in the afternoon they had left all signs of civilisation far behind them, and had entered that wild and rugged region of mountain, forest and scrub—almost wholly unexplored, yet known to be infested by some of the fiercest tribes of natives in the whole of New South Wales—that runs from the edge of Garoo Downs, northward to the confines of the town of Cobar, and westward to the banks of the Darling River. For upwards of an hour they rode through this desolate region without drawing rein; then Bush Billy called a halt.

"We'll off-saddle 'ere, and give the 'osses a rest," he said, wheeling round and holding up his hand. "They've done a big day's work to-day, and we've still another fifteen miles to go, so we may as well—"

The sentence ended in a startled oath, for at that moment a shower of spears came whizzing through the air, whilst an instant later a horde of bushy-headed natives, fully five hundred strong, dashed out of a thicket some distance in the rear, hurling their spears and boomerangs as they ran, and making the welkin ring with their shrill, discordant war-cry.

Though taken completely by surprise, the bush rangers quickly closed their ranks, and greeted the blacks with a withering volley of rifle-fire. To this the natives replied with a second shower of spears, but most of their missiles flew wide of the mark, and a moment later, seeing that the bush-rangers were preparing to fire again, they fled back into the thicket and took cover behind the trees.

"Now, my lads, fall into line, and ride like old Harry!" cried Bush Billy. "We haven't finished with the beggars yet! As soon as they have got over their fright they'll be round us like a swarm of bees, and we can't afford to stand and fight against odds of forty to one!"

He drove his spurs into his horse's sides and dashed away at a furious gallop. His comrades lost no time in following his example. But ere they had covered a hundred yards the blacks broke cover, with another ear-splitting yell, and raced in hot pursuit.

Now, the natives of Australia, as the reader may know, are notorious for their marvellous running powers. Both in speed

and endurance they are more than a match for any ordinary horse, as they can not only cover the ground more quickly than a horse can gallop, but they can also keep up the pace for hours at a stretch.

"It's all U P, my lads!" groaned Bush Billy, when the chase had lasted some ten or fifteen minutes. "The 'osses is just dead beat, and we're losing ground at every stride." He ducked his head just in time to dodge a skimming boomerang. "They've got within range of us now," he continued. "It's no use goin' on like this, for they'll simply pick us off, one by one, same as if we was cokernuts at a fair! Yet wot to do I'm blowed if I know!"

"'Ow would it be to turn the pack-'osses adrift?" suggested one of the gang. "If we was to send 'em gallopin' back towards the blacks, the beggars would perhaps be satisfied, and wouldn't foller us no farther."

"Oh, yes, they would!" said Bush Billy, shaking his head. "I know those beggars by the way they do their 'air! They're cannibals! It isn't plunder they want—it's a white man for their Sunday dinner!"

"Then give 'em Nelson Lee!" said another member of the gang.

"By Gosh, that's not a bad idea!" exclaimed Bush Billy. "I don't know whether it'll answer or not, but, at any rate, we can try it."

"But look 'ere, guv'nor," objected one of the gang, "if we part with Nelson Lee, we lose the professor's seven hundred quid."

"Rats!" retorted Bush Billy. "Wot odds does it make to the professor whether he shoots Nelson Lee, or whether the blacks make a meal off 'im? Besides, the professor won't know nothing about the matter till he turns up at the Glen to-morrow night, with the money in 'is pocket, and it'll be rather late in the day for 'im to start objectin' then!"

He glanced back over his shoulder, and saw that the horse to which Nelson Lee was bound was twenty or thirty yards behind.

"Ride on, you chaps!" he cried, addressing those in his immediate neighbourhood. "I'll be after you in 'arf a tick."

He wheeled his horse round, pulled up, and waited until the detective's horse was abreast of him.

"Gimme 'old of that leadin' rein," he shouted to the man who was acting as the detective's escort.

The man obeyed, and in the twinkling of an eye Bush Billy turned the horse's head towards the blacks. Then he whipped out his pocket-knife, leaned forward in his saddle, and drove the blade into the flank of the detective's horse. With a snort of pain, the terrified beast made a sudden forward plunge, and then, taking the bit between its teeth, it dashed away, towards the blacks.

For a moment the natives could scarcely believe their eyes. Then surprise gave place

to exultation, and the forest rang with their savage cries of triumph. Further pursuit of Bush Billy and his gang was instantly abandoned, and almost before the detective had realised what was happening the horse was caught, and he found himself surrounded on every side by a surging mob of yelling and gesticulating natives.

THE WITCH-DOCTOR'S DECREE.

IT was one of Nelson Lee's boasts that he knew a little, in some cases a great deal, of every language and every dialect under the sun. As luck would have it, the language of his captors was one of those tongues in which he was fairly proficient, so that he had little or no difficulty in understanding the general drift of the lengthy and somewhat heated argument which followed his capture.

A great many of the expressions which were used were unintelligible to him, but he understood sufficient of what was said to grasp the fact that some of his captors were in favour of killing him on the spot, whilst the others insisted that the proper thing to do with him was to take him to their village and leave his fate to be decided, some said by the headman or chief of the tribe, and others said by the "witch-doctor."

In the end the views of the latter prevailed, and a move was accordingly made for the natives' village, which was simply a scattered collection of rudely-constructed bowers—or "gunyahs," as they are called—built of branches and twigs, and nestling at the foot of a precipitous hill about twenty miles from the spot where Nelson Lee had been captured.

Afternoon had given place to evening, and evening was fast merging into night, when the dusky warriors, with their captive in their midst, arrived at their destination. On the outskirts of the village they were met by a jubilant crowd of men and women, who greeted their return with vociferous shouts of welcome, and escorted them in triumph to an open space in the centre of the encampment, where the head-man, surrounded by a bodyguard of half a dozen men, was waiting to receive them.

After listening to the story of the capture, the head-man took a torch from one of his bodyguard, and strode up to the horse on which Nelson Lee was bound. He raised the torch above his head, and peered into the detective's face. Then a low gasp of amazement burst from his lips, followed by a delighted cry from Nelson Lee.

For the head-man was none other than Dargo, whom Lee had rescued from his torturers on the previous day!

Each recognised the other at the same instant, and the feeling of despair which had hitherto filled the detective's heart now gave place to one of hope.

Somewhat to Nelson Lee's surprise however, Dargo evinced no pleasure at the meeting. Instead he simply stood and stared at him in sorrowful, pitying silence.

"Don't you know me?" asked the detective at last.

"Yes, me know you," answered Dargo, with a deep sigh. "Dis plenty much dreadful bad job! Me wish dey had not caught you."

"So do I!" said Lee, with a rueful laugh. "Still, it might have been worse, worse for me, I mean. I might have fallen into the hands of a tribe whose head-man did not know me."

Dargo heaved another deep sigh, but vouchsafed no reply. The detective began to feel vaguely uneasy.

"Well, aren't you going to order your men to set me free?" he asked, after an awkward pause.

"Plenty much no use if me did!" replied Dargo mournfully. "Dey not obey me."

"Why not?" demanded Lee in surprise. "You are the headman of the tribe, aren't you?"

"Yes," said Dargo, with a nod of his woolly head. "But there been plenty much sickness among my people, and big heap men and women died. Witch-doctor say dat Buddai much angry wid us 'cause we not sacrifice a white man to him for so many moons. Him tell me send my men to catch a white man for Buddai, so dat we hab no more sickness. So me send my men out, and dey plenty good deat pleased dey get you, and dey not let you go—nebbber, nebbber, nebbber!"

The detective's cheeks grew pale as he listened to this recital of the fate in store for him. He was to be offered up as a human sacrifice to Buddai, the principal god in the native mythology!

"And this is to be my reward for saving your life, is it?" he asked bitterly. "Although you are the head-man of your tribe, you are going to stand by and allow me to be murdered in cold blood. I thought better of you."

"What can me do?" said Dargo piteously. "Me not ungrateful. Me gladly gib my life to save you, but de witch doctor want a white man. Black man no good. What can me do?"

"Order your men to stand back," said Nelson Lee. "Then cut these thongs and leave the rest to me."

Again Dargo shook his head.

"Dey not obey if me tell dem to stand back," he said. "Dey plenty much suspicious now, 'cause me talk to you so long in the white man's tongue, which dey not understand. Dey kill me if dey tink we going to set you free."

"Then tell them what happened yesterday, and ask them if they are going to be so ungrateful as to murder the man who saved their chief from torture and death."

For the third time Dargo shook his head. "Dey not listen to me," he said. "Me count for nothing 'gainst de word ob de witch-doctor. All my people 'fraid ob him. Me 'fraid ob him, too. Him terrible powerful. Him blast us all wid his magic if we not do what he say."

"Where is he?" asked Nelson Lee.

Dargo pointed to the rugged hill at the back of the village.

"Him up dat hill, in the cave ob Buddai," he said. "Him gone tell Buddai we got one white man. When him come down, me beg him let you go. Me swear to catch two, five, three, more white men, if he——"

The rest of the sentence was drowned by a deep-toned reverential murmur of applause. The dreaded witch-doctor had descended from the sacred hill, and was coming to inspect his prospective victim!

Some of the natives flung themselves prostrate on the ground; the rest drew back in superstitious awe, forming a sort of living lane, along which, with slow and solemn steps, the witch-doctor advanced towards the horse on which Nelson Lee was lashed.

As seen by the fitful torchlight, there was something decidedly uncanny about the witch-doctor's appearance. To compensate for his shortness of stature, for he was little and old and wrinkled; his hair was piled up on the top of his head in a towering cone, fully nine inches high, and surmounted with a nodding plume of emu's feathers.

The upper part of his body was bare, save for a necklet of teeth and a leather thong to which was suspended a native horn. Around his waist was a sheep's-wool tunic, short but exceedingly bulky, fastened with an enormous skewer of bone. His face and his limbs were tattooed with grotesque designs, whilst his back and breast were covered with the hideous, gaping scars of self-inflicted wounds.

"Thy warriors have done well," he said, addressing Dargo, in a harsh and strident voice. "I have spoken to Buddai. He accepts his faithful children's offering. Let the white man be taken from his horse, and bound afresh. Let him then be carried to the sacred cave, and laid at Buddai's feet. It is Buddai's will that the offering should be made at the rising of the sun."

THE CAVE OF BUDDAI

DARGO listened to these instructions in dull and stupefied silence. Then, acting on a sudden impulse, he flung himself at the witch-doctor's feet, and burst into an impassioned plea for mercy on the captive's behalf.

He explained that the white man was the same white man who had rescued him—Dargo—from the clutches of the brutal miners on the previous day. He urged the claims of gratitude, and swore by all he held holy that if Nelson Lee's life were

spared he himself would undertake to supply as many substitutes for sacrificial purposes as the witch-doctor might demand.

To all of which the witch-doctor listened in cold, disdainful silence.

"Thou speakest words of foolishness," he said, when Dargo had concluded his eloquent pleading. "What is it to Buddai that this white man did save thy life? Even if he were thine own father, and Buddai claimed him from thee, it would be thy duty to give him up to the stone of sacrifice."

"Enough!" he went on, as Dargo began a fresh appeal. "I will hear no more from thee! Speak but another word and I will call down fire from above to consume thee! I tell thee once and for all that this white man is for Buddai!"

He raised his hand as he spoke, and a thrill of superstitious terror ran through the crowd. There was not a man amongst them who did not believe that the witch-doctor was able to carry out his threat if he chose to do so. Dargo certainly believed it, and he crept away, trembling like an aspen leaf, and completely cowed.

Under the witch-doctor's directions the detective was then removed from his horse and pinioned hand and foot. About half-way up the precipitous hill already described was a vast gloomy cave, which could only be approached by a narrow, winding path which the natives had cut in the steep face of the rock. At the far end of this cave was an enormous wooden idol, representing a gigantic old man, lying asleep with his head pillowed on his arm. In front of the idol—which was a figure of Buddai, the Australian deity—was a massive slab of stone, supported on four roughly-carved pillars of wood.

Bound and helpless, the detective was carried into the cave, and laid upon this "stone of sacrifice" as it was called.

For upwards of an hour the natives remained by his side, chanting monotonous dirges, and ever and anon prostrating themselves before the wooden idol. Then the witch-doctor made a sign, and the natives filed out of the cave.

When the last man had departed, the witch-doctor examined the detective's bonds, to make sure that they were secure. Then he, too, took his departure, and left Nelson Lee to ponder over his coming fate in solitude and darkness.

A BID FOR FREEDOM.

NO sooner did the detective find himself alone than he set to work to endeavour to loosen the cords by which he was bound. But the natives had done their work too well. For more than an hour he exercised both his ingenuity and his patience, but without the slightest success. Then he abandoned the attempt in despair.

"It's no use!" he groaned. "I may as well resign myself to——"

He paused, for at that moment the sound

OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION

of a stealthy footstep fell on his ear. He held his breath and listened. Was it the witch-doctor coming to have another look at his prisoner? Was it one of the natives drawn to the sacred cave by morbid curiosity? Or was it—could it be—Dargo, who had overcome his superstitious dread, and was coming to release him?

This last thought sent a thrill of exultation through his frame.

"Who's there?" he demanded, in a low, tense whisper.

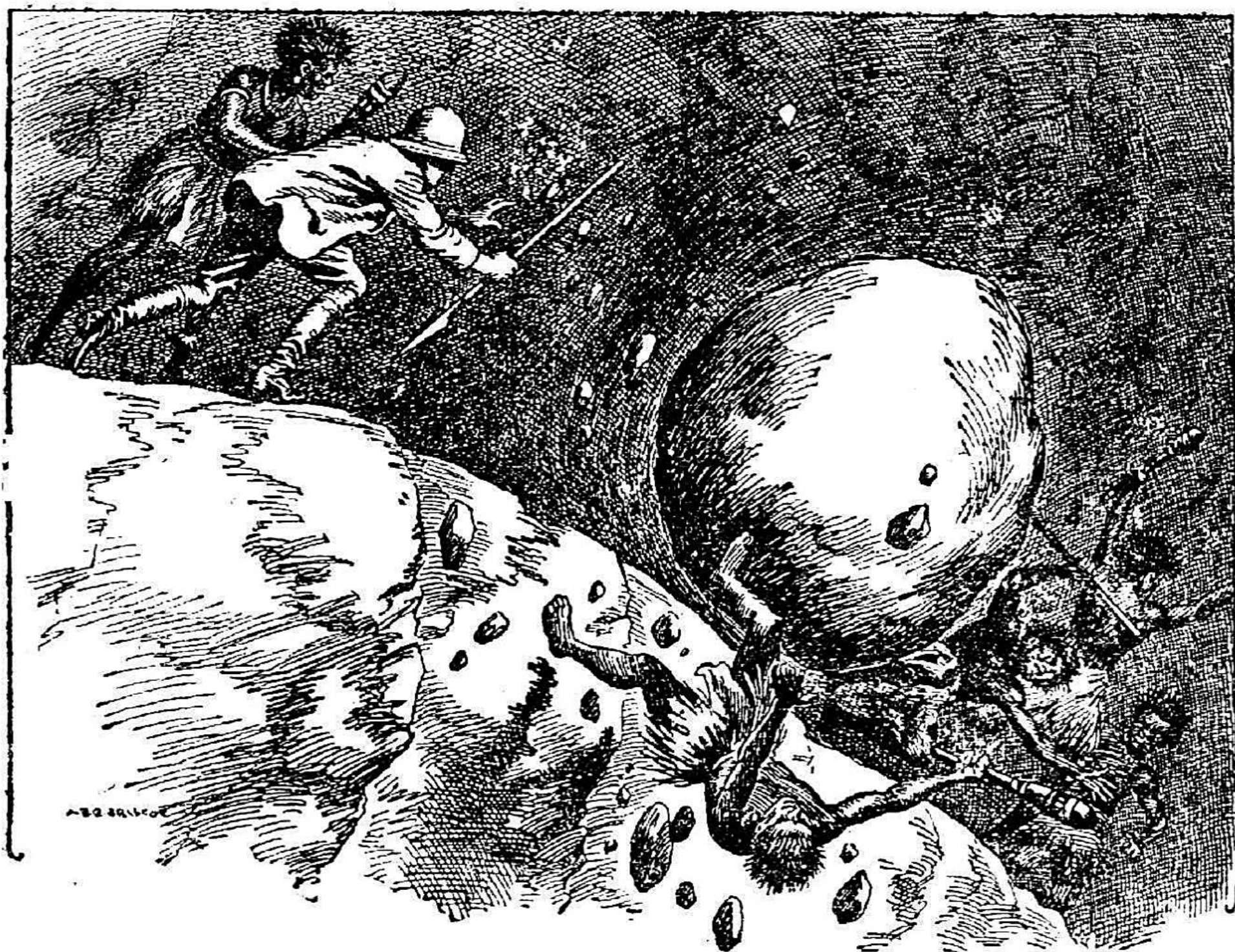
"Me—Dargo!" said a trembling voice at his elbow.

"You have come to set me free?"

"You seem to have a mighty big respect for that precious witchdoctor of yours!" he said. "However, since you're frightened of him finding out that it was you who cheated him of his prey, I'll tell you what I'll do: If you'll help me to escape, I'll take you away with me, and you shall be my servant. Will you come?"

"Me will," said Dargo, bending his head and kissing the detective's pinioned hand.

"Then we'll consider that settled," said Nelson Lee. "Now cut these cords, and we'll discuss our plans for getting away. What has become of the horse that brought me here?"



The scene which ensued baffles description. Like some remorseless Jugger-naut, the boulder bounded down the hill, killing or maiming all who stood in the way. Of the vanguard of the natives, not a single man escaped.

"Yes," said Dargo. "You sabe my life; me gib it back to you."

"Nonsense!" said Nelson Lee, in an encouraging voice. "You're not going to give your life to me or anybody else. Why should you?"

"Witchdoctor kill me when he know me helped you to escape," said Dargo.

"But how's he to know that it was you who helped me to escape?"

"Him find out by his magic," said Dargo simply.

The detective laughed. His spirits were rising by leaps and bounds.

"Me left him standing at de bottom of dis hill," said Dargo, as he set to work to sever the detective's bonds. "Me think you want to ride away when me set you free."

"Quite right," said Nelson Lee approvingly. "You can run as fast as the horse can canter, I suppose?"

"Plenty much more faster!" said Dargo.

"Good!" said the detective. "Then you shall run by my side, and act as my guide; and as soon as we reach Nymagee—What's that?"

A sudden flicker of a light had illuminated the rocky wall at the entrance to the cave.

"Somebody coming up de path wid a torch!" gasped Dargo, commencing to shiver with fright. "It de witch-doctor, for sure! All am lost!"

"Not a bit of it!" said the detective fiercely. "Quick! Cut these remaining cords!"

Dargo slashed at the last of the bonds, and an instant later Nelson Lee was free. Quivering with excitement, he leaped down from the "stone of sacrifice"; but even as he did so, the grotesque figure of the witch-doctor appeared at the mouth of the cave, a blazing torch in his uplifted hand, and his evil face distorted with fury.

Like an arrow from a bow, Lee darted towards him. Quick as thought the witch-doctor hurled the torch into the detective's face. Half blinded by the burning wood, half dazed by the force of the blow, he staggered back, and measured his length on the floor of the cave.

The next instant, before Nelson Lee could scramble to his feet, the witch-doctor was scurrying down the narrow path, blowing his horn at one moment, and yelling to the natives at another that the white man was endeavouring to escape.

Pale with excitement, but in no wise disheartened, the detective picked himself up, and darted from the cave, shouting to Dargo to follow him.

By the time they reached the open air, however, the witch-doctor was more than half-way down the hill; and although they could not see him—for the night was pitchy dark—they could not only hear his yells, and the hooting of his horn, but they could also hear an ominous hum of excited voices, which rapidly swelled into a roar, and which told them only too plainly that the natives had been aroused, and were flocking out of their gunyahs.

As already mentioned, the path which led to the sacred cave had been cut out of the solid rock by the labour of the natives. As a matter of fact, it was simply a narrow, zigzag ledge of rock, abounding in numerous pitfalls, and nowhere more than three feet wide.

If Dargo had been alone, he would doubtless have been able to reach the foot of the hill as soon, or almost as soon, as the witch-doctor, for he knew every inch of the path, and would have found no difficulty in racing down it blindfold.

It was different with Nelson Lee.

In the first place, he had never seen the path in the day-time, and, in the second place, his limbs had been tightly bound for nearly twelve hours, and were consequently stiff and cramped.

So that, in spite of Dargo's frenzied appeals to make haste, the detective was compelled to grope his way down the treacherous path with the utmost care and deliberation, since a single false step—as Dargo had warned him—would be fatal.

Presently a torch burst into flame at the foot of the hill. Others followed suit in quick

succession, and by means of their fitful, flickering light the detective perceived that the lower end of the path was guarded by a surging crowd of natives, all of whom were armed with spears and boomerangs. The witch-doctor was addressing them in a passionate and excited voice, and ever and anon his hearers gave vent to an angry yell, and brandished their spears in a manner that boded ill for Nelson Lee and his companion.

"It's no use going any farther in this direction," said the detective, halting, and signing to Dargo to do the same. "Even if I had my revolver, it would be hopeless to try to force our way through the crowd. As it is, it would be downright madness to attempt such a feat. We must climb to the top of this hill, and try to find some way of getting down the other side."

"But how you going to get to de top ob de hill?" asked Dargo. "Dis am de only path dere is, and it stop at de opening into de cave. Rest ob de hill so steep and straight dat eben a squirrel not able to run up!"

The detective groaned.

"Do you mean to say," he asked, "that there is absolutely no other way of getting down this hill except by this path?"

Again Dargo nodded his head.

"Dere was no way at all till we make dis path," he said. "If dere been anoder way, we not make dis. But see! Dey not going to wait for us no longer! Dey coming up to fetch us!"

It was true. The natives had sighted them, and were advancing up the narrow path in single file, each man holding a torch in one hand, and a spear or a boomerang in the other.

"What you do now?" asked Dargo despondently. "You let dem take you back to de cave and off you up to Buddai, or you fight till dey kill you?"

"I fight!" said Nelson Lee.

"Me, too!" said Dargo simply. "Plenty much better to die fighting dan be offered up to Buddai."

"You think they'll kill you, then, for attempting to assist me to escape?"

"For sure!" said Dargo. "If dey capture us alive, dey offer me up to Buddai same time as you. But me no let dem capture me alive. Me hab spear and waddy. You take spear, and me keep waddy. We wait here till dey come, den we fight dem, side by side, till we die. What say?"

The detective made no reply. He was not listening. He was gazing at a ponderous boulder poised on the edge of the path, and he was wondering whether he and Dargo could manage to set it rolling. He decided they could.

"You told me in the cave," he said, turning to Dargo, "that you had brought my horse to the bottom of the hill. Where did you leave him?"

Dargo pointed to a clump of bushes about thirty yards from the foot of the hill.

"Him behind those bushes," he said.

"Good!" said Nelson Lee. "Now listen to me. You and I are now going to dislodge that lump of rock and send it rolling down the path. In the confusion which will follow, we are going to make a desperate attempt to fight our way through to those bushes. If we succeed, we are both going to mount the horse and gallop away. It's a forlorn hope, I admit, but it's the only chance that's open to us. Are you game to try it?"

Dargo grunted his assent.

"Then lay down your weapons for a moment," said the detective.

Dargo laid down his spear and his waddy. The foremost of the advancing blacks was then but twenty yards below.

"Now, do as I do," said Nelson Lee.

He crouched behind the boulder, and applied his left shoulder to it.

Dargo followed his example.

"Now push for all you're worth!" said Nelson Lee.

Suiting the action to the word, he gave the rocky mass a vigorous, long-sustained push.

Again Dargo followed his example.

For a moment, however, the boulder refused to move; but at last, in response to a herculean thrust, it glided forward an inch or two, came to a standstill, moved again, rocked and swayed from side to side, and then, with a thunderous roar, went rolling down the steep and narrow path.

The scene which ensued baffles description. Like some remorseless Juggernaut, the boulder bounded down the hill, killing or maiming all who stood in its way. Of the vanguard of the natives not a single man escaped.

Those in the rear, being warned of what was coming, sought safety in a hurried stampede at the foot of the hill. Most of them were successful in reaching level ground before the boulder overtook them; but many were overwhelmed and crushed, whilst not a few, in their panic-stricken haste, missed their footing on the narrow ledge, and were dashed to pieces on the rocks below.

The instant the boulder started on its downward career the detective snatched up Dargo's spear, and flew down the path at the top of his speed. Dargo, armed with his waddy, lost no time in following suit.

Guided by the torches of those below, they reached the foot of the hill without mishap, and a moment later they were charging through the ranks of the panic-stricken natives.

So fierce and impetuous was their onslaught, so well did the detective ply his spear, so ably did Dargo wield his waddy, that the natives were completely demoralised, and almost before they had realised what was happening the two men had fought their way to the bushes, where they scrambled on to the horse's back—the detective in front and Dargo behind—and dashed away at a reckless, breakneck gallop!

At sight of the horse—which had hitherto escaped their notice—the natives seemed in-

stantly to recover their presence of mind, and in the twinkling of an eye about half a hundred of them were racing after the fugitives in hot and furious pursuit. For upwards of a mile, however, the latter maintained their lead, and Nelson Lee was just beginning to congratulate himself that their escape was as good as accomplished, when a shower of spears came hurtling through the air, and one of them buried itself in the horse's flank.

With a shrill scream of pain, the horse leaped into the air, so suddenly and unexpectedly that Dargo was unseated and thrown to the ground. Relieved of half its burden, the horse then bolted through the wood with the fleetness of the wind, and before Nelson Lee could pull up Dargo was a couple of hundred yards behind.

An exultant yell burst from the blacks when they witnessed Dargo's fall. He was on his feet again in an instant; but ere he had time to take cover a boomerang caught him a violent blow on the side of the head, and once more felled him to the ground. Nothing daunted, he scrambled to his feet again; but even as he did so his pursuers dashed up with a whoop of triumph and flung themselves upon him.

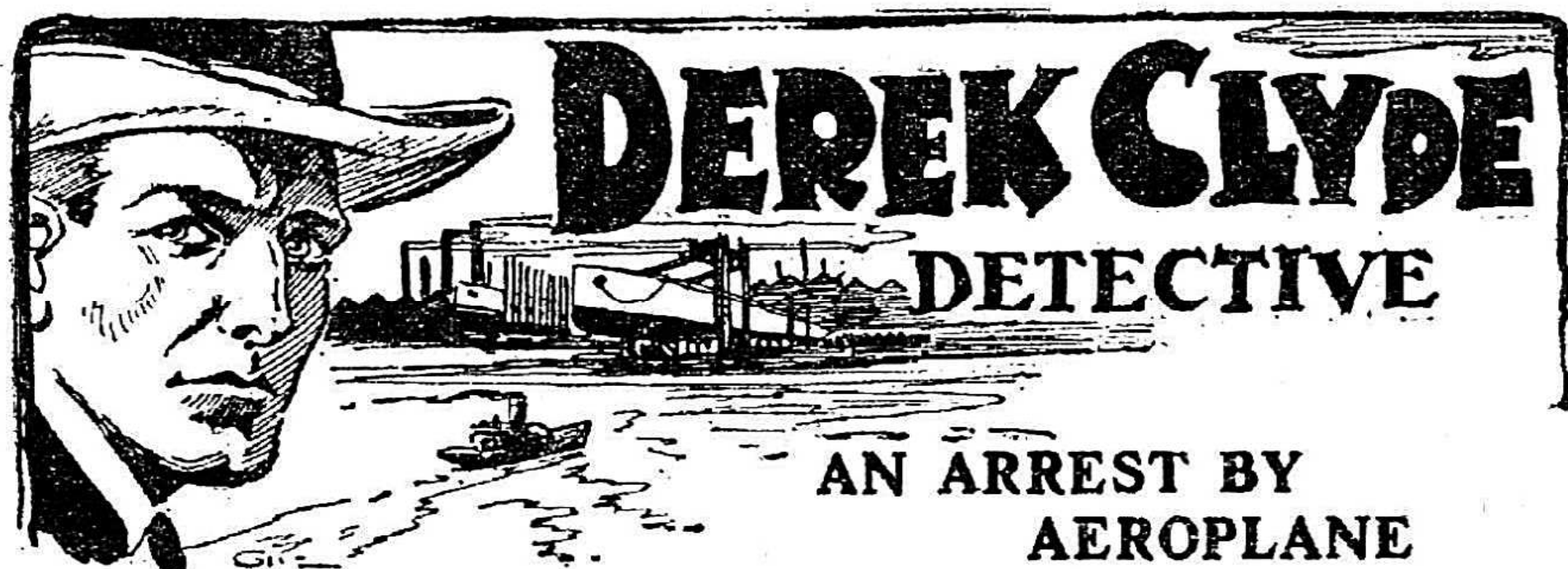
It need scarcely be said that Nelson Lee never thought for a moment of riding on and leaving Dargo to his fate. As soon as he had got his horse under control again, he wheeled him round, and galloped back towards the scene of the disaster.

By that time the natives had overpowered Dargo by the simple process of stunning him with their waddies. When they saw that Nelson Lee was coming back, a few of them fled to the shelter of the trees; but the great majority stood their ground, and greeted the detective with a cloud of javelins. Marvellous to relate, he escaped without a single scratch, and an instant later he burst upon them like a thunder-clap, scattering them to right and left with his spear.

For a moment it seemed as though his daredevil courage would be crowned with success, for the natives promptly took to their heels. But it was only for a moment, and just as the detective sprang to the ground with the object of lifting Dargo on to the horse, the blacks plucked up courage and returned to the attack in overwhelming numbers.

Standing over Dargo's unconscious form, with Dargo's spear as his only weapon, the detective defended himself with such vigour that for fully five minutes he kept his assailants at bay. At the end of that time, however, a sudden rush on the part of his foes—who were bent on taking him alive—swept him off his feet, whilst a moment later a crack on the skull with the blunt end of a javelin robbed him of all consciousness, and stretched him senseless by his dusky comrade's side.

(To be continued)

GRAND NEW COMPLETE TALES OF THE FAMOUS SCOTS DETECTIVE!**AN ARREST BY
AEROPLANE****CHAPTER I.**

DEREK CLYDE and Inspector Murdoch had spent Saturday and Sunday at an old mansion amongst the hills on the west side of Loch Lomond, as the guests of a gentleman who was a friend of the detective. They had left there after dinner on the Sunday evening in Clyde's car, on their return to Glasgow. It was ten o'clock when they passed through the little village of Dalraig, two or three miles to the north-west of Dumbarton, and when they had gone another mile they observed a moving light in a field to the right of them and beyond them.

It drew nearer as they ran on. They saw the figure of a man who was running, and as they pulled up sharply, in response to a shout, a constable with a lantern in his hand climbed over a stile into the road, and peered at the occupants of the car. They recognised him at once. He was a man who had formerly been in the police force in Glasgow, and was now stationed at Dalraig.

"Hallo, Rankin!" said the inspector. "What's wrong?"

"So it's you, Mr. Murdoch!" the constable exclaimed breathlessly. "And Mr. Derek Clyde is with you! It is fortunate that you should have come by. There's been murder done, and a queer one at that, I imagine!"

"A murder, Rankin?"

"Yes, sir, there isn't any doubt of it! Come this way and I'll show you! It isn't far."

Clyde and the inspector stepped from the car, and followed Constable Rankin, who led them for thirty or forty yards across the field to a footpath that ran north and south. On the farther side of the path, within a short distance, was a small, dense spinney.

It was hardly more than a dozen yards in diameter, and when the constable had pushed a little way into it he stopped, and played the glow of the lantern on to the dead body

of a man who was lying in thick grass, beneath the foliage of overhanging trees.

He was a man of slim build and medium height, respectably dressed, with clean-shaven features and fair hair that was dabbled with clotted blood. What had caused his death was obvious. He was lying on his back, and the front of his skull had been shattered by a heavy blow.

"It's murder, right enough," declared the inspector. "What do you know about it, Rankin?"

"Nothing at all, sir," the constable replied. "I had been to Dumbarton, and was on my way home to the village, and was passing here where I heard a loud rustling noise. I came over to see what it meant, and found a sheep that was caught fast in some thorn bushes. I set the animal free, and was about to turn back when I got a glimpse through the thickets of a man's arm sticking from the grass. I had lit my lantern, and on going forward a couple of yards I discovered the body."

"I thoroughly searched the spinney, and looked for footprints. There weren't any, the ground being too hard to show them. Then I heard a car approaching, and hurried to the road to see who was coming."

"Did you find the weapon that was used?" Clyde inquired.

"No, sir, the murderer must have carried it off with him," answered Constable Rankin. "If I may express an opinion, it appears that the blow was dealt with the butt-end of a revolver."

"That is a shrewd surmise. I agree with you. And now what about this man? Don't you know who he is?"

"I do not, sir. He is a stranger to me. I have never set eyes on him before, to the best of my belief."

"He doesn't belong to the neighbourhood, then?"

"No, Mr. Clyde. He may be a Dumbarton man without my knowing him, and very likely he is."

"Did you notice any bloodstains on the path, Rankin, or between it and this spot?"

"No, sir, there are no traces of blood anywhere except here."

Murdoch nodded vaguely, and stood watching Clyde, who was searching the corpse. He went through all the pockets, taking from them a silver watch, a bunch of keys, a few coppers, a pipe and tobacco-pouch, and a pigskin purse in which was some silver and three one-pound notes. He handed the things to the inspector, and then, taking the lantern from Constable Rankin, he closely scrutinised the body, and subjected it to various medical tests with which he was familiar.

"You have made a tardy discovery, Rankin," he said, as he rose to his feet. "The man has been dead for forty-eight hours."

It was a gruesome sight, the corpse lying there in the sickly glow of the lantern. A chill wind was blowing, and moaning in the trees. The inspector shivered slightly.

"We had better make a search in the vicinity ourselves," he said. "We may stumble on some clue."

"No, I believe we can do better than that," Clyde answered. "I have a clue already."

"You have? What is it?"

"There are smudges of green paint on the man's left sleeve. Do you see?"

"Yes, you are right. It may be an important discovery."

"It ought to be, Murdoch. There is a strong likelihood of our learning where —" Clyde paused, and turned to the constable. "Do you know of any dwelling near-by that has been recently painted green?" he asked.

"No, sir, I don't," Constable Rankin replied.

"What houses are there on or near the footpath between here and the village?"

"There is only one, Glen Villa by name. It is half-a-mile distant, between the path and the road. It belongs to a London gentleman, a Mr. Spencer Lucas, who has been coming there every autumn with a man-servant for the last three or four years. He arrived a couple of weeks ago, and he brought a new servant this time, a man who hadn't been with him before. I had a glimpse at him."

"Are you sure he isn't the murdered man, Rankin?"

"Yes, sir, the servant had a heavy moustache."

"What is Mr. Lucas like?"

"He is a middle-aged gentleman, tall and slim, with a brown moustache and a pointed beard."

"When did you last see him?"

"On Thursday of last week, sir. He was in the village post office."

"Didn't you pass the house this evening on your way to Dumbarton?"

"No, Mr. Clyde, I went by the road, and returned by the path. There isn't much difference between the two."

Clyde reflected for a moment. "Come along, Murdoch," he said. "We will see if we can discover anything. You had

better stay with the body, Rankin," he added. "We will be back presently."

CHAPTER II.

LEAVING the spinney, Clyde and the inspector struck along the footpath to the north, and in ten minutes reached the place the constable had spoken of. It was to the left of them, and within a short distance of the path. They could see that it was a dwelling of two storeys, surrounded by trees, and standing in a garden that was enclosed by a hedge.

They approached it from the rear, walking twenty yards over a field, and stopped by a small gate that was set in the hedge. Clyde had his electric torch in his pocket. He played the silvery flare on the gate, and at once Murdoch drew a quick breath.

"Green paint!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, and it was recently put on," said Clyde. "It is dry now, but it wasn't dry on Friday."

"Well, we are on the right track."

"Not a doubt of it, Murdoch. I wonder what we are going to learn?"

They passed through the gate into the garden, and when they had looked up at the back of the house and at the side of it, seeing no glimmer of light anywhere, they went round to the front. They saw no light here either. They knocked repeatedly on the door, and there was no response. All was silent within.

"The gentleman can hardly have gone to bed yet," Clyde murmured. "I rather think he is at home, though."

He took from the inspector the bunch of keys he had found on the murdered man. He tried two of them, and the third fitted the lock.

"By Jove, that's queer!" declared Murdoch.

"It is more than queer," Clyde assented. "It is very ominous that the dead man should have had this key on his bunch."

"It looks as if he was the servant of Mr. Spencer Lucas, in spite of Rankin's assertion to the contrary."

"I shouldn't be surprised if he was."

"And he may have been killed by Mr. Lucas for some mysterious reasons, Clyde."

"I am not so sure of that, Murdoch. I fear it will prove to be the other way round. But, that is only conjecture."

They entered the hall of the dwelling, guided by the glow of the torch. A sense of tragedy was heavy upon them both. They did not speak. What sinister discovery were they going to make? The air felt damp and close to them.

For a short interval they stood listening, straining their ears, shrouded in hushed silence. Then they stepped from the hall into a room on the right, where the inspector scraped a match, and lit the lamp.

OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION

It was a comfortably furnished sitting-room, with many books and pictures. There was nobody here, nor were there any indications of a struggle. All was in order. On a writing-table were pen and ink, and a vase containing some faded flowers. It had two drawers, and when Clyde had looked into them, and observed some blank paper and envelopes, he moved to a door at the rear of the apartment.

It was locked, but he opened it with one of the keys on the bunch. With Murdoch at his heels, he passed into a small smoking-room with furniture upholstered in red leather. He glanced around him, and a human foot caught his eye. Stepping forward to a large couch, he lifted an end of it, and dragged it aside.

And he and the inspector, dumb with horror, stood gazing at the body of a man who was stretched on the floor where the couch had been. He was dead, cold and rigid. He was well-dressed, and he had a brown moustache, and a beard that was cut to a point. His wrists and ankles were tied with cords, and a handkerchief was bound tightly across his mouth.

"By heavens, this must be Mr. Spencer Lucas!" gasped Murdoch.

"Yes, that's who it is, of course," Clyde replied.

"And his servant has murdered him!"

"There can't be much doubt of it, Murdoch."

"And the servant is probably the man the constable found. If so, who murdered him?"

"That is the problem we have to deal with. Can't you suggest any solution of the mystery?"

"I can't, Clyde, and you can't either. Not unless you know more than I do, and I am sure you don't."

Clyde shrugged his shoulders. He had a grip of the double affair. His gift of deduction had flashed a theory to his mind, now that he had discovered the dead body of the gentleman who had lived at Glen Villa. Having lighted a lamp that was on the table, he slipped his torch into his pocket, and examined the corpse of Mr. Lucas as carefully as he had examined the corpse in the spinney. He searched his clothing, and found only a watch and a cigar-case.

"He has been dead for about forty-eight hours," he declared, when he had finished.

"Which fixes the time as Friday night," the inspector replied. "But what killed him. There is no trace of a wound."

"There isn't one. There are dim marks of fingers on his throat, but he wasn't suffocated, else his features would be discoloured. He must have had a weak heart, and he died suddenly from the effects of the shock."

"I daresay you are right," said Murdoch. "There are no signs of a struggle. The poor fellow must have been taken by surprise by his assailant."

"His assailants" Clyde quietly remarked.

"Assailants? You think there were two of them?"

"I am sure there were, Murdoch."

"What has put that into your head?"

"The circumstances of the double tragedy. They point to an obvious conclusion."

The inspector didn't see it. He was bewildered. The table had no drawers, and there was no other furniture in the room except the chairs and the couch. Clyde extinguished the lamp and returned with Murdoch to the front apartment, closing the door behind him. He looked again in the drawers of the writing-table, but all that was there were the blank paper and envelopes.

"What are you looking for?" Murdoch inquired.

"There is a fresh and curious element of mystery in the affair," Clyde answered.

"It is to be presumed that there were letters and papers in these drawers, and that Mr. Lucas had letters and money in his pockets. His assailants have robbed him of everything except his watch and the cigar-case. I wonder why?"

"It is a trifling point, Clyde. But you might search upstairs if you are so keen on finding letters and papers."

"No, I don't think I should find any there. Here is a writing-table with pen and ink on it, and the gentleman would have used it for—"

"Listen! What's that?" the inspector interrupted.

"There is somebody coming!" whispered Clyde. "Who can it be?"

They had left the outer door open, and they could hear footsteps in the hall. Murdoch whipped a revolver from his pocket, and Clyde raised his stick as a shadowy figure appeared. But they had no cause for alarm. The man who entered the room was a rustic labourer shabbily attired, with a ragged beard and moustache of a reddish colour.

"My name is Sandy Melross, and I've come from Constable Rankin," he said, as he pulled off his cap. "He sent me here to tell you what I've told him."

"And what is that?" asked Clyde.

"About the body that is lying in the spinney," was the reply. "The constable called to me as I was passing, and when I had seen the murdered man I recognised him. He is George Blagden, the servant of Mr. Spencer Lucas."

"I understood that the servant had a moustache while the dead man is clean-shaven."

"He must have shaved his moustache off, sir. I knew him in spite of that. I can't be mistaken, for I have seen him close, and I remember how he was dressed."

"How often have you seen him?" Clyde inquired.

"Three or four times last week, sir, as I was going along the footpath yonder," Sandy Melross answered. "I live in the

village and work at Dumbarton, and I walk there and back every day."

"When did you last see this man Blagden?"

"It would be about nine o'clock on Friday night, sir, as I was passing. He was standing at the back-gate in the hedge that opens in to the field. He struck a match to light his pipe, and I had a glimpse of his face. There was another man with him, but I didn't see him distinctly. I don't think either of them saw or heard me."

"Did you happen to hear any conversation between the two?"

"How did you know his name?"

"Through having a drink with him at the public-house at Daleraig last week. I forgot to mention that."

The labourer's statements had thrown a clearer light on the mystery, and Murdoch was prompt to grasp what had eluded him before.

"I must have the address of Spencer Lucas," Clyde muttered, half to himself. "No use looking for it here, as his letters and papers have been carried off. But it should be in one of the London directories, and I daresay I will find



They had left the outer door open, and they could hear footsteps in the hall. Murdoch whipped a revolver from his pocket, and Clyde raised his stick as a shadowy figure appeared.

"Yes, sir, I did. It was George Blagden's companion who was speaking. I stopped to listen to him. 'We can't get up to town before early to-morrow afternoon, Blagden,' he said to him, 'and that would be too late. We'll have to chance it, and wait till Monday morning.' Those were the very words I heard."

"And then you went on to the village?"

"I did, sir. And I didn't give the matter another thought until the constable showed me George Blagden's body in the spinney."

somebody who can give me the information I want. Shall I send a telegram if I get the address in Glasgow? No, it might fail to—" Clyde paused, and glanced at his watch. "Nearly twelve o'clock. I think I can do it, Murdoch. I must be in London by eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

"It's impossible," exclaimed the inspector. "There is no train."

"I'm not going by train, Murdoch."

"Your car can't cover the distance in—"

"I'm not going by car either."

"You're daft man! How can you expect to—?"

Murdoch did not finish the sentence. He was alone with Sandy Melross. Clyde was gone. He hastened from the house, darted out to the road at the front of it, and ran as fast as he could in the direction of the spinney where he had left his car.

CHAPTER III.

AT half past seven o'clock the next morning a Handley-Page flying-machine, came to earth at Hendon on the outskirts of London. It had one passenger, and that was Derek Clyde. He paid the pilot, thanked him, and hurried away.

His destination was a residence in Montague Street, Portman Square.

Here he met James Lucas, brother of the murdered man, and from the former, Clyde obtained the name of the bank where Spencer Lucas had an account.

At ten o'clock on that Monday morning, immediately after the London and Suburban Bank in Cockspur Street was open for business, there walked into the premises a tall, well-dressed man of heavy build, with a black moustache. He took from his pocket a slip of pink paper, and coolly handed it over the counter to the manager. It was a cheque for two thousand pounds, drawn to bearer, and signed Spencer Lucas. The manager scrutinised it, and nodded.

"How will you have the money, sir?" he blandly inquired.

"Just as you like," was the reply. "Partly in large notes, and partly in—"

The man swung round at the sound of stealthy footsteps behind him, and the next instant he was in the grasp of Derek Clyde and Inspector Harkness. He fought like a madman, raving and cursing, and he very nearly succeeded in breaking away from his assailants. But after a frenzied struggle they got the better of him, and locked fetters on his wrists. He was dragged into the manager's private office, and while he sat there in a chair, white with terror, Inspector Harkness searched him. He found in his pockets a loaded revolver, a sum of money, a cheque-book with one cheque missing, and a receipt form for the same book which bore the genuine signature of Mr. Spencer Lucas.

"You know what you are wanted for, of course, apart from the forgery?" Clyde said to the trembling prisoner. "You will be charged with the murder of Mr. Lucas at Glen Villa near Dumbarton, and also with the murder of the latter's servant, George Blagden. We have the right man, Harkness," he added. "Come along. We will get a cab outside."

It was at the Central Police Office in Glasgow a couple of days later that Clyde related to Inspector Murdoch all that had occurred in London.

"The confession that was made by Mark Cleaver corroborated to a consider-

able extent the theories I had formed," he went on, after a pause. "George Blagden was an ex-convict and a friend of Cleaver. By means of false references he got a position with Mr. Spencer Lucas, who was looking for a servant to accompany him to Scotland. Cleaver knew all about it.

"He waited for a short time, travelled north from London, and turned up at Glen Villa on the Friday night, where he had a talk with Blagden in the garden. He proposed that the two should rob Mr. Lucas, who was supposed to have a considerable sum of money on his person, and threatened to denounce Blagden as an ex-convict if he would not agree.

"Blagden was frightened into giving his consent, but he did not take an active part in the murder. He slipped into the room where Mr. Lucas was sitting, and struck him a light blow that rendered him unconscious. The gentleman died immediately after he had been gagged and bound, and Cleaver called Blagden in.

"The scoundrels got less money than they had expected. Having made a search, they found in a drawer of the writing table a cheque-book that had just been sent to Mr. Lucas, and a receipt-form signed by him, and ready to be posted. This gave Cleaver an idea. It put it into his head to forge a cheque for a large amount, and imitate Mr. Lucas' signature.

"He and Blagden concealed the body under the couch in the smoking-room, burnt a number of letters and papers as a safeguard, and departed, locking the door with the key that was in the servant's possession. As they were on their way to Dumbarton Blagden's courage failed him.

"He declared that he was going to part company with his accomplice, and Cleaver, fearing that Blagden might betray him to the police, killed him with a blow from his revolver, dragged him into the spinney, and went on. He knew that he could not reach London the next day in time to accomplish his object, as the banks closed at one o'clock on Saturday. He had to wait until Monday morning, and meanwhile he cleverly forged the cheque that will hang him."

Clyde stopped to light his pipe. "You didn't use your wits," he continued. "Knowing what you did know of the affair, you might have guessed that the words spoken to Blagden by Cleaver, and overheard by the man Melross, referred to a forged cheque that was to be presented at Mr. Spencer Lucas' bank in London on the Monday. That occurred to me in view of the facts that Mr. Lucas had presumably had a cheque-book, and that it had disappeared, and my deductions led to the arrest of the murderer. My methods are really quite simple, Murdoch, as you have learned from this case, and from previous cases as well."

(Another Clyde Story Next Week!)

(Continued from page 14)

staff had not been instituting a general clear out.

Besides, the very idea was absurd, when De Valerie came to think of it. The term had only just commenced, and everything had been spick and span, and scrupulously clean. And then some more juniors appeared, and in less than three minutes the Remove passage was a shouting mass of fellows.

"It's the Monks!" declared Reggie Pitt shrewdly. "I'll bet you anything you like those rotters came here during the night!"

"My goodness, yes!"

"The Monks!"

"They've done this!"

"Cads—beasts!"

I fought my way through the crowd.

"What's the idea of this?" I demanded.

"Stop this din, you asses! You'll have a crowd of prefects down on us in two minutes! Can't you be a little less noisy? What's all the trouble?"

It didn't take me long to find out what the trouble was. I had just come in from the Triangle, having gone straight out for a breath of fresh air with Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West.

I was very grave as soon as I had seen the empty studies.

"Yes, of course, the Monks!" I agreed quietly. "No question about that. I suppose Buster Boots thought that it was a good trick to come and steal this furniture. In a way, it was a pretty smart dodge, and if the feud doesn't get any more vindictive, it won't matter much. But I've got an idea that there's more behind it."

"Perhaps they've made a bonfire of the stuff?" suggested Watson.

"Even Boots wouldn't go to that length!" I replied. "It would be absolutely criminal to destroy hundreds of pounds worth of furniture like that! We shall have to find out what's become of the stuff, and get it back!"

"Yes, and smash those Monks, too!"

"That's a part of the programme!" I declared grimly.

"Hurrah!"

"Down with the Monks!"

Indignation ran high in the Remove. Archie Glenthorne and De Valerie and the others were in a tremendous state of anger. To have all their furniture stolen like that was awful. They didn't mind the expense so much—they had plenty of money to get some more in.

It was the inconvenience, to say nothing of the humiliation. That was the worst feature of the whole affair. The Monks had gained a complete victory.

And, naturally, the Fossils turned on me.

They demanded instant retaliation. The only thing was to pay back the Monks in their own coin. I pointed out that it was quite impossible to do anything on the spot, but the fellows could rely on me to get busy at once.

I hurried to Study C, and Reggie Pitt, De Valerie and a few others came with me. We were going to discuss affairs at once, and decide upon a definite course of action.

I walked into Study C briskly.

"Great Scott!" I gasped.

I stood there, staring. Something had happened in Study C, too, but it wasn't anything like the disaster that had taken place in the other studies. All the furniture remained.

But it was wrecked.

"The destructive cads!" I shouted hotly. "Good heavens! Look at this! It's getting beyond all reason!"

The other juniors crowded in, too startled to say much.

Study C had not been a model of luxury, although the simple furniture shared by Watson, Tregellis-West and myself had been very dear to us. We had always taken a pride in our own little den.

But now it was nothing more nor less than a pile of wreckage.

The table, the chairs, bookcase, and everything else had been smashed to atoms. The furniture was lying in one great heap in the centre of the floor. Everything was chopped up ruthlessly, and quite beyond repair.

The carpet lay in shreds. The pictures were torn to pieces. In the fireplace lay a pile of smashed crockery. Spoons and forks were bent and twisted up. In one corner was a pile of books, books that we had particularly prized. They were covered with tar and soot and ashes.

The destruction, in fact, was utter and complete.

And there, on the wall, hung a placard.

THE WRECKED STUDY!

Wrecked by the "MONKS."

We stared at it in a kind of daze.

"This stuff is no good to us, so we've been good enough to leave it behind. The goods from the other studies are now adorning our own headquarters. Thanks. Much obliged!"

There was no signature, for this would have been too risky, but we knew on the instant that John Busterfield Boots had put this sign up. Some of the fellows were inclined to rage wildly.

But I was cool and cold.

I was filled with intense anger. I had never believed that the Monks could do such a wicked, dastardly act as this. It was beyond all reason, beyond every limit of decency.

The feud at St. Frank's was becoming positively dangerous. And it was absolutely necessary for the Fossils to put their foot down—hard.

And I had all sorts of ideas, and meant to put them into operation.

CHAPTER VI.

WORSE AND WORSE.



"WELL, Nipper, what's going to be done?" asked Pitt quietly.

"I don't know—yet," I replied. "We can't take any steps that will be equivalent to this. If the Monks have done a villainous act, we mustn't copy them. Our scheme is to punish the rotters in a fitting manner."

"That's all very well," put in De Valerie. "But unless we show them that we're more powerful than they are, well, they'll simply go from bad to worse. We've got to do something drastic."

I nodded slowly.

We had gathered together in Study E, and were talking quietly. The Remove had gone off into the common room, and into the Triangle, to discuss the exciting events of the morning. It had been with great difficulty that I had quelled the fellows.

They were fuming with rage, but I pointed out that it would be the worst possible thing to show any signs of excitement or anger. The Monks would only take it as a sign of weakness. It would be far better to show a front of complete indifference.

Some of the juniors agreed to do their best, but it was very difficult. And, naturally, there could be no question of sneaking. Bad as the case was, we should have to keep the whole thing to ourselves.

I had locked the door of Study C, so that nobody could enter, and the blind was pulled down. During the evening we would smuggle out the broken stuff, and replace the borrowed articles. Archie and De Valerie and the others were already being accommodated in other studies, until they could get their own rooms shipshape again.

"If a word of this got to the Head's ears there would be a fearful inquiry," I pointed out. "And if Buster was proved to be the culprit, it would mean the sack for him. Up till now I've had a bit of respect for the fellow, I have regarded him as a good leader, and a smart chap. But this affair has shown him up in another light. He's a cad and a hooligan!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We're going to——"

The door suddenly burst open, and Handforth hurled himself in.

"Look at this!" roared Handforth, holding a bundle of rags in front of my face. "My new overcoat!"

"What?" I exclaimed. "But—but——"

"Torn to shreds!" said Handforth furiously. "Cut to ribbons! And it was brand new this term!"

He held up the overcoat for our inspection, and we looked at it seriously. There was no question about the overcoat being ruined. It was a smart tweed affair in

which Handforth had taken much pride.

And it was literally ripped to shreds.

No tailor on earth would be able to repair it. An overcoat yesterday, to-day it was a mere bunch of rags. And Handforth was purple with rage.

"What are you going to do about it?" he demanded fiercely.

"Wait a minute——"

"You're always waiting!" roared Handforth. "I can't sneak to the Head; but I'm going straight over to the College House, and I'm going to smash those cads——"

"Handy, old man!" I said sharply, grasping his arm. "It's no good going on like that! You can't do it!"

"Can't do it!"

"No—no! Think a minute, and, you'll realise I'm right," I went on. "You'll only get yourself into further trouble, and make the position worse. You can trust me to do something drastic."

Handforth cooled down a bit.

"Perhaps you're right!" he growled, breathing hard. "You're a good chap, Nipper; but it won't do to have any delays. All the fellows are getting fed up to the neck, I can tell you that straight."

I nodded.

"Well, they won't have to wait very long," I said grimly. "By the way, where did you find this overcoat?"

"In the cloakroom, of course."

"Did you examine any other coats?"

"No."

"Then we'd better go along and have a look," I said. "It's quite likely that some others have been treated in the same way. Come on, you chaps, we might as well know the worst at once. Those cads must have been pretty busy last night."

We hurried away to the cloak-room, and it was not long before we discovered the fact that four other overcoats had been treated in precisely the same manner. Reggie Pitt's, De Valerie's, mine and Tregellis-West's.

"The demons!" I said fiercely. "There's no excuse for this. It's sheer, villainous destruction! There's nothing sporting about this—nothing that can be condoned. The great pity is that we can't retaliate in the same way. If the Monks do ruffianly things, we're not going to soil our hands in the same way."

"That's all very well——"

"Two wrongs don't make a right," I said curtly. "If you fellows want me to adopt these same methods—well, you'd better get a new leader. I won't do it! I shall confine myself to affairs of a strictly personal character."

"What do you mean?" asked Handforth.

"We'll deal with the chaps themselves, not with their furniture or their clothing," I replied. "It's sheer villainy to destroy property. We will leave that kind of filthy trick to them."

The others realised that I was right,

although it was only in human nature that they should want to pay the Monks back in their own coin. But there were some things that could not be done—at least, they couldn't be done, allowing us to keep our self-respect at the same time.

Outside in the lobby, I came upon Fullwood.

"You seem to be fairly amused over something!" I said curtly.

"Amused?" repeated Fullwood. "I was just wonderin' what you fellows are goin' to do for furniture. An' I daresay you'll be rather cold when you go out these cool evenin's!"

I seized Fullwood by the coat collar, and shook him.

"You infernal cad," I snapped.

"Look here——"

"What do you know about this business?" I demanded. "Answer me—quick! It'll only take me two seconds to knock you down!"

Fullwood staggered back, startled.

"What's the idea of questionin' me?" he asked huskily. "How should I know anythin' about the affair? The Monks did it! You know the Monks did it!"

"Yes, I know that," I replied. "But you were out last night—you sneaked in with Gulliver and Bell at about half-past-twelve. Did you take any hand in this filthy business?"

"Don't be a fool?" snarled Fullwood. "We didn't know anythin' about it. We didn't even see the Monks! They must have come long after we got in. We'd been to Bannin'ton, an' I can prove it. If you think I'm tellin' lies, you can go straight to the telephone, an' make inquiries."

"And hear more lies?" I asked. "All right, my son. I'll let you go now. But unless you can be a true Fossil, you'll soon be kicked out of this House."

"Thanks," sneered Fullwood. "I'm not keen on stayin'!"

He walked away as quickly as possible, and the bell for prayers rang. We all had to go into Big Hall. Breakfast followed, and by the time morning lessons commenced the fellows were not feeling quite so bad.

They had got over their initial rage.

And it was only a minority that was affected. The fellows who had not been interfered with were angry enough, but it was not possible for them to be as incensed as Archie and De Valerie and the others.

The day passed fairly quietly.

There were no scraps out in the Triangle. For the Monks and the Fossils were taking good care to keep within their own bounds. There was a kind of invisible line across the Triangle, and it was recognised as unsafe for any fellows to go beyond that line.

Of course, when the gymnasium had to be visited, the juniors would go in clumps of four and five. And it was not likely that any serious scraps would start out in the open.

For that would mean a terrific din, and prefects and masters would soon be on the spot. So the day passed without any special excitement. But the feud was still as keen as ever, and had grown in bitterness every hour.

John Busterfield Boots was just the same as ever. He showed no signs of victory—but merely walked about with a calm, cool air. In the Form-room Mr. Crowell had noticed something in the air. But the Form master was too tactful to make any remarks.

Many of the Monks were openly gloating, but not so John Busterfield Boots. The leader took it all as a matter of course.

And that evening I planned out a most elaborate attack, an affair which would mean a complete victory for the Fossils. The scheme was discussed by us all, and generally approved.

I won't go into any horrible details.

It failed.

The thing was put into execution exactly as we had planned. Every precaution against a hitch had been taken, and we couldn't see how any possible trouble could arise.

But it did arise, and the raiders came back bruised, battered, and badly treated. I was one of them. And I knew well enough that the Monks, somehow or other, had obtained information. John Busterfield Boots' scouts were much cleverer than I had given them credit for being.

Anyhow, the fact remained that we had failed.

The fellows didn't blame me. They had approved my scheme, and had declared it to be one of the best I had ever thought out. The fact that it had gone wrong was a sheer misfortune, and the Fossils were not unreasonable enough to turn on me because of defeat.

But, all the same, it was bad.

And we realised that we should have to look to our laurels. And that evening two more Ancient House chaps were mysteriously captured and spirited away. They were left hanging to a bough of one of the old elm trees—bound, gagged, and head downwards.

And Buster Boots sent a stone crashing through one of the study windows. A piece of paper was attached to it, telling us where to find the missing pair. They were cut down nearly senseless after their ordeal.

Undoubtedly, things were going from bad to worse!

CHAPTER VII.

TRAITORS IN THE RANKS!



THREE days elapsed.

They were three days of torture for the juniors in the Ancient House.

Never in the experience of all the fellows had they passed through such a trying time. It didn't matter what we did—it didn't

matter what japes we planned—everything seemed to go wrong.

And the Fossils were getting fed up.

The Monks, on the other hand, had become more daring than ever. They cackled openly at every opportunity—they jeered at the Fossils, goaded them, and were already proclaiming that the College House was at the top.

The feeling of hatred between the two Houses had grown apace. There was now not the tiniest feeling of humanity. The Fossils hated the Monks worse than poison. And the Monks hated the Fossils. Any of the fellows were ready enough to fight at the smallest provocation.

The feud was becoming a dangerous thing.

But the most alarming feature of all was that our plans should go wrong. In every case they failed. During those three days we worked out scheme after scheme—some simple, some elaborate.

We took every precaution against the Monks getting warned.

But all our efforts seemed to be in vain.

Buster and Co. had anticipated every move that we made. And they were always ready. It was always the Ancient House that suffered. So it was small wonder that the Monks were beginning to crow.

The Ancient House was fed up.

The juniors were beginning to talk of throwing me out of the captaincy—but these were only the unreasonable fellows. Goodness knows I'd done my best. The majority of the Fossils were sensible enough to realise this.

They could see that I had been working my hardest, and that I had been planning scheme after scheme with much cunning and skill. I had a committee consisting of Pitt, De Valerie, Handforth and Singleton. Together, we plotted deeply. And every scheme was submitted to the Remove before we put it into execution.

But they failed every time.

On the last two occasions we, the committee, had made our plans without taking the other fellows into our confidence. But the result was just the same. In some mysterious manner Buster Boots knew what was coming.

"It's getting too serious for words," declared Reggie Pitt, that evening, as we collected together in Study C. "It's no good going on like this, Nipper. You've got to do something drastic."

"We've said that about twenty times!" exclaimed Handforth gruffly.

"I know," I replied. "But this time I've got a scheme that will pan out well, I believe. Anyhow, I'm going to put it to you chaps now. It may not strike you as being very harsh, but it'll be the beginning."

They looked at me doubtfully. Study C was a bit like itself now—furnished with borrowed stuff, a piece from one study, and a piece from another.

"What's the wheeze?" asked Pitt.

"Well, in the first place, Mr. Crowell will go to Study Q in the College House, and he'll order the Supreme Six to collect in the gymnasium," I replied.

"Mr. Crowell will?"

"Yes."

"How the dickens do you know?"

"Well, I happen to know—that's all," I said. "Mr. Crowell will get these rotters in the gym, and we shall be hiding there in readiness. The doors will be closed, and then we'll fall upon the cads—"

"Hold on!" growled Handforth. "It's all rot! How can you be certain that Mr. Crowell will go and order these Monks into the gym?"

"Because I shall be Mr. Crowell," I replied calmly.

"What!"

"Quite a simple disguise," I continued. The juniors stared at me blankly.

"But—but it's impossible!" they exclaimed.

"I've done it before—and I can do it again," I said. "Mr. Crowell isn't a very big man, and his face was made for the very purpose. Don't forget that the gov'nor has taught me a great deal about the art of make up. And if I can't turn myself into a second Mr. Crowell, it'll be a pity."

They began to take to the idea.

"Of course, it's jolly good, when you come to think of it," said De Valerie.

"These Monks daren't touch Mr. Crowell—and they'll be compelled to obey his orders. But what's going to happen if you are spotted over in the College House? It'll be horribly risky!"

"I'll take a chance on that," I replied. "Just at present Mr. Crowell is wearing some of those horn rimmed glasses—you know how the chaps have been chipping him about 'em. Well, they help considerably in a disguise. And I can mimic old Crowell's voice to perfection. Listen to this!"

And I proceeded to give an imitation.

"Great!" chuckled Reggie Pitt. "Crowell to the life!"

"Absolutely!" agreed De Valerie. "But look here—supposing everything goes all right, and these six Monks are lured into the gym. What then?"

"There'll be twenty Fossils in there—waiting," I said.

"And simply give the Monks a good hiding?"

"I reckon to be a little more severe than that," I replied. "I'm open to any suggestions, but I thought it wouldn't be a bad stunt to strip Buster and Co. completely, paint them all over, and dress them up in rushes, like South Sea Islanders. Then we'll rope them together, and send them back home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Great!"

"And the paint, mind you, will be a very

particular brand," I continued. "It'll take Buster and Co. about a week to get rid of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But there'll be an awful row!" said Handforth. "If these chaps are painted black there'll be all sorts of inquiries by the masters—"

"Exactly," I agreed. "But I think I know Buster and his pals by this time. They're rotters, but they're not sneaks. They'll never tell what happened—and they'll invent some story of their own to explain their condition. But think of the humiliation! Being compelled to go about like niggers for a week!"

"Fine!" said Pitt. "We don't need to think of anything else."

The plan was discussed in full details, and certain fellows were told off to deal with definite plans. There would be no hitch in this case. I was going to disguise myself in absolute secret, and other juniors were to watch Mr. Crowell closely—so that his movements would be known.

While I was on the job, for example, a certain number of chaps would be ready to detain the Form master if he took it into his head to take a stroll. We didn't leave a stone unturned.

And while we were in Study C, discussing all this, Ralph Leslie Fullwood was elsewhere.

To be exact, he was in the cellar. He was immediately beneath the floor of Study C, with a kind of metal cup to his ear. It was an improvised telephone—a primitive affair which had been easily fixed up. And it communicated with the ventilator which opened into Study C.

Fullwood had heard every word of the conversation.

He knew exactly what had taken place, and had every detail of the plan in his own head. And as soon as the meeting broke up, Ralph Leslie slipped out of the cellar, and came strolling down the passage from the rear quarters.

It was impossible for anybody to suspect that he had been eavesdropping.

This new scheme had been necessary of late—for Fullwood was discovering that we were no longer planning our raids in the common room, where any of the Fossils could congregate.

Fullwood had risen to the occasion—but only because he had been given the tip by John Busterfield Boots.

That amateur telephone had been fixed, and at the first sign of any committee meeting, either Fullwood or Gulliver or Bell hastened down to listen-in. It was in this way that all our plans had gone wrong.

With traitors in the ranks it was hardly surprising that we could meet with no success.

The part that Fullwood was playing was the most contemptible imaginable. He and his chums were spies—traitors to their



In the vicinity of the monastery ruins the three prisoners were inspected. They were Fullwood, Gulliver, and Bell!

own House. Perhaps my faith in human nature was too strong—but I had always believed that even Fullwood and Co. would never descend to such vile behaviour.

But just recently I had begun to suspect. And that's why our committee meetings were being held in secret, in the privacy of Study C. At least, we had believed that privacy was there.

Long before the plan was ready to be put into execution, Ralph Leslie Fullwood was talking to Buster Boots.

The leader of the Nuts had strolled out casually, making his way towards the gates, as though he intended going out. Gulliver and Bell were with him, so no suspicions were aroused. It was always considered fairly safe for three fellows to move about.

For soon after getting out into the road, Fullwood and Co. executed a curious move. They climbed over the wall near the monastery ruins, and edged their way into the shrubbery. Here they waited until complete darkness descended.

Then Fullwood calmly walked forward—confident that if his figure was seen in the gloom it would not be recognised. He mingled with a crowd of Monks at once—and they took him into their midst. In this way he was swiftly smuggled into the College House, and straight to Buster Boot's study.

Fullwood was now recognised by the Monks as a valuable ally.

The times that he had given the warning—the success with which he had conducted his campaign—had firmly planted him in the confidence of the enemy.

Fullwood and Co. were now recognised as friends and allies.

And Fullwood was delighted by the way in which he was treated. Monks always made him extremely welcome in the College House.

Fullwood entered Study Q, and lounged in. "Just a little item of news," he said calmly.

"Good!" said Buster Boots. "Sit down, Fully, and let's hear it."

Fullwood sat down, and lit a cigarette.

"Of course, all this business is pretty risky," he said. "I hope you realise that I'm doin' you chaps a good turn—"

"Yes, we know all about that, thanks," said Buster. "We'll discuss the matter afterwards. What's the next move of Nipper's?"

Fullwood explained all that he had heard.

And the Supreme Six listened eagerly. They were all there, and their faces became suffused with grins as they heard the story unfolded. Fullwood finished at length and grinned, too.

"Well, don't you think that's pretty neat?" he asked.

"My son, it's fine!" said Buster enthusiastically. "So Nipper is coming here, disguised as the excellent Mr. Crowell! Good! We shall know how to deal with him!"

"And we'll make an example of the rotter, eh?" asked Bray.

"We will," replied Boots grimly.

Considering how our plans were all being carried to the enemy, it was small wonder that they never succeeded!

CHAPTER VIII.

NOT ACCORDING TO PROGRAMME!



MR. CROWELL entered Study E, in the Remove passage, and looked round severely.

"Do you know where Pitt is, Tucker?" he asked sharply.

Timothy Tucker blinked up at the Form Master.

"Really, my dear sir, I must confess that I do not!" he replied. "I trust that the young gentleman has not been getting into mischief?"

"It is not for you, Tucker, to ask me questions," said Mr. Crowell tartly.

"Quite so, my dear sir—quite so!" said Tucker. "I merely wondered—"

"It appears, Tucker, that wondering is your normal state of mind!" snapped Mr. Crowell. "And how dare you appear publicly in that absurd tie?"

"Dear, dear, dear!" said Tucker. "Really, sir? It appears that you are not very enthusiastic about the tie!"

He rose to his feet, and gazed at himself in the mirror.

"Not so bad—not so bad!" he said critically. "You've got to realise, my dear sir, that this tie is one of the knitted variety. The point is this—a tie like this enhances the natural beauty—"

"That will be enough, Tucker!" said Mr. Crowell. "Write me two hundred lines!"

And Mr. Crowell stalked out of the room leaving Tucker blinking mildly through his big spectacles.

Mr. Crowell went next door, and burst upon Handforth and Co. It was rather an unfortunate moment for his arrival. For Handforth was in the act of pressing Church's head into the coalbox, and Church was uttering weird sounds as though he were in the act of choking.

A cloud of black dust was obscuring that section of the room.

"Now!" said Handforth curtly. "See it!"

"Gug-gug-gugg!" said Church incoherently.

"See that coalbox?" roared Handforth. "It's empty! And these nights are getting chilly! I've told you before—"

"Handforth!" shouted Mr. Crowell angrily.

Handforth gave a great gulp, and released Church so suddenly that the unfortunate junior dived head first into the coalbox, and finally sat up looking more

like a nigger than a respectable St. Frank's schoolboy.

"Spe-speaking to me, sir?" asked Handforth faintly.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Crowell. "Boy! What have you been doing to Church?"

"Nun-nothing, sir," said Handforth.

"It seems to me that you have half slaughtered the poor chap!" said Mr. Crowell tartly. "For two pins, Handforth, I'll biff you in the jaw!"

Handforth started back, his eyes bulging.

"Ye-yes, sir!" he said feebly.

"You dotty ass!" went on Mr. Crowell, changing his voice. "What's the idea of using Church like that? I only came here as a test, and it seems that the make-up is pretty good. You didn't even suspect—although you knew that I was going to do this dodge!"

Church and McClure gasped, and Handforth turned red.

"Oh, so it's you!" he said, trying to hide his confusion. "You ass! Do you think I didn't know you? You don't look a bit like old Crowell—I knew it was you all the time!"

I grinned—for I, of course, was the substitute Mr. Crowell.

"My hat!" said Church. "It's a masterpiece, Nipper! I—I don't feel comfortable talking to you! Even in this bright light you look like Crowell to the life!"

"Then it's all right?" I asked.

"Fine!" they declared, in unison.

I set my face properly again, and strode out into the passage with Mr. Crowell's well-known step. I passed a couple of Fifth Formers, and they didn't suspect a thing. They politely raised their caps and bade me good evening.

Everything, in fact, was ready for the big move against the Monks.

I went into Study C, and reported to Pitt and Grey that everything was ready. The genuine Mr. Crowell, of course, was safely out of the way—at least, we knew exactly where he was, and what he was doing. There would be no fear of any confusion arising.

Five minutes later I was out in the gloomy Triangle.

The rest of the fellows were already preparing to go across to the gymnasium. I strode across the Triangle with perfect confidence, and paused to speak to several Monks who were standing near the College House Steps.

They were on guard, of course.

These Monks were scouts—on the lookout for any move from the Ancient House.

They did not suspect this imitation Mr. Crowell at all. In the dimness of the Triangle it was utterly impossible for them to see through the fake.

And my disguise, too, was as perfect as it could possibly be. I had spent nearly two hours over it, and had satisfied myself that nothing had been left undone. I had

practised Mr. Crowell's walk, his mannerisms, and his voice.

Out in the Triangle I talked to the Monks. And I had to admit to myself that they looked at me rather curiously—rather suspiciously. I was surprised at this, for I could not see how they suspected anything.

But it was impossible for them to touch me there—even if they had known the truth. For it was altogether too public. Seniors were moving about constantly, crossing from one House to another. It was still fairly early in the evening.

After this preliminary canter, I walked back towards the Ancient House. Here Mr. Crowell paused to speak to Pitt and Grey, who were lounging near the Ancient steps.

"All serene?" asked Pitt.

"Yes," replied Mr. Crowell. "Everything's O.K., my son."

And Mr. Crowell walked off.

Five minutes later he was back across the Triangle, striding into the College House with his usual springy step. A few Monks were watching, and they at once sent a scout indoors.

"The ass!" breathed Clapson. "As if he thinks he can deceive us like that! Anybody can see it's not Crowell!"

Fullwood's warning was being well heeded.

And by the time Mr. Crowell entered the College House, everything was ready for him. Totally unconscious of the fate in store, he went straight to Study Q, and tapped upon the door.

"Come in!" sang out the voice of John Busterfield Boots.

Mr. Crowell entered.

"I want to know the meaning of this—" he began.

"Sorry, old man, but it's a bit too thick!" grinned Buster Boots, as two juniors deftly closed the door.

Mr. Crowell started back, astonished.

"Are you addressing me, Boots?" he asked sharply.

"Oh, come off it!" said Buster curtly. "This time, my son, we've got you—and we're going to make an example. Your petty little tricks are too jolly silly. And we're going to teach you once and for all that you can't show us anything in the way of japes!"

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Crowell. "How dare you?"

"Grab him!" ordered Buster sharply.

Before Mr. Crowell could make any effort at resistance, he was seized. It would have been a big shock for the Monks if they had known that they were laying hands upon the real, genuine Mr. Crowell!

But this was the case.

The master of the Remove had gone into the College a few minutes after I had vanished into the gloom—after making my preliminary sally into the enemy's country.

And the Monks, being warned, had taken it absolutely for granted that the second Mr. Crowell was the same as the first Mr.

Crowell. In short, they mistook him for me!

And things looked like developing in an interesting way.

Mr. Crowell was utterly staggered. For any boys to lay hands upon him was a terrible offence. And here he was being roughly handled as though he was merely a junior himself!

"Good gracious!" gasped the Form master. "How—how dare you? Release me at once, you wretched boys! I shall punish you with the utmost severity for this outrageous conduct!"

"Does it well, doesn't he?" grinned Bray. "It won't do, you ass! We know your little game!"

"My—my little game!" panted Mr. Crowell. "Release me——"

But, instead of being released, the Monks fell upon him in full force—for the Supreme Six were all in that study, in addition to Clapson and Freeman and two or three others.

Mr. Crowell was whirled to the floor.

Ropes were on hand, and the unfortunate Form master was bound up, and a thick muffler was tied round his head. It was utterly impossible for him to make any outcry, and his struggles against the Monks were of no avail.

As soon as he was bound up, Buster Boots opened the door.

"All clear?" he asked.

"Yes!" said Yorke, who was outside.

"Good!"

Boots returned to the study, knowing that the passages were well guarded, and that it would be easy to smuggle Mr. Crowell out by means of the rear door. A moment later the Form master was being whirled down the passage, round the corner, and in another minute he was outside.

It had been done so quickly that nobody had seen. Even if some seniors had been near by they would never have suspected—they would simply have concluded that the juniors were up to one of their usual larks. It was by no means uncommon to see eight or nine fellows whizzing down a passage in a clump.

Outside the rear door all was darkness.

Here everything was quiet, too. And it was merely the work of a few minutes to take Mr. Crowell over to a stable—one attached to the College House that was now in a state of disuse.

Inside, other preparations had been made.

Two candles were burning, the window had been carefully shaded, and various articles were ready to be used. Mr. Crowell was propped against the wall, and bound to a post.

"Now, you cad, you're going to get it in the neck!" said Buster. "You thought you could beat us, didn't you? Well, we've decided to make an example of you, and to smother you in tar and feathers!"

Mr. Crowell gurgled behind his gag.

Close by stood a pail half full of tar—and

near it a bag containing numbers of feathers. Buster picked the tar brush out of the pail, and held it ready. He was doing everything quite calmly and in a matter-of-fact way.

"Shall we strip him or not?" asked Clapson.

"No—it'll be just as effective without stripping," replied Buster Boots. "You chaps had better stand out of the way——"

"Cave!" hissed Freeman, putting a white face in the door.

"Eh?"

"Fossils!" shouted Freeman.

Boots started, but did not lose his calmness. But before he could give any orders, the door was hurled open, and a huge crowd of Ancient House fellows swarmed in. I was in the lead.

"What are you doing to Mr. Crowell?" I shouted angrily.

"It's—it's Nipper!" gasped Clapson, staggering back.

John Busterfield Boots gazed at me and turned slightly pale. For the first time I saw him start—for the first time he was taken out of his usual serene coolness.

"Nipper!" he echoed. "Then—then who——"

"All right, Mr. Crowell—we'll rescue you!" exclaimed Reggie Pitt briskly.

The Ancient House fellows were not making any attempt to fight the Monks. Instead, they had knives ready, and they slashed through Mr. Crowell's bonds. And the Form master was soon free.

"Thank you, boys—thank you!" he said breathlessly. "Good heavens! I've never been so outrageously treated in all my life! These—these young hooligans were actually preparing to smother me in tar and feathers!"

"Quite a misunderstanding, sir," said Buster Boots quickly. "We thought——"

"Enough!" snapped Mr. Crowell.

"But—but we mistook you for somebody else——"

"How dare you?" thundered the Form master. "Boots! You are the ringleader in this act of hooliganism, and if you are not expelled from the school you will be lucky! And you have the audacity to stand there and say that you mistook me for somebody else! You wretched boy!"

Mr. Crowell was fairly boiling with rage, and he looked round sharply.

"I know you all!" he said curtly. "Every boy who took part in this affair belongs to the College House——"

He strung out the names of all the culprits.

"You'll form into line, and follow me at once into Dr. Stafford's study," he ordered. "Any boy who attempts to escape will be in danger of instant expulsion."

The Monks were startled and staggered.

"As for you other boys," said Mr. Crowell, turning to the Fossils. "I owe you a big debt of gratitude. Thank you, boys, for saving me from an outrage that might have led to serious consequences."

"We had an idea that you were in trouble,

sir, and came to your assistance," I said politely. "We rescued you, sir, and we should like you to recognise our services in a certain way."

Mr. Crowell looked surprised.

"I do not quite understand, Nipper," he said. "Please explain."

"Well, sir, these fellows thought that you were one of our crowd dressed up," I said calmly. "They didn't mean to tar and feather you, sir—it was a misunderstanding, as Boots tried to explain."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Crowell.

"Yes, sir, and we'd like you to deal with the matter personally, sir, instead of reporting to the Head. If you give them all a flogging, sir, I think that will be enough."

Mr. Crowell had calmed down a bit.

"Under these circumstances, Nipper, I will consider the matter," he said. "The boys are guilty of disgraceful conduct, and they shall be severely punished."

He turned to the Monks.

"Come with me!" he said, in an awful voice.

CHAPTER IX.

DRIVEN FROM HOME!



"H A, ha, ha!"
The Ancient House rang with gleeful laughter.

The jape on Buster and Co. had been a complete success. It had not panned out at all in accordance with the original scheme, but that made no difference. There was not the slightest doubt that Buster Boots and his gang had come off second best.

It was a distinct victory for the Fossils. I had partially explained the situation to Mr. Crowell, because it would have been a mean trick to allow the matter to go before the Headmaster.

We had gained our end, and that was enough.

For John Busterfield Boots and his Faithful Five had suffered severely. A few other Monks were included. They had all received six slashing cuts of Mr. Crowell's cane.

The Form master, in fact, was feeling quite used up from the effects of the floggings he had given. And the Monks were now very silent and subdued. It was the first time they had tasted a real defeat.

It had been easy enough to engineer.

We had simply left an unsigned note upon Mr. Crowell's desk in printed characters. This note had requested him to go straight to Study Q in the College House, as there was something of great importance for him to attend to there. And he was asked to go at a certain, fixed time.

Very obligingly, Mr. Crowell had acted in accordance. But perhaps you are wondering how the Fossils knew that Buster Boots had been warned?

That's easy, too.

For some time I had been suspecting that we had traitors in the camp. At first I had believed that Fullwood and Co. were carrying information to the enemy. But I had hardly liked to believe that the Study A trio had been guilty of such base treachery.

But there was nobody else to suspect—and so I had had Fullwood and Co. watched.

And I was convinced that they were the guilty parties. Fullwood and Co. had been seen to leave the Triangle. And Fullwood had been shadowed when he made his way into the enemy's camp.

We knew, therefore, that the Monks were fully aware of our new scheme, and that they would take steps accordingly.

Naturally, they would have seized me at once if I had gone into Study Q. It had occurred to me that it would be rather a good idea if the Monks got hold of the real Mr. Crowell instead.

But, of course, we were watching, and ready to swoop down to save the Form-master from any actual violence. I wanted Buster and Co. to get a big shock—and they certainly got one.

And we could not be accused of unfair behaviour. We had saved the matter from going before the Head. But the Monks were exceedingly sore—and, what was far more telling, tremendously humiliated.

And now there was something else to be done.

"The next move is to deal with these rotten traitors!" I declared, as I talked to a number of fellows on the Ancient House steps. "Fullwood and Co. are spies in our midst. We've proved it up to the hilt!"

"Kick them out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We won't have them in the Ancient House!"

"Never!"

"That's the very idea!" I agreed. "Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell are unworthy to be called Fossils. They're ten times more contemptible than the Monks themselves—because they've been taking our secret plans over to the enemy. We now know the reason why all our japes have failed!"

"Yes, rather!"

"These cads have given the game away every time!"

All the juniors were highly indignant, and were ready to back me up to the last limit. I had fully made up my mind that Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell should no longer remain in the Ancient House. Let the consequences be what they may, the traitors were to be hounded out.

"Come on—we'll deal with this in the common room!" I said grimly.

"Hurrah!"

The crowd went indoors, but before going to the common room, we all invaded Study A. Fullwood and Co. were there, calmly doing their prep—and believing that once again the Ancient House plans had gone wrong.

Fullwood started to his feet as the crowd surged in.

"What the dickens——"

"Grab them!" I said shortly.

Fullwood and Co. were seized before they could make any protest. They were held roughly, and without any attempt being made at gentle treatment. They were hustled along the corridor, and into the common room like sheep being led to the slaughter.

By the time they arrived, they were dusty and dishevelled.

"You—you fools!" snarled Fullwood. "What do you think you're doing? What's the idea of treating us like this?"

"Kick them out!"

"Go over to the Monks, you traitors!"

"Blacklegs!"

"Wait a minute, you fellows," I said quietly.

"Perhaps you'll explain?" snapped Fullwood, glaring at me. "What do these rotters mean—callin' us traitors?"

"I think you know well enough," I replied. "You three fellows are in the confidence of Buster Boots. For the past three or four days you have been carrying information into the enemy's camp!"

"You—you're mad!" stuttered Fullwood, turning pale.

"We—we haven't done anythin' of the sort!" panted Gulliver.

I looked at them contemptuously.

"You reveal your guilt in every line of your faces!" I said. "And it so happens that we have got proof——"

"Proof!" sneered Fullwood, partially recovering himself. "Where is it? Don't be such a fool! How do you suppose we could get into the Monks' camp? We shouldn't be safe there for two seconds!"

"You can deny the charge as much as you like—but the evidence in my hands is all that I require!" I said. "I suspected you from the very first, and at last I had you three fellows watched."

"Watched!" gasped Bell.

"Exactly!" I said coldly. "I know all your tricks—and Fullwood, this evening, was shadowed when he went across to the College House! We know all about the telephone arrangement down in the cellar. And now the three of you are going to be kicked out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's get on the job!"

Ralph Leslie Fullwood gulped.

"Kicked out!" he echoed huskily.

"Yes!"

"But—but we've got to be in the Ancient House—we're Fossils!" yelled Gulliver. "If you kick us out, where shall we go to?"

"You go over to the Monks," I replied. "And if they don't want you, you can go somewhere else. One thing's absolutely certain—we're not going to have you in the Ancient House any longer. You've proved yourselves unfit to be called Fossils!"

"Yah! Traitors!"

"Cads!"

The fellows didn't wait for me any longer. They fell on Fullwood & Co., and grabbed them. The three spies of Buster Boots were bumped on the common room floor until they were mere wrecks.

Then they were compelled to run the gauntlet, and, finally, they were hounded out of the Ancient House. Struggling, gasping, fighting desperately, the wretched juniors were literally kicked out of the passage.

And they were hurled out into the Triangle.

In their present excited condition, the Fossils didn't care whether they were seen or not. And by great good fortune nobody was on hand to witness this expulsion.

"And now you can stay out!" yelled the Fossils.

Fullwood & Co. scrambled to their feet, and staggered away. But they didn't go over to the College House just yet. They felt more inclined to apply for admission into the nearest hospital.

And while they were skulking under the eaves, trying to regain their breath, they saw something that gave them a fresh shock.

"Look—look there!" gasped Gulliver.

The other two looked—and gazed at the window of Study A. It was wide open, and things were being hurled out into the night. Books and papers came shooting through—boots, overcoats, and all sorts of other personal articles.

And another window was opened in the dormitory. And from this window more articles of clothing were being hurled out. The cads of Study A had not only been booted out of the Fossils' camp, but all their personal property was being hurled forth, too.

The furniture in Study A was seized, and transferred to other quarters—as a kind of retaliation for what the Monks had done. And Fullwood & Co. watched, too staggered to speak.

There was no question about the Fossils being in earnest.

Again and again Fullwood & Co. tried to get back. Again and again they were hurled out. So, finally, they limped away to the College House. Here they were at once seized.

As soon as they got into the enemy territory they were grabbed, and taken before John Busterfield Boots. The latter was looking grim.

"So you brought false information, did you?" snapped the leader of the Monks. "This is going to be a serious affair for you, my sons."

"Don't be an idiot!" panted Fullwood. "Look at us! Look what those rotten cads have done! We were bein' watched all the time—Nipper suspected that we were spyin' for you, an' he had us shadowed!"

Buster whistled softly.

"Oh, so that's it, eh?" he said slowly.

"Well, I'm sorry; it seems that we can't use you any more—"

"But—but they've chucked us out of the Ancient House, an' won't let us in again!" protested Bell. "We must go somewhere! I've a good mind to go an' complain to the Housemaster—"

"No need to do that," interrupted Buster. "There's a study on our side that you can use. Come on—we'll take you in, but you've got to be faithful Monks, and you've got to obey me in all things!"

The unhappy Fullwood & Co. were only too pleased to pledge their word. And they were admitted into the ranks of the Monks. No longer were they members of the Ancient House.

They had been driven out in dire disgrace, and now they were open enemies, and liable to be fallen upon by any Fossils they happened to come into contact with. It was better that things should be this way.

Somehow or other, the Nuts obtained permission to remain in the College House. They had been using the influence of Kenmore, of the Sixth—a bullying prefect who was rather partial to the chums of Study A. And Kenmore succeeded in obtaining the necessary transfer.

The Ancient House had done with Fullwood & Co.—and the feud continued with greater intensity than ever.

CHAPTER X. THE RIOT!



WHIZZ!
"What the dickens was that?" asked Church, startled.

He was strolling with Handforth and McClure in the Triangle. It was morning—quite early. A good many juniors were out in the Triangle, taking the air before breakfast.

The Monks kept to their side of the Triangle, and the Fossils remained near the Ancient House. To all outward appearance there was nothing radically wrong. But a close observer might have been surprised that the juniors of the two houses kept their distance so rigidly.

Whizz!

Handforth started back, and stared across the Triangle.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. That was a stone!

"A stone!" repeated Church. "Do you mean to say that the Monks are chucking stones at us? The—the dangerous idiots! They might blind somebody! This is getting a bit too thick!"

Whizz!

Handforth gave a sudden gasp, his hand flying up towards his cheek. It came away smeared with blood. There was a nasty gash, just near the ear—a cut which had been caused by a sharp stone. It had come



We hurried along to the cloak-room, and it was not long before we discovered the fact that four overcoats had been treated in exactly the same manner.

shooting across from the direction of the College House.

"By George!" said Handforth thickly.

Church and McClure knew that tone—and they weren't surprised at it. An inch to the left, and that stone would have entered Handforth's eye, probably blinding him for life.

And while the chums of Study D stood there, other stones came hissing across. The Monks were becoming more daring—they were resorting to dirty behaviour. But Fullwood & Co. were the real culprits.

Handforth stared across at the Monks, and strode forward.

"Stop that, you rotten cads!" he shouted angrily.

Another stone came, and Handforth saw it. He only just dodged it in the nick of time. And this was more than he could stand. He rushed over, regardless of consequences—for Handforth never considered the odds when he was excited.

Church and McClure went with him—for they were just as incensed. They came into close contact with Clapson and Oldfield near the fountain.

"You dangerous ruffians!" shouted Handforth hotly.

Crash!

His fist thudded into Clapson's face, and Clapson went over with a howl. And that was the beginning of much trouble. Christine and Percy Bray and two of the others came hurrying to the rescue of their comrades.

Handforth & Co. were surrounded. And in a moment they were fighting desperately.

"Rescue, Fossils!" roared Church.

Armstrong and Griffith and a few more turned round, and gazed at the scene.

"Great Scott!" gasped Armstrong. "Those Monks have got hold of Handforth & Co.! Come on! This is where we enter the scene!"

"You bet!"

They rushed over to the assistance of their fellow-Fossils.

And in less than a minute they were fighting, too. And by this time Buster Boots and the other members of the Supreme Six were on the spot. John Busterfield Boots was angry.

"The mad idiots!" he exclaimed. "Who started this?"

"Handforth!" said Page breathlessly. "He knocked Clapson down!"

"Well, we can't let it go on!" exclaimed Boots. "A thing like this will only end in a riot! It's a wonder the prefects haven't come down already! These chaps must be off their heads!"

Buster gave vent to a shrill, piercing whistle.

It was his own peculiar signal and he had taught it to all the Monks. It meant that they were to rally round him on the instant. But in this case the signal was misunderstood.

Buster intended that the Monks should retreat, and leave this fight alone. And nearly all the Monks thought that he was urging them to go to the attack! In ten seconds a dozen Monks were rushing into the fight.

And it looked bad for the Fossils, for they were outnumbered.

"Rescue—rescue!"

"Fossils to the rescue!"

"Hurrah!"

In two minutes the affair had become a wild melee. Fossils came rushing out, and they dashed into the fray.

It all happened so swiftly that the riot was in progress almost before a prefect could possibly get on the scene—and it was a real riot, a grim, terrible affair. St. Frank's had never seen anything like it in the whole course of the school's record.

The feud had reached its height.

And the long, pent-up hatred of the past few days found its outlet. The Monks and the Fossils fought madly—desperately—insanely.

Juniors were knocked over, and caught in the swaying mass of youthful humanity. They fell down, screaming and yelling with pain, to be trampled underfoot. Some of the more serious juniors kept their heads, and tried to pull the others up.

But it was impossible.

Some of the fellows were fighting like maniacs. Unfortunately, I wasn't on the scene at the moment, for I had been up to one of the boxrooms, looking in my trunk. I arrived in the Triangle when the terrible affair was at its height.

And I stood there, aghast.

"They'll kill themselves!" I shouted, in alarm.

I rushed forward, and the next instant I was pushing my way into the struggling, screaming mass of boys.

"Stop this!" I thundered. "Stop, I tell you!"

My foot caught against something, and, gazing down, I saw Dallas there—Dallas of the College House. He looked as though he were dead—quite unconscious, with his face and clothing smeared with blood.

"Good heavens!" I gasped.

Somehow or other, I managed to drag him out of that awful melee. And I had him clear—while the riot still raged. Dallas was breathing regularly enough, but he was awfully battered about. And there was something about his left arm that struck me as being funny. I felt it more closely.

"Broken!" I muttered, aghast.

And it was true. The unfortunate junior's left arm was broken between the wrist and the elbow, and the pain, no doubt, had caused him to faint. He had literally been trodden on in the mad excitement.

By this time masters and prefects were on the scene. Morrow, Fenton, and some others were charging in, forcing the juniors to desist. Mr. Crowell had appeared, too, and Nelson Lee and Mr. Stockdale.

The Headmaster was rushing up, his gown waving in the wind.

Seniors and fags were crowding into the Triangle on all sides—for by this time the din was so terrific that nobody in the school could be unaware of the riot.

Even the servants were crowding out—scared-looking and startled.

A kind of dust hovered over the whole Triangle. There were screams, yells of agony, and grunts as the mass of juniors still continued fighting in the heart of the zone.

But at last it was all over—the prefects and the masters succeeded in dragging the juniors apart. And the whole Sixth in general assisted in this work. It looked as though real warfare had been indulged in.

There were many casualties.

Juniors, utterly exhausted, were lying about all over the place. Clothing was torn to shreds, and blood was flowing freely. Half the Remove were in a condition that nearly caused Dr. Stafford to collapse.

Looking at the juniors in their present state, it seemed that a dozen or more of them were dying. Somebody suggested ringing for the ambulance. But Nelson Lee had taken charge of the affair now, and he ordered such panic-mongers to be quiet.

The injuries looked far greater than they actually were.

But Dr. Brett, the village medico, was certainly 'phoned for—his services would be required. And one by one the more serious cases were carried straight indoors to the school sanatorium.

Twenty minutes later the Triangle was deserted.

And now came the reckoning.

The whole school had been ordered into Big Hall. Dr. Stafford appeared on the platform, and he was rather pale.

"You may possibly think that I am harsh in punishing you after you have suffered so much in the fighting," said the Head. "But I must put my foot down firmly. I have heard certain rumours that a feud has been in progress between the Ancient House and the College House. This is most lamentable. Surely you boys can be at peace with one another?"

The school was silent again.

"Flogging, I am afraid, would be of little use," said Dr. Stafford gravely. "I shall therefore deprive you of all half-holidays during the coming two weeks, and the Remove Form is confined to gates for that same period."

He finished up his address by appealing to the boys to curb themselves—to do away with this unhappy feud.

But Dr. Stafford might just as well have spoken to the wall.

The Remove, though subdued, was more grimly determined than it had ever been before. And John Busterfield Boots had made up his mind to assume the complete leadership.

The feud at St. Frank's, as a matter of fact, had only just started!

THE END.

The inevitable struggle between BUSTER BOOTS and NIPPER for the leadership of the REMOVE will be described in

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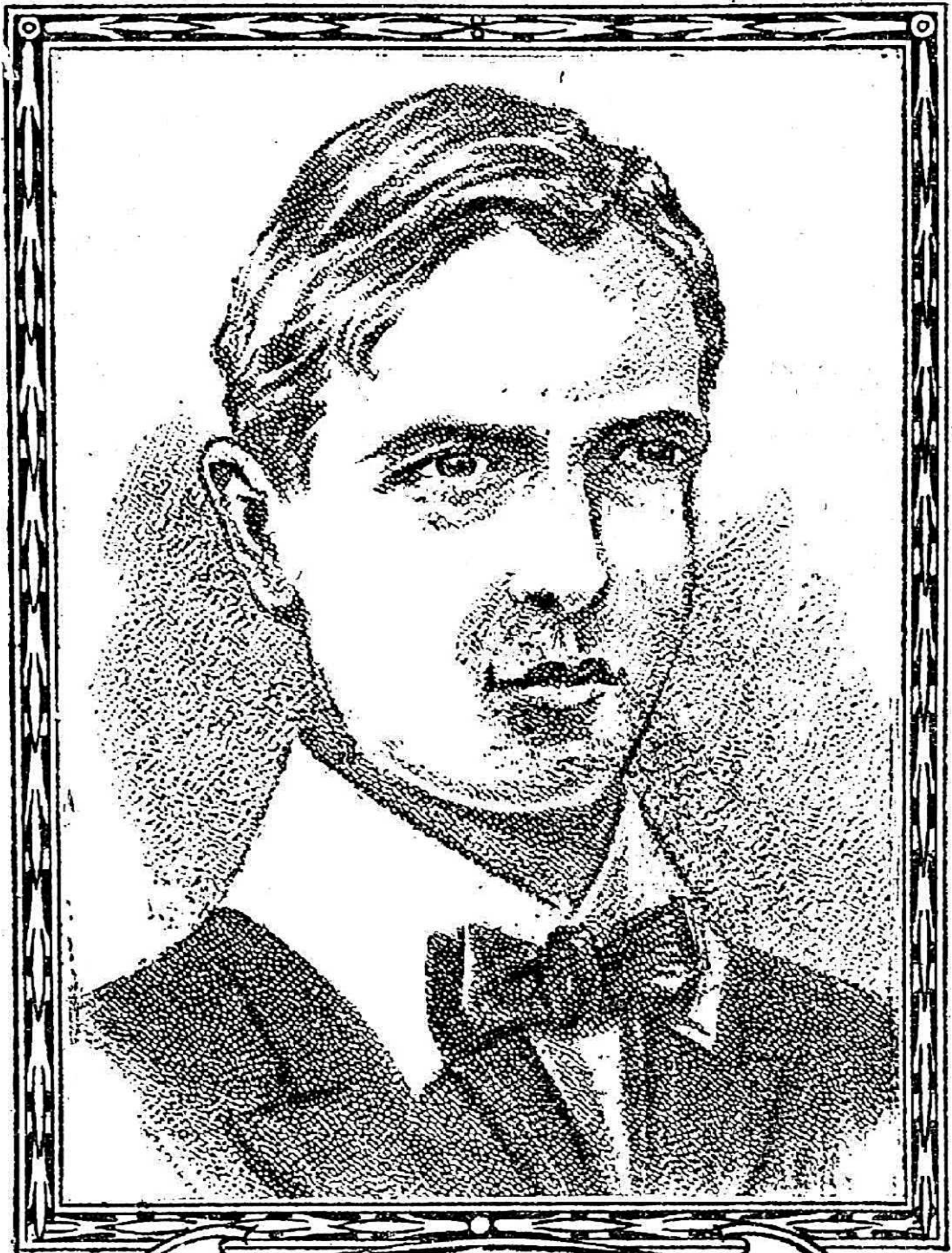
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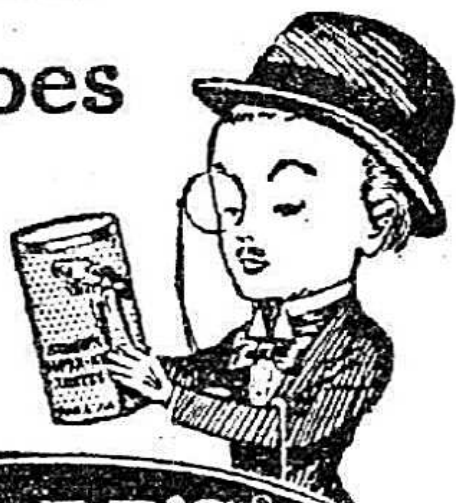
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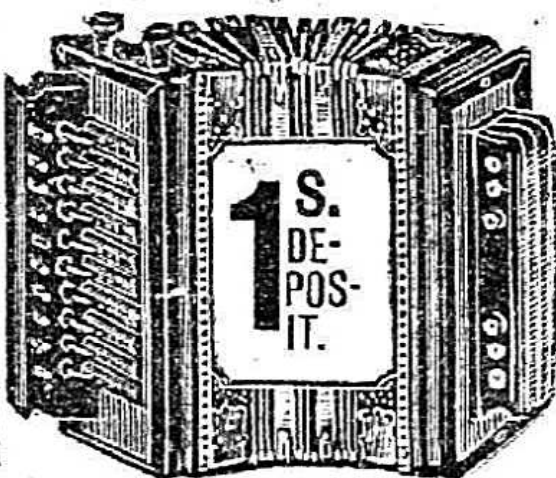
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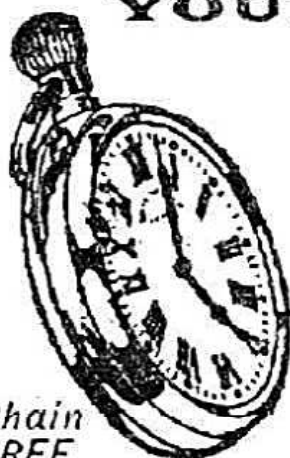
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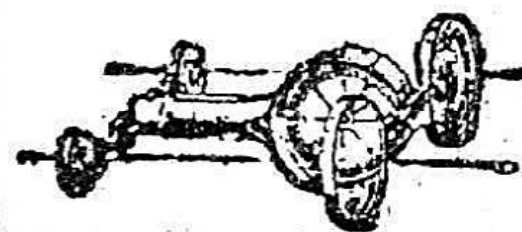
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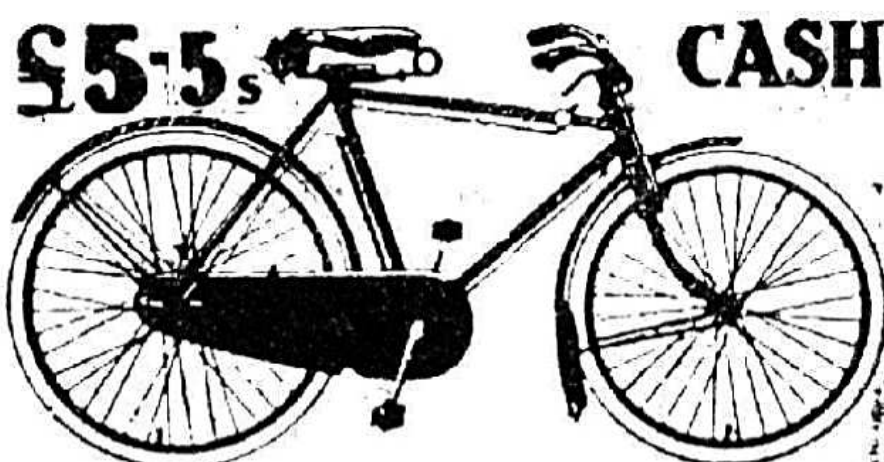
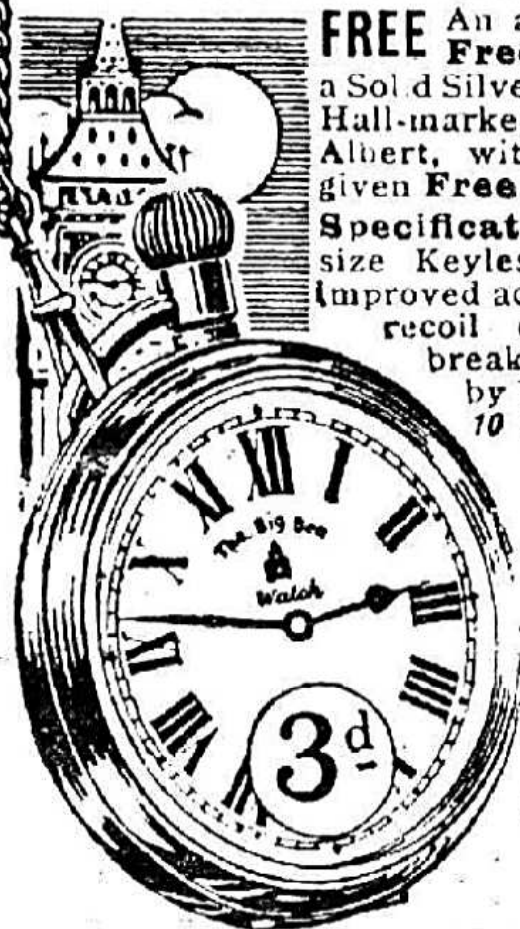
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