

30 MOTOR BICYCLES AND HUGE CASH PRIZES ! See page 28.

THE Nelson Lee 2d *Library*

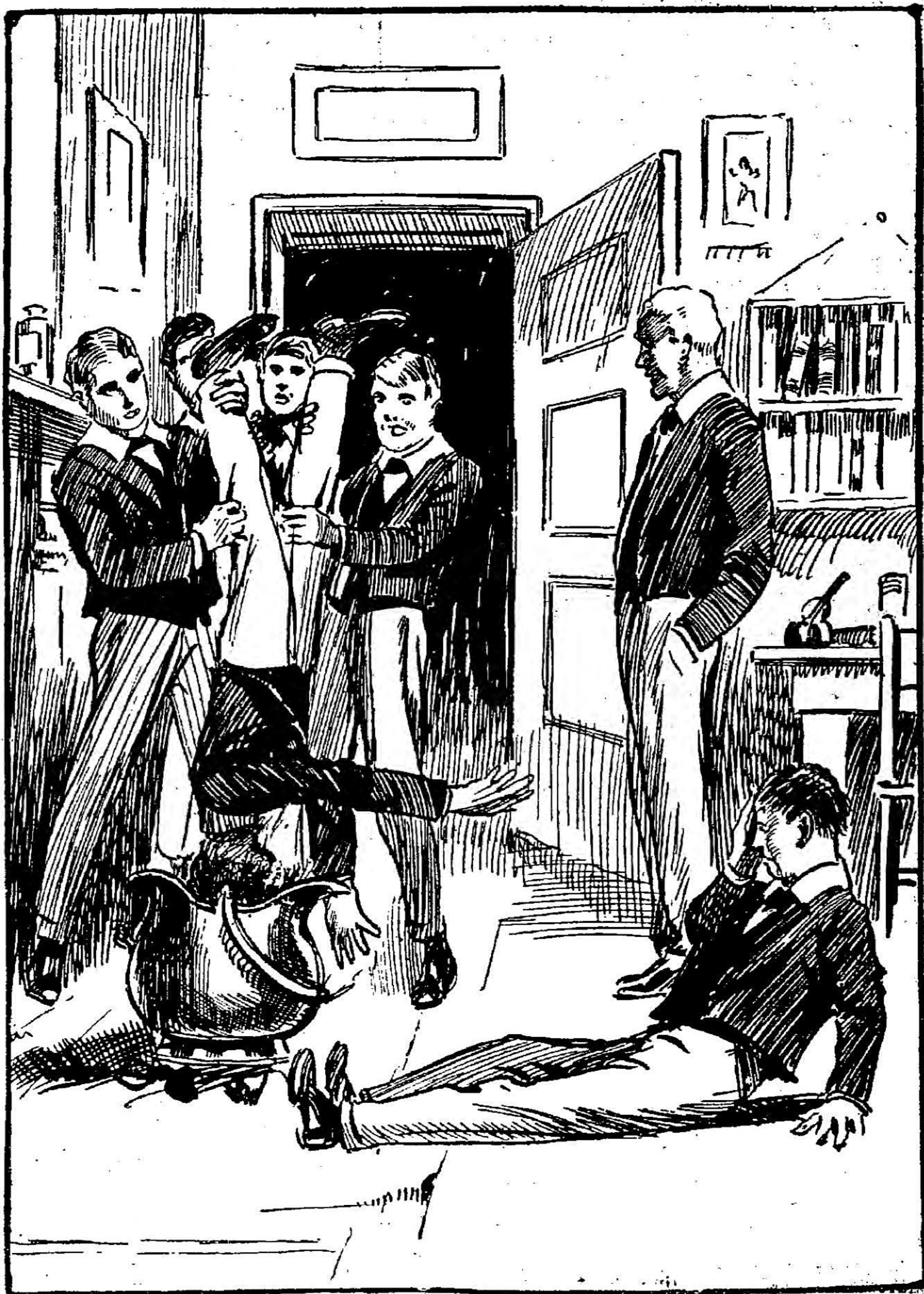


❄
**COLOSSAL
FOOTBALL
COMPETITION !**

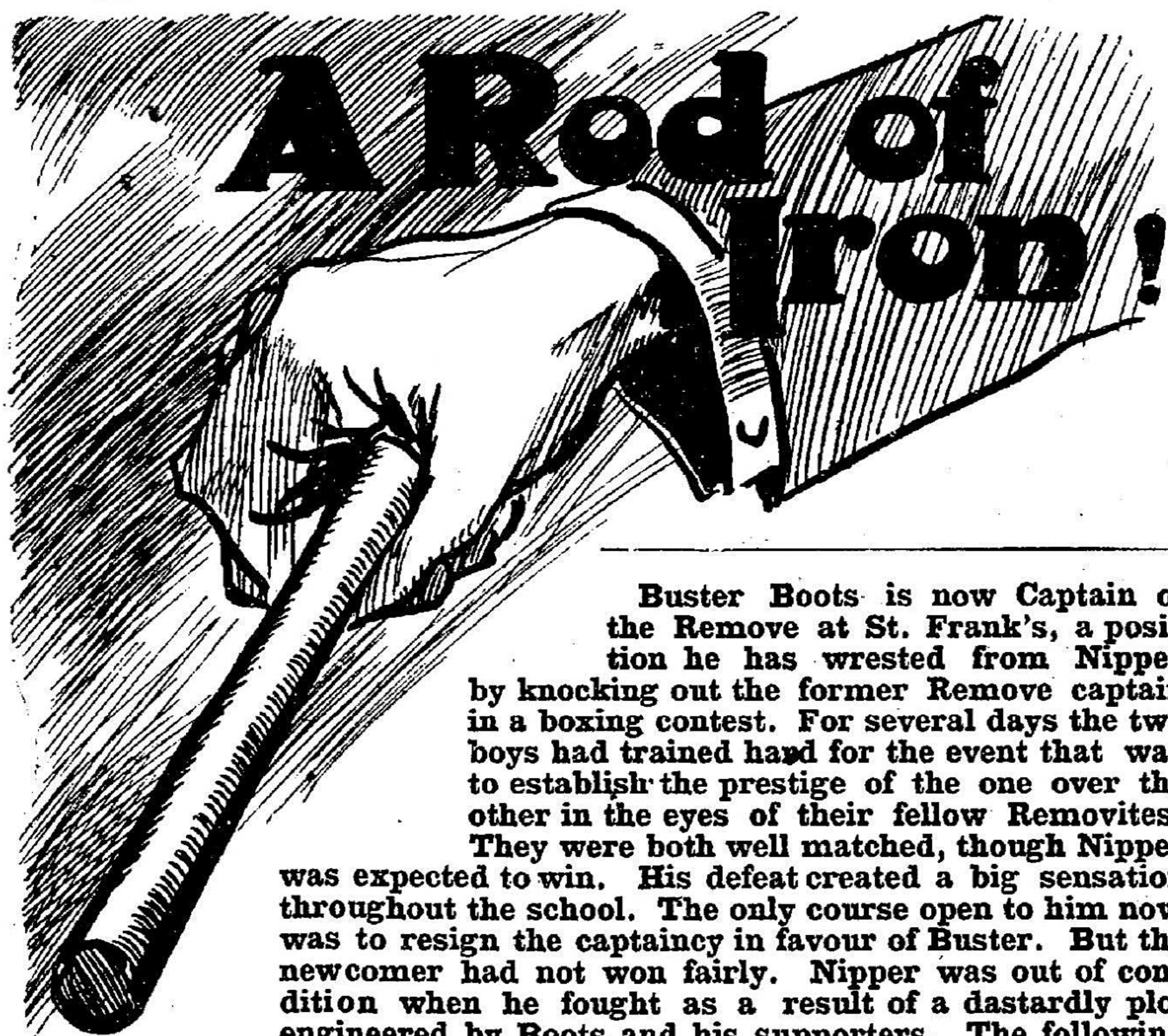
A ROD OF IRON !

A Fine Long Complete Yarn of
Nipper & Co. at St. Frank's.

❄
**STARTS
NEXT
WEEK !**



But Hubbard didn't go straight to the Head. He was instantly seized by the Faithful Five, held upside down, and his face was ground into the coalbox.



Buster Boots is now Captain of the Remove at St. Frank's, a position he has wrested from Nipper by knocking out the former Remove captain in a boxing contest. For several days the two boys had trained hard for the event that was to establish the prestige of the one over the other in the eyes of their fellow Removites. They were both well matched, though Nipper

was expected to win. His defeat created a big sensation throughout the school. The only course open to him now was to resign the captaincy in favour of Buster. But the newcomer had not won fairly. Nipper was out of condition when he fought as a result of a dastardly plot engineered by Boots and his supporters. The following

exciting story shows Buster Boots as a dictator, and the disastrous effect of his iron rule upon the fortunes of the Remove.

A list of the wonderful array of prizes offered to readers in a new and attractive Football Competition starting next week—will be found on page 28 of this issue.

THE EDITOR.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER I.

THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA.

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH thumped the table heavily.

"It was a swindle!" he roared, glaring round. "Those rotten Monks ought to be hooped out. It was a swindle all the way through! As for Buster Boots—he's a cad and a hooligan!"

"Steady on, Handy——" began Reginald Pitt.

"I'm going to speak my mind!" thundered Handforth defiantly. "Nipper's too much of an ass to stand up for himself! That fight was supposed to be a test—but it was nothing better than a farce! Nipper was practically in a fever when he went into the

ring. He'd just got over pneumonia, and ought to have been in bed!"

I grinned.

"No need to exaggerate, old man," I said. "I was certainly on the last lap of a pretty rotten cold—but there was no question of pneumonia. Don't misrepresent, Handy. My opinion of John Busterfield Boots is fairly low, but he isn't such a hooligan as you make out."

Handforth banged the table again.

"Rot!" he declared vehemently. "Absolute rot! Didn't you both arrange for that fight over a week ago? Didn't you both go into training? Answer me that! Didn't you——"

"Cut the cackle, old chap," suggested Pitt. "What are you getting at?"

"You—you dense idiot!" sneered Edward Oswald. "To-day's Thursday—"

"Really?"

"Thursday!" hooted Handforth. "The fight took place yesterday—but for two days before that you were in a terrible condition. Shaky, pale, feverish, and generally groggy. In fact, you were in the throes of a particularly awful cold. Buster knew this—he knew that you were absolutely out of condition—yet he insisted upon the fight! Do you call that sportsmanlike?"

"I don't," I replied. "It was a dirty business altogether."

"Buster saw his chance of winning the fight," said Reggie. "The chap knew well enough that he wouldn't stand an earthly in a fair fight. Nipper's miles better than Boots—more science, more staying power—more skill all along the line. So Buster seized the opportunity that Chance had put in his way—"

"Chance?" interrupted Handforth darkly.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that there was some trickery about it!" declared Handy. "Trickery! You can't fool me!"

"Oh, come off it!" protested Tommy Watson. "That's a bit too thick, Handy. You know well enough that Nipper got a cold. We can't blame the Monks for that, I suppose?"

"I don't know," said Handforth grimly. "They're capable of anything!"

The rest of us grinned. Handforth was always unnecessarily vehement. And it seemed that his suspicions were ridiculous. Yet, as a matter of fact, Edward Oswald was startlingly near the truth.

The Remove at St. Frank's was in a bit of a turmoil. The Ancient House fellows were dismayed and disappointed and indignant. And the College House fellows were jubilant and triumphant.

For the College House was now in a position that it had never before occupied. John Busterfield Boots, the self-appointed leader of the Monks, was the captain of the whole Remove. Not for many moons had a College House junior occupied this coveted position.

Ever since the arrival of Buster Boots, at the beginning of the term, he had been exerting his powerful influence. He was the son of a famous amateur boxer, and he was a terror with the gloves. And he had assumed the position of leader by sheer right of conquest. Within a few days of his arrival he had tipped Bob Christine from his pedestal—for hitherto Bob had been the recognised leader.

And Boots had been accompanied by five other new fellows—all pals of his. The six newcomers had been a powerful combine at Kendis College, their former school. Here they had been known as the Supreme Six. Buster's five supporters had backed him up loyally, and between them all they had revolutionised the sleepy, go-as-you-please College House.

The climax had come when John Busterfield Boots had whipped the Monks into a state of animosity against the Fossils that had resulted in a genuine riot between the rival factions. Buster, in short, meant to force matters to an issue. And he had challenged me to a fight—a fight for the captaincy itself.

We had made big preparations for this boxing contest, each of us going into proper training, with our own secret camps and everything. That was the mistake. If the fight had been undertaken at once I should have beaten Buster with ease and comfort.

But two days before the fight was due to take place I had been suddenly stricken with a most appalling cold. My temperature rose until I was almost in a fever; my throat was sore; my chest thick and congested; my whole body stiff and my muscles flabby.

On the day of the fight—which had been yesterday—I awoke somewhat better, but still limp and shaky, and in no condition for battling against a powerful opponent. But Buster Boots had positively refused to consider any postponement. We had held the contest. For the first round or so I had battled with all my power and skill. But I was still weak and ill—and Buster had been able to deliver the knock-out blow which gave him the captaincy of the Remove.

Yet, ordinarily, I was capable of making rings round him. Buster's intimate supporters—who called themselves the Faithful Five—had found this out. And Percy Bray, who shared Study Q with the new leader, had performed an act which made my doom certain.

I knew nothing of it at the time—indeed, I did not know the truth until weeks later—but for the sake of making everything clear, I am setting down the facts here and now. The fight had been planned for Wednesday afternoon. And on the previous Sunday evening, Percy Bray crept into the Remove dormitory in the Ancient House—and changed the dry under-blanket on my bed for a damp under-blanket! That night I had slept fitfully, unable to realise the cause of my discomfort. And in the morning I had awakened with the first symptoms of a coming cold.

By Tuesday I was in the thick of the worst bout I had experienced for months. And all because of that damp blanket! Handforth was right—absolutely right! John Busterfield Boots had won the captaincy by sheer, wicked trickery. But it is only fair to add that Buster knew nothing about it. Percy Bray was the only fellow who knew the truth.

But Buster had insisted upon the fight taking place, knowing that I was groggy. In that respect Buster had proved that he was the opposite of a good sportsman. And the Ancient House fellows already hated him like rank poison.

They considered that Boots had gained an unfair victory—that his triumph was only

hollow. Everybody knew that he had beaten me in a manner that was far from convincing. I had not been knocked out because Buster was a better man, but because I had been badly ill.

Even the College House juniors knew, in their own hearts, that their triumph and jubilation was tinged with a false note. But their exuberance was so great that they tried to overlook the inner truth.

Buster had won—Buster was now the skipper.

That was all that mattered, from the point of view of the Monks. And victory of any kind for the College House was so unusual that the Monks made the very most of this occasion. They conveniently overlooked the unpleasant features of the case and hailed John Busterfield Boots as a conquering hero.

"Those cads are capable of anything!" repeated Handforth curtly. "Particularly those five rotters who always stick round Buster like ink spots on Somerton's collar! They're always with him!"

"Yes, but it's dotty to say that Boots resorted to trickery," protested Church. "He simply took advantage of Nipper's cold——"

"Who told you to butt in?" roared Handforth.

"I'm not butting in," said Church. "I've got as much right to speak as you have, Handy——"

Bill!

"Yarrooh!" howled Church, holding his nose.

"That shows you how much right you've got to speak!" snapped Handforth. "When I'm talking I'm not going to be interrupted. The first chap who butts in is going to get kicked out of the study! Do you think I'm going to be spoofed by these rotten Monks? I'm going to get up a tremendous agitation, and within two days Boots will be kicked off his perch! He'll be ground into the mud! In fact, he'll be slaughtered."

Handforth glared round, inviting dissension.

"Well?" he roared, as nobody spoke. "Anything to say?"

"Yes—lots!" I remarked. "It's all very well to get excited, Handy, but that sort of thing won't do any good——"

"Who's excited?" howled Handforth wildly.

"Buster Boots is captain, and the only thing we can do is to give him a fair run," I continued, ignoring the interruption. "I don't blame you for getting indignant—but don't you see that we're in a queer position?"

"A queer position?" repeated Handforth.

"Yes. If we start protesting about the fight the Monks will immediately assume that we're no sportsmen," I continued. "Buster knocked me out, and won the captaincy——"

"Yes, by unfair means!" snorted Handforth gruffly.

"Not exactly unfair—but by taking a mean advantage," I corrected. "All right—let

the Monks get on with the job. What does it matter? Let the College House crow for a bit and take the lead."

Handforth regarded me as though I were some rare insect.

"You—you mean to say that you'll let them boss us?" he gasped.

"Certainly."

"You—you blithering lunatic!" howled Handforth. "And you're the chap who we always looked upon as a leader——"

"Give them enough rope, and they'll hang themselves," I went on calmly. "And I'm rather curious to see what kind of a job Buster makes of this captaincy. In any case, no possible good can come of making a fuss. The affair's over and done with, and I'm relieved of all responsibility. It'll be rather curious to see how long Buster lasts."

"That's not a bad idea," said Pitt. "We'll give him a show, anyway. Supposing we go along to the common-room, and hear what the chaps are saying? Perhaps Buster has started something already—he's liable to spring a surprise at any minute now."

"He'd better be careful—that's all," growled Handforth. "If he starts any of his rot with me he'll wish he never crawled out of his cradle!"

We left the study, and passed along the Remove passage until we came to the common-room. I was feeling much more like my usual self to-day, and except for one or two bruises, I was fairly fit.

There were a good many fellows in the junior common-room. A silence fell upon them as soon as we entered, and I found all eyes turned upon myself. Fellows like Merrell and Marriott and Fullwood openly sneered.

"Here he comes—the fallen idol!" said Ralph Leslie Fullwood. "Poor chap! His day's over! No longer the giddy lord of all he surveys!"

"Every dog has his little hour!" jeered Merrell.

"Yah! Weakling! Knocked out by a beastly Monk!"

"And we relied on him to keep our end up!"

"Any other remarks?" I asked quietly, as there was a lull. "I may have been beaten by Buster Boots, but there's no other fellow capable of delivering a knock-out. The next chap who fancies himself as a comedian had better look out. I'm not in a very nice humour!"

There were no more sneering remarks.

"You—you miserable cads!" said Handforth witheringly. "Turning on Nipper just because that beast whacked him! You know jolly well it was an accident! If Nipper had been fit he could have knocked Buster out——"

"All defeated champions are ready with excuses!" interrupted Fullwood sourly.

"That's true enough," agreed Armstrong. "Nipper's got to admit that he was completely knocked out——"

"Have I ever denied it?" I demanded. "I'm whacked, and Buster is now the Form skipper. My advice is to take practically no notice of the change. If you fellows make a song about it, the Monks will crow all the more. Let Buster have a fair run, and judge him accordingly."

But I couldn't help feeling just a little upset. Too many of the fellows were ready enough to drop me like a worn-out garment. I was nobody now. I had been knocked off my pedestal.

And John Busterfield Boots reigned in my stead.

CHAPTER II.

BUSTER BEGINS TO MOVE!



"WHICH is the top House at St. Frank's?"

"College House!"

"Who leads the school?"

"The Monks!"

"Who's the junior skipper?"

"Buster Boots!"

"Hurrah!"

A big crowd of College House juniors occupied the lobby, and made a most extraordinary amount of noise. They were merely celebrating. They were letting it be known, far and wide, that the College House was now the top House of the school—at least, as far as the juniors were concerned.

And the Monks were particularly anxious for the Ancient House fellows to hear the celebration. Their exuberance was not very surprising. Indeed, it was easy enough to understand their attitude.

For years the College House had been a mere echo of the Ancient House—a kind of nonentity. But now, suddenly and unexpectedly, the Monks had assumed the leadership. They were of the most importance in the junior school. And the sudden importance had got into their heads.

But, after all, the fellows who made most of the noise were merely the smaller fry—the unimportant fellows who never did anything, anyway. They were just the followers—ready to make any amount of din at the slightest provocation.

In Study Q there was a very different scene.

John Busterfield Boots, the new captain of the Remove, was holding a solemn conclave with his chief lieutenants. Percy Bray was there—Bray, who shared Study Q with the new leader. Crowe and Webb, of Study P were present, and also Crooks and Denny, of Study R.

These six fellows had all come to St. Frank's at the beginning of term—and their advent had been the beginning of the new regime. Under Buster Boots the Supreme Six had upset all the traditions of the junior school. As new fellows they were supposed to be meek and unassuming. It was their

duty to obey readily the orders of the old-timers. Instead, John Busterfield Boots and his chums had proceeded to run the College House in their own way.

And such were Buster's capabilities as a leader that he had forced himself into a position of power by sheer aggressiveness. After a brief spell of resistance, the Monks had succumbed.

And now, Boots was not only the leader of the College House, but he was actually the Captain of the whole Remove. Bob Christine, the former leader, had never been able to attain such glory. Bob Christine was now a mere passenger. He had no say in the affairs of the College House. He had been dropped by the Monks, and Buster was looked upon as a super leader.

And nothing could alter the fact that he was the Remove captain.

He was not merely a fellow who talked—Buster was a veritable cyclone once he fairly got going. The Ancient House fellows reckoned that he had gained the captaincy by taking a mean advantage of an unfit opponent—but it made no difference to the actual fact.

He was the official skipper.

"Well, so far things have been going well," declared Buster, as he stood in front of the fireplace, with his legs to the cheery blaze. "I don't mean to give these fellows any rest—I'm going on with my campaign straight away."

"Campaign?" repeated Denny.

"Exactly."

"But you won it—you're skipper now."

"Quite so," agreed Buster, "but that's only the very first step in the programme. You surely don't imagine that I'm going to carry on in just the same old way? My sons, I'm going to bring about some radical changes."

"Better go easy to start with," said Bray doubtfully. "Don't want to spring too much all at once, you know—"

"That's the very thing I shall do," interrupted Buster. "Give these chaps time to think, and they'll hesitate and debate, and goodness knows what else. There's only one method—and that is to rush things. I'm going to show these snails that I'm a speed merchant."

The Faithful Five were duly impressed.

"I'm going to wake the old school up with a vengeance!" continued Buster. "I shall institute new rules, I shall throw all the old stuff overboard. In fact, the idea is to change the whole giddy map!"

While Buster was speaking he was pacing up and down on the hearthrug. His rugged face was grim and determined, and his eyes gleamed purposefully. There was something about him which told of the great power within his frame. His strikingly red hair was untidy and tousled—its usual condition.

And Buster was always like this—always a concentrated bunch of energy. It was physically impossible for this junior to keep

still for any amount of time. He possessed such a great reserve of "pep" that it was utterly impossible for him to act as other juniors acted. He had gained the captaincy—but that was only just a beginning.

"You chaps have got to back me up all along the line!" said Buster firmly.

"All along the line!" echoed the Faithful Five.

"You've got to be at hand when I want you."

"We'll be at hand when you want us!"

"I shall expect you to obey orders without question."

"Without question!" said the Five dutifully.

"And we're going to show these slow-coaches a thing or two!"

"You bet we are!" said the Faithful Five.

This sort of thing was quite a commonplace occurrence in Study Q. Buster would state his intentions, and his five chums would echo him in all things. They were his shadows—his bodyguard. And now that the first step in his great campaign had been achieved, Buster was keen upon going further.

"The first thing is to call a meeting of the whole Form," declared Buster. "You fellows have got to go out and spread the word—let it be known far and wide that the Form has got to meet in the Lecture Hall at seven o'clock."

"But supposing the chaps won't obey?" asked Crooks.

"I'm not supposing anything so silly," replied Buster Boots. "The word of a Form captain is law. When the skipper gives an order for the whole Form to meet, the Form has got to obey. It's an unwritten law that everybody must attend."

"I know that," said Crooks impatiently. "Of course, all our own chaps will turn up in force. But what about the Fossils? Quite a number of the Ancient House fellows are antagonistic—particularly Nipper's own clique. They reckon that Nipper was unfit to fight yesterday, and that—"

"Don't go over that again," interrupted Buster sharply. "We can't help their troubles. And if it comes down to rock bottom facts, I did win that fight because Nipper was a bit groggy. I'm not one of the chaps to keep up a pretence before his own pals. Under ordinary circumstances, Nipper's a better boxer than I am—and I should have lost. But, by sheer good luck, fortune was with me—and now I'm the skipper of the whole Remove. And what's more, I'm going to be obeyed—and any Fossils who think they can defy me will live to regret it. Go on—clear out, and deliver the message."

The Faithful Five lost no time in going round.

The news spread through the College House in a few moments, and there was no



Handforth glared at the notice with such a ferocious aspect that Pitt half expected to see the paper scorching and bursting into flame. "My name's not here!" hooted Handforth wildly.

doubt that every Monk would be on hand at seven o'clock to the minute. The Ancient House juniors were not quite so enthusiastic.

"Oh, so we've got to take orders from that cad, have we?" said Handforth tartly, when he was told "Buster Boots can go and eat coke! I don't recognise him as the skipper, and I won't take any orders from him!"

"Hear, hear!" said Church and McClure.

There were other fellows, too, who adopted a similar attitude. But when I heard about his I went round and had a chat with them. I collected all the dissatisfied fellows together and had a chat with them.

"Now look here, you chaps, be reasonable," I said. "We've got to attend this meeting."

"Never!"

"We won't take any notice of Buster Boots!"

"We're not obeying his orders!"

"Rather not!"

"You—you lunatic!" exclaimed Handforth wrathfully. "You, the ex-captain of the Form, urging us to attend a Form meeting! Why, you must be mad!"

"Not at all," I pointed out. "It's just a matter of common decency. It's an unwritten law that a Form captain's order must be obeyed. Nothing short of illness or absence from the school must prevent any fellow from attending an official Remove meeting."

"But this isn't official—we don't recognise Buster—"

"That makes no difference," I interrupted. "Whether you recognise Buster as captain or not is immaterial. He is the captain, and he has been officially invested with full skipper's powers by Mr. Lee and Mr. Stockdale. Buster Boots is now the Captain of the Remove, and we've got to give him a chance. That's only fair."

And then John Busterfield Boots himself appeared.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Buster!"

"Yah! Cads!"

"Rotten outsider!"

The cheers for Buster were intermingled with sundry hoots and groans. But Buster smiled calmly as he took his stand on the raised platform. He held up his hand for silence, and obtained it. There was something about Buster that compelled obedience.

"Thank you!" said the new captain easily. "Before I begin my speech, I'd just like to take a count of the faithful and the

GRAND AUTUMN PROGRAMME of Stories for Boys Out This Month!

The Boys' Friend Library

685. THE NAMELESS FORWARD.

A Masterly Yarn of Stirring Football Adventure. By James Egerton Wing.

686. THE HAYGARTH CARAVANNERS.

A Rollicking Story of the Four Macs at Haygarth School. By Jack North.

687. OMAR THE MAGNIFICENT!

A Gripping Story of Adventure Abroad. By Maurice Everard.

688. THE DEVIL-TREE OF EL DORADO.

A Breathless Tale of Amazing Happenings in the Wilds of British Guiana. By Frank Aubrey.

The Sexton Blake Library

303. THE LOST EXPEDITION.

A Fascinating Tale of Mystery and Adventure in British Guiana. Introducing GRANITE GRANT and MDLLE. JULIE.

304. SOLVED IN THIRTY-SIX HOURS.

A Thrilling Story of Amazing Mystery and Detective Work. By the Author of "The Great Revue Mystery," etc., etc.

305. THE MANSION OF SHADOWS.

A most Absorbing Romance of Detective Adventure in ENGLAND and MEXICO.

306. THE SHIELD OF THE LAW.

A Tale of Sexton Blake and Tinker in London and Paris. By the Author of "The Arctic Trail," etc., etc.

Now on Sale.

Price Fourpence Each!

At last I succeeded in convincing the fellows that it was really up to us to attend the meeting. And so, at seven o'clock, the Lecture Hall was full up. Every fellow in the Remove was present—with the single exception of Dallas, who was still in the sanatorium, recovering from his broken arm.

It was a noisy throng.

Monks were arguing with the Fossils. Handforth was stoutly maintaining that the whole thing was a farce—that Buster was a usurper, and that it was only by sheer luck that he hadn't been slaughtered long ago.

unfaithful. I'm curious to know how many enemies I've got."

"Dozens!" said Handforth sourly.

"Hands up, every fellow who fails to recognise me as captain," said Buster.

Handforth's hand shot up, to be instantly followed by about fifteen or sixteen others. Handforth gave me a fearful glare when he saw that my hand was not raised.

"Ain't you with us?" he roared.

"I'll tell you whether I'm willing to support Buster at the end of two or three days," I replied quietly. "It all depends upon Buster's skill as a leader. If he turns out trumps, I'll support him."

"Thank you," said Buster, giving me a nod. "By the way, that's a good tip of yours, Nipper. I won't take the count now—I'll wait until I've outlined my policy. I want all you fellows to know that I'm going to bring about some drastic changes. I'm not going to let the Remove run on its present sleepy course. It's time some real activity was developed."

"Hear, hear!"

"By what I can see, the Remove has been in a state of semi-unconsciousness for terms," continued Boots. "It's gone on in the same old way without any new ideas. And all this, of course, is mainly due to leadership—or lack of leadership."

"Thanks!" I said drily.

"I'm not meaning to pass any slurs upon you, Nipper—but you can't get away from facts," said Buster. "In my opinion, you've absolutely failed to fulfil your duties. You haven't instituted any new ideas for the benefit of the Remove in general. Things have run along the same old lines term in and term out. You can't deny it."

"I'm not trying to," I replied. "But if you want to take some advice from an old hand—go easy on the new ideas. It always pays to stick to the old traditions. A fellow who wants to throw the old things overboard and institute new plans, is in for a pretty hard time."

"I'm fully capable of enforcing any new rule," declared Buster. "But you needn't imagine for a moment that I mean to impose unpopular schemes. My idea is to improve the Remove in such a way that it won't know itself by the end of this term. I'm going to institute some changes that will bring pleasure and recreation to the whole crowd of you."

"Good!"

"Go ahead, old man!"

"The Remove's been running in the same old rut for too long," proceeded Buster. "It's high time that you fellows had some interest put into your lives. I'm cutting adrift from the obsolete plans, and before long you'll realise that my leadership is necessary. From this moment I'm going to buck things up for all I'm worth. I'm going to give the Remove heaps of pleasure, and plenty of good times."

"How?" demanded Reggie Pitt.

"I shan't tell you how all at once," replied Buster. "But the first step is to inaugurate a club—a club that will fill a long felt want. At present the Remove is divided into so many studies—and the members of these studies simply amuse themselves individually. The only other alternative is to gather in the common-room for gossip. In my opinion, that's all wrong. What the Remove needs is a club, and my first task will be to organise this club on popular lines."

"Good old Buster!"

"A recreation club, eh?"

"Good egg!"

The juniors were approving heartily.

Buster Boots was a clever fellow—he was commencing well by appealing to the pleasures of the juniors. Nearly everybody had expected him to act aggressively—but here he was assuming the burdens of a real leader—he was suggesting ideas that would be for the general benefit of the whole Form.

And it was, of course, a popular line to adopt. Many of the Ancient House juniors, who had been greatly prejudiced, were now listening interestedly—telling themselves that they had misjudged Buster. After all, he was turning out to be a far better leader than they had anticipated.

"What kind of club is this going to be?" asked De Valerie.

"You'll know that later," replied Buster.

"You've got to trust me—you've got to leave everything entirely in my hands. Can't you rely upon me to do the thing right? I'm the captain now, and I want to keep the captaincy. So you can be absolutely certain that I shall do everything in my power to retain popular favour. I don't want to boast—I don't want to claim credit for anything yet—wait until I've done a few things. Deeds are the things that count—not words. My sole efforts will be for the betterment of the whole Remove. Nipper was a good leader—I'm not trying to belittle him. But he failed in the all-important matter of providing full and adequate pleasures for the Form. For that reason I am keen upon instituting the Remove Recreation Club. And I call upon you all for subscriptions."

"Eh?"

"Subscriptions?"

"I thought there was a catch in it!" said Teddy Long sourly.

"Every fellow in the Remove must subscribe to the Recreation Fund," continued Boots. "You can't expect me to form a club of this sort—and I mean it to be a powerful, splendid organisation—without adequate capital. The club is for the use of us all, and so we must all help."

"That's fair enough," said Bob Christine.

"The regular subscription will be five shillings a term," said Buster Boots. "Every fellow in the Remove must subscribe—it will be compulsory, or admittance to the club will be forbidden. Those fellows who fail to pay their subs. will be debarred from every privilege."

"Well, five bob a term isn't so much—quite a reasonable amount," declared De Valerie. "And there's not a fellow who can truthfully say he can't afford five bob—especially at the beginning of term."

"The club will have a well selected committee, and certain rules will be mapped out," continued Buster. "Occasionally we shall hold concerts, amateur theatricals, and such like. During the summer term the Remove Recreation Club will organise picnics and outings. By lumping our money together in this way, and having the whole thing under a central organisation, we shall

be able to gain far more pleasure. As I've told you before, my chief idea as skipper is to uplift the Remove, and do everything in my power to make the days pass more easily and lightly. I'm all for the Remove—all for the good of the Form!"

"Good!"

"That's the way, Buster!"

I couldn't help admiring the new captain. He was certainly beginning his captaincy in a manner that would immediately install him in popular favour. But it remained to be seen whether he would carry out his ambitious programme.

"I have already spoken to Mr. Stockdale on the subject," said Boots, "and I have obtained permission for the Remove to use the laboratory annexe—which, as you know, is situated right behind the cloisters in an isolated position. The annexe hasn't been used for years, and it'll make a perfect club house. It'll be sufficiently far away from the school buildings for us to enjoy ourselves in peace and comfort—without the fear of being dropped upon."

"Fine!"

"Couldn't be better!"

"It now remains for us to organise this club on proper lines," went on John Busterfield Boots. "Of course, the five shillings subscription fee will be the normal sum after the club is in full swing. At present we need much more than that. The more money we can get together straight away, the better. A big sum is needed for the purchase of furniture and many other things. And the Remove has got to subscribe heavily."

"Oh!"

"Before we subscribe, wouldn't it be a good idea to tell us how this money is going to be spent?" asked Pitt.

"If you can't trust me to handle the thing properly it's a pity," replied Buster, with a show of indignation. "You needn't think that I've got any idea of making something for myself on the deal. All the money will be placed in the hands of the Cash Committee. Strict accounts will be kept, and these accounts will be open to anybody who cares to examine them."

"That's fair enough."

"I know, of course, that many of you chaps have got heaps of pocket-money, and many of you are rather hard up," continued Buster. "I think we ought to adopt a system which will affect everybody in the same way. In other words, I shall require fifty per cent. of everybody's available cash. In that way there can be no grumbling. We shall all pay the same proportion."

"Hear, hear!" said Teddy Long enthusiastically. "I'm game!"

"How much have you got?" demanded Handforth, with suspicion.

"Who, me?" asked Teddy. "Oh, I—I've only got fourpence—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you young ass!" roared Handforth. "No wonder you're game—with only

tuppence to lose! But I'm blessed if I'm going to give fifty per cent. of my capital. Rats to the Recreation Club! The chaps have got plenty of recreation as it is."

"Besides, fifty per cent.'s too much," objected Christine.

"Well, we'll say twenty-five per cent.—to begin with," exclaimed Buster. "I'm not unreasonable—I'll go by the vote of the Form."

Without much discussion, the form voted that twenty-five per cent. was quite satisfactory. And every junior was obliged to make a statement of his financial resources.

Handforth objected at first, but finally agreed to pay his own whack. And as he happened to possess two pounds, he handed over ten shillings. The bulk of the subscriptions were three shillings or four shillings, or even less. But it came rather hard upon juniors like Somerton and Archie Glen-thorne and the Hon. Douglas Singleton.

Archie, for example, happened to have twenty pounds on him in bank-notes, but he handed over five pounds without a murmur. The other wealthy juniors did the same. And when the full subscriptions were all counted up it was found that quite a fair sum had been obtained.

"Now, you all know exactly how much we have, and this cash will be kept intact," declared Buster. "The money won't be touched for a day or two, and I may come upon you for further subscriptions later—it all depends upon how much expenditure is required. And this club, mind you, is only the beginning of the new order of things."

"By the way, what about football?" inquired Pitt.

"Football?" repeated Buster, without enthusiasm. "Well, after all, there's not much pleasure in football—it's only a side issue—"

"What?"

"You—you blithering idiot!"

"Football's more important than anything else!"

"We're playing Bannington Grammar School on Saturday!"

Buster compressed his lips as he heard the storm of protest. He realised that he had made a blunder, and he quickly sought to cover it up.

"When I say that football is a side issue I mean that it is quite separate and apart from recreation," he declared. "Of course, as a sport it takes first place. The old Remove eleven is now out of existence—"

"What!"

"Nipper was the former captain, and he had his own men in the team," continued Buster. "The eleven consisted of Nipper's pals—"

"Wait a minute," I interrupted grimly.

"I'm not going to stand here and hear you say a thing like that, Buster. The Remove eleven, under my captaincy, always consisted of the best footballers that could be got together—irrespective of any friendship.

I'd have played Fullwood, if he'd have been a good man."

Buster nodded.

"Well, that's all changed now," he said. "As Remove skipper, I shall appoint the team for Saturday's game. The list of names will be placed on the notice-board to-morrow morning. The team will consist of the best material, and you can trust me to see that St. Frank's wins."

And shortly afterwards the Remove meeting broke up. And the majority of the fellows who had been opposed to Buster Boots were now in his favour. His speech had made an impression.

Buster had shown himself to be a live wire. He was full of energy—full of that material which the juniors described as mustard. He was determined to wake the Remove up with a vengeance.

And the juniors were already saying that it was high time a change should take place. I had lost my supporters wholesale—the Remove had gone over to the new leader.

But how long would Buster Boots last? That was the all-important question!

CHAPTER III.

THE AUTOCRAT OF THE REMOVE!



HUBBARD, of the Remove, looked up as the door of Study B opened.

"Oh, come in—and welcome!" he said heartily.

"Thanks—I was coming in, all the same," exclaimed John Busterfield Boots easily. "Quite a nice little study you've got here."

"One of the best in the passage," said Hubbard, with pride.

He and Teddy Long were just about to do their prep. After the Remove meeting the fellows had talked for a bit, and had then separated to go to their own studies—for work had to be done.

And Study B was certainly looking quite cheerful, with the fire blazing in the grate and with the electric lights glowing. The furniture was not of the best, but quite comfortable.

Buster Boots was accompanied by the Faithful Five. They had arrived in the Ancient House ten minutes earlier, and had calmly proceeded down the Remove passage, entering study after study and inspecting them—without asking permission of the occupants.

Buster apparently imagined that he had a perfect right to go where the fancy took him and to do as he pleased. He and his own chums looked round Study B, utterly ignoring Hubbard and Long.

"Not so bad, eh?" asked Percy Bray.

"Yes, I think this one will do fine," replied Buster. "Of course, Study C is about the best, but it wouldn't be advisable

to turn Nipper out—he's the leader over on this side, and there might be a fuss."

"That's what I was thinking," said Crooks—"the same with Study D. Hand-forth would raise Cain. Can't do better than this."

Buster nodded.

"Right—we'll fix on this study, then," he said. "I'll leave it to you fellows to get it all ready for me. I shall require it not later than to-morrow afternoon—and sooner, if possible."

"That's all right, then," said Percy Bray. "Glad we've got it fixed."

The Supreme Six gave another look round and prepared to leave. Hubbard and Teddy Long regarded them curiously—wondering vaguely at the meaning of Buster's words.

"I say, what's the idea?" asked Hubbard.

"What are you chaps talking about? You've fixed on this study—for what? And what the dickens do you mean by saying that you'll require it by to-morrow afternoon?"

Buster looked at him as though just aware of his existence.

"I'm taking this study for myself," he replied calmly.

"You're doing—what?" gasped Hubbard.

"My dear chap, I haven't got time to bother with you," replied the captain.

"You've got to get out of here by the morning—that's all."

"Got to get out!" howled Hubbard.

"Yes—with all your belongings."

"But—but you must be dotty!" panted Hubbard.

"It's—it's a joke!" muttered Teddy Long.

"Don't be such an ass—Buster's selected this study for his own use," put in Denny impatiently. "I'd advise you chaps not to make a fuss about it—it'll save you all sorts of pain and trouble. Better clear out this evening and be on the safe side."

Hubbard and Long stared blankly. The calm, matter-of-fact way in which these College House fellows were talking took their breath away. The Monks had deliberately come there, as though they owned the whole place, and were talking about turning Hubbard and Long out! Their high-handed attitude was well nigh insufferable.

But neither Hubbard nor Long were forceful juniors.

"Clear out this evening!" repeated Hubbard dazedly. "But—but we've had this study for terms! And where can we clear out to, anyway? Likely! Do you think you're going to turn us out of our own room?"

Buster strode up to Hubbard and stared him in the face.

"Take a tip from me—get out quietly!" he said, with deliberate grimness. "I've selected this study for my own use."

"But—but you've got a study of your own—over in the College House!" protested Hubbard indignantly. "What are you talking about? You can't have a study here as well! It's unheard of! It's never been done before—"

"You see?" asked Boots, turning to his supporters. "The same old narrow-minded ideas. These chaps can't get out of the rut. Just because it hasn't been done before, they imagine it can't be done at all. It's a pity they're so short-sighted."

Hubbard stared.

"You—you must be joking!" he stammered.

"Buster isn't joking," said Bray. "Being captain of the whole Remove, it's necessary for him to have headquarters in both Houses. He wants a study over on this side so that he can use it when he chooses. And this room is about the best for his purpose."

Hubbard's admiration of Buster vanished.

"You—you rotten Monks!" he shouted.

"Then you mean it?"

"Of course we mean it!"

"I'm not going to get out of this study, and I'll go straight to Mr. Lee if you dare to lay a finger on me!" roared Hubbard. "We're not going to be turned out of our study by you rotters!"

"No fear!" said Teddy Long excitedly.

"I'll go to Mr. Lee now!"

"Hold him!" said Buster curtly.

Teddy Long was seized and whirled round. With cool deliberation Buster Boots raised his fist, and sent it crashing into Teddy Long's face. The sneak of the Remove crumpled up, and sank howling to the floor.

"Yow—yaroooh!" he bellowed wildly.

Crash!

With the same deliberate action, Buster planted his fist into Hubbard's face. Hubbard was no hero, but he was not such a coward as Teddy. He picked himself up, purple with rage and pain.

"You—you bullying cad!" he blurted out. "I'll go straight to Mr. Lee——"

"Biff!"

Again came that deadly fist, and Hubbard collapsed.

"You'll go to Mr. Lee, will you?" exclaimed Buster, gazing down at the snivelling junior. "Better think it over, my son. I'll give you your choice. Clear out of this study at once, and make no complaint, and you'll be treated with special favours—I'll compensate you for the loss of your study. But go to Mr. Lee and sneak—and I'll make your life a misery. I'll make you wish you'd never been born! I'll give you ten seconds to decide."

Hubbard, shaking with pain and anger, hauled himself up.

"You—you bullying beast!" he said thickly. "I was wrong about you—I can see you're nothing but a rotten cad! I'm going straight to the Head."

But Hubbard didn't go straight to the Head. He was instantly seized by the Faithful Five, held upside down, and his face was ground into the coalbox. After that he was bumped until there was scarcely an atom of breath left in his body—until his spirit was quelled.

"Well?" inquired Buster calmly.

"All right," muttered Hubbard, with a gulp. "We—we'll clear out!"

"Yes, we'll clear out!" echoed Teddy Long fearfully.

He had seen what had happened to his study mate, and had no desire to suffer the same fate.

Buster Boots smiled.

"Good!" he said briskly. "Don't think I'm a bully—I'm not! But I'm determined to have my own way. Any fellow who dares to oppose me is simply looking for trouble. Take my advice, and say nothing to the other fellows—let them think we agreed to this amiably. It won't do any good for you to make a song. There'll be more trouble if you oppose my wishes."

The captain and his gang passed out of the study, leaving Hubbard and Long in a dazed and staggered condition. Buster was proving himself to be an autocrat. He meant to have his own way, and would not be denied.

It was clear, in fact, that he intended ruling the Remove with a rod of iron. Any fellows who dared to oppose him would regret it. And the idea of him preparing a study for himself in the Ancient House was daring. No Remove captain had ever had two studies before.

But Buster, of course, was out to violate every tradition. He was determined to make his own laws, and to enforce his own rule.

It wasn't long before news of the seizure leaked out among the other Fossils. Teddy Long was not the kind of fellow to keep a thing to himself. And indignation ran high.

Many fellows declared that if Buster Boots actually took possession of Study B, he would be kicked out at once, captain or no captain. The Ancient House was not going to have its liberties interfered with in that way! Handforth was most emphatic on the point.

But Armstrong and Fullwood and Merrell and some others got talking, and suggested that the idea was quite sound. They weren't affected, so why should they worry!

And, after all, the skipper was the skipper, and he had a perfect right to certain privileges. Why shouldn't he have two studies if he wanted them? And a go-ahead captain, who took an active interest in both Houses, would find it necessary to have quarters on both sides of the triangle.

"Just because Nipper didn't have a study in the College House, that's no reason why Boots shouldn't have one in the Ancient House," argued Merrell. "Personally, I think it's a good idea. Buster's going to wake things up properly—he means to improve the Remove all round. Good man! I'm with him!"

"Hear, hear!"

So even this high-handed action of Buster's did not meet with stern disapproval from all. He had already gained a large number of faithful followers in the ranks of the Fossils.

Over in the College House, Buster was smashing a few more traditions.

Seated in Study Q, he gave some sharp instructions to Denny.

"Go to Study X, and bring Turner and Page here at once," he said briskly. "Tell them they're under orders, and can't disobey."

"Right!" said Denny crisply.

He went out of the room, and presently returned with Turner and Page, who were both looking rather puzzled, and slightly indignant. They had both been interrupted in the middle of their prep, and didn't like it.

"What's the idea of dragging us here now," asked Page gruffly.

Buster stared at them.

"It is none of your business to ask questions," he said curtly.

"What?"

"I am the skipper, and you've got to obey me—in everything," continued Boots. "My word is law—and if you don't believe it, you'll soon find it out. Tomorrow, you will start your duties."

"Our duties?" said Turner, in surprise.

"Exactly."

"What the thunder do you mean—duties?"

"For the period of one week you will act as my batmen," said Buster calmly. "In other words, you've got to see that this study is kept clean and tidy. You've got to keep the fire going, and prepare meals, and wash up, and do everything, in fact, that has to be done. And if I find occasion to grumble at anything, I shall deal out some drastic punishment!"

Turner and Page listened as though in a dream.

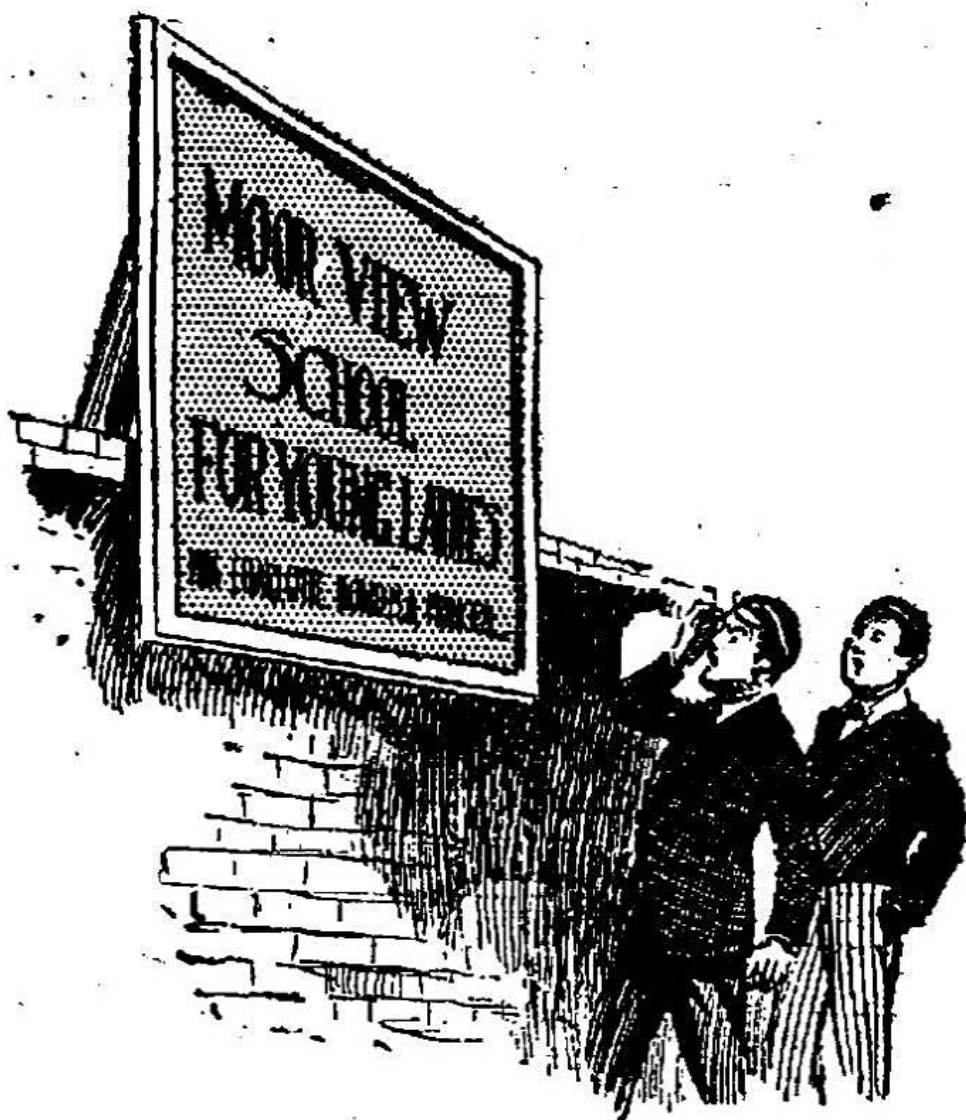
"You—you always were a bit of a comic, Buster!" said Turner, with an attempt at a grin. "But what's the idea of making a joke now—"

"I'm serious!" interrupted Buster curtly.

"You—you mean that we've got to—to fag for you?" roared Page.

"I didn't say anything about fagging—and the next time you yell at me you'll regret it!" replied the captain. "You won't have to act as fags—but you'll be batmen. You ought to consider it a privilege to be chosen as the first pair. You will be relieved at the end of a week, when two other fellows will take your place."

Turner and Page were staggered. Buster Boots was making new laws, and no mistake about it! Never in the history of the school had a Removite had fellows to fag for him. Occasionally, the Fifth had attempted to press some of the weaker Third Formers into service—but it had never been a success.



Alf Brent clutched at Archie as he read the sign.

"Great Scott!" he breathed faintly. "Look—look at that!"

And here was John Busterfield Boots actually choosing two of his own Form fellows to serve in the capacity of—batmen! The name made no difference—Buster required these juniors to act as fags! Even a lordly Sixth Former only had one fag. But Buster Boots considered himself to be so important that he required two!

The truth was simple.

Buster was a good leader—up to a certain point. He could lead a small band with eminent success. But now that he had become captain of the Remove, the intoxication of success had got into his head.

And opposition was the only result.

"So you think we're going to do all your dirty work, eh?" asked Turner nastily. "I'm ready to support you as captain, but I'm hanged if I'm going to be treated as a servant!"

"Same here!" declared Page. "Do your own confounded work!"

Buster gently tapped the arm of his chair.

"Of course, it's quite likely that you don't realise the position," he said, leaning back, and regarding the two juniors with perfect calmness. "In case you are suffering from any misapprehension, I think I had better make myself quite clear."

"We're not going to fag for you—that's clear, anyway," said Page hotly.

"I want you to thoroughly understand

that I am captain, and all my orders must be obeyed," said Buster. "It will save a tremendous lot of trouble if you fellows take it calmly and easily. New ideas are always opposed to start with."

"What do you mean—new ideas?" demanded Turner tartly. "You're not the first fellow who's tried to start anything of this kind—"

"I mean to have my way, and nobody will stop me," proceeded Buster. "You will enter in upon your duties in the morning—"

"Never!"

"If you oppose me—and I cannot think you'll be foolish enough to do that—you will be debarred from every activity of the Remove," said Boots. "You will never be admitted into the Recreation Club, you will have no showing in the football team, and in every respect you will be treated as outsiders. Every fellow who fails to support me will be dealt with drastically. Furthermore, you will be subjected to every form of physical punishment. You can take it or leave it—and I'll give you ten seconds to make up your minds."

Turner and Page were hot with anger. "It's all very well to bluster like that, but we're not going to be intimidated!" shouted Turner. "We finished with our fagging when we left the Third—and we're not going back to it."

"No?" said Buster calmly.

He acted like lightning. Springing to his feet, he attacked the two juniors before they could possibly be aware of it. His left crashed into Turner's chest, and his right thudded into Page's face. The two juniors went flying.

And then, before they could recover themselves, they were seized by the Faithful Five, and subjected to every form of indignity.

It took exactly five minutes to convince them of the wisdom of obeying John Busterfield Boots. Bruised, battered and sore, the two juniors finally agreed to serve Buster in the way he required.

To sneak was impossible—and to put up with this kind of treatment was equally impossible. Boots was in a position to enforce his authority. He had the power, and he had the determination.

When Turner and Page left the study they were subdued—and on the morrow they would commence their duties.

Buster smiled as the study door closed.

"They'll soon get used to it," he said calmly. "Every reformer has these troubles. But I'm the skipper, and I mean to let those chaps know it. What's the good of being captain if I don't have a better time than the rest of the chaps?"

"You can always rely on us to back you up, old man," said Percy Bray. "By the way, the club subscriptions amount to forty-seven pounds, two shillings. Not so bad, eh?"

"Fairly good—for a start," said Buster.

"But we shall need double that amount before we've finished. It won't take long to turn the Remove inside out, my sons. We've started well—and we'll continue better!"

CHAPTER IV.

A SHOCK FOR ARCHIE.



ARMSTRONG, of Study J, looked very important as he marched into the

Ancient House on the following morning. It was not yet breakfast time, and the early air was crisp and fresh, with a keen nip of autumn in it.

"Why this thusness?" inquired Reggie Pitt, as he paused before Armstrong. "Why the genial smile, and the cheerful grin? You look as if you've just found some good news."

Armstrong nodded.

"In a way, yes," he said. "The fact is, Buster's appointed me to a pretty responsible position."

"Oh, Buster has, eh?" said Pitt. "That's fearfully interesting! But I wasn't aware that Buster had any particular authority to appoint anybody to anything. But we live and learn."

"No authority?" repeated Armstrong. "Isn't Boots the captain?"

"Well, yes—but the captaincy doesn't invest a fellow with powers to make appointments," said Reggie. "Proceed, O chief! Pour thy wondrous story into my listening department. I would fain share thy jubilation."

"Well, in a nutshell, I'm vice-captain," said Armstrong.

"You're which?"

"Vice-captain."

"Oh, good!" said Reggie. "Clear as mud! I know as much as I did before! Kindly elaborate, old bird. I'm fearfully anxious to know what you're vice-captain of, and why and which."

"You funny ass!" growled Armstrong, conscious of the fact that Pitt was slightly sarcastic. "Buster himself is the captain of the Remove—and this morning he appointed me vice-captain. I'm to act on his behalf in the Ancient House. In other words, I'm his sole agent on this side."

"You speak like a commercial traveller!" said Reggie. "I'm blessed if I can see anything to crow about!"

"Who's crowing?"

"Well, if you weren't exactly crowing, you were getting ready to," said Pitt. "You were looking as pleased as a cockerel with two combs! And why? This appointment of vice-captain is hollow—it means nothing. If you want to know the absolute truth, it's just a wheeze of Buster's to shove some of his dirty work on to you."

"You're jealous—that's what's the matter with you!" sneered Armstrong. "Nipper used to be skipper—and now he's not even on the committee! I'm the vice-captain."

"I think you mentioned that before," said Pitt easily. "I may be wrong, but I have a distinct idea that you whispered it in my willing ear. But carry on—don't let me detain you. Vice-captains have vast and cumbersome duties to perform. Tarry not, O thou of great importance! And if it's not ungentlemanly, what's that you've got in your flipper?"

"This is the list of fellows to play in the footer match to-morrow afternoon," said Armstrong. "Buster selected the team, and I'm just going to pin it up on the board."

"The team?" asked Pitt politely. "Personally, I shouldn't care for the idea of being pinned up—"

"You needn't worry—you're not on the list!" interrupted Armstrong, with genuine relish.

Reggie clutched at his heart.

"Not on the list?" he said faintly. "My Heavens! Not that!" he added, with dramatic horror. "Unsay those terrible words, vice-captain! Surely Buster can't get on without me in the team? Who's going to take the corner kicks? Who's going to feed the inside-forwards? Lemme have a look at the list, anyway."

Pitt, in spite of his facetious manner, was really quite concerned. He had never considered the possibility of being left out of the team. He was the best outside left in the whole school. Even the First Eleven couldn't boast of a forward with Reginald Pitt's capability.

Reggie wasn't conceited—on the contrary, he was astonishingly modest, considering his extraordinary cleverness. He was one of those fellows to whom football comes as second nature. He had played for the English League in professional games, and at one time had been one of the most important forwards in the First Eleven of the Bannington professional team.

Even so, Reggie was just the same unassuming fellow as ever. But he certainly did pride himself with the belief that he was indispensable to the Remove Eleven. There were reserve men, of course, but they could not hope to touch Pitt's wonderful form.

Reggie looked at the list, and his eyes bulged somewhat.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "What's this—a joke? There's not a single member of the ordinary team here! Not one chap in the whole list! And you're on this list, Armstrong—you're on it!"

"Anything funny in that?" asked Armstrong tartly.

"It's not funny—it's tragic!" replied Pitt. "You're down here as one of the half-backs—and I don't believe you know the difference between a goal post and a touch line!

Aren't you the chap who thought a touch line was a rope?"

"No, I'm not!" howled Armstrong wrathfully. "And what do you mean—I don't know anything about football? Buster's a fine chap—he's given some good players a chance! That's more than Nipper ever did!"

Pitt still stared at the list in a dazed kind of way.

"It's a pity you haven't got Fatty Little as centre-forward," he said thoughtfully. "And why not have Teddy Long as goal-keeper? Timothy Tucker wouldn't be so bad in the half-back line—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" growled Armstrong. "Gimme that paper back!"

"Wait a minute—I can't see properly yet," said Pitt. "My eyes are still blurred. I want to look at it again, and make sure. Ye gods! Ye little fishes! I can't believe it! If the Grammar School chaps don't win by a score of fifty goals to nil it'll be a wonder!"

Armstrong snatched the paper, and stalked away. He wasn't exactly pleased with Reggie's frank criticism. He pinned the list on the green baize of the notice board, and gazed at it. And this is what he read:

"I have selected the following team for the match against Bannington Grammar School Junior Eleven to-morrow, Saturday, afternoon: Crooks, Webb, Clapson, Armstrong, Griffith, Turner, Crowe, Denny, Boots, Christine, Bray. This list will not be altered in any way, and no suggestions to that effect will be considered.

"JOHN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS,
"Remove Captain."

Reggie Pitt moved up, and looked at the notice again. He was still doing so when Jack Grey arrived, accompanied by Archie Glenthorne and De Valerie. Then Handforth & Co. put in an appearance, and Tregellis-West, and a few others. It doesn't take long to draw a crowd.

"What's all the giddy excitement?" demanded Handforth.

"The vice-chairman just pinned a notice on the board," explained Pitt. "It's the list of fellows for to-morrow's match."

Handforth nodded.

"I'm feeling in pretty good form just now," he remarked. "If any of those Grammar School forwards get the leather past me to-morrow it'll be a miracle."

"It will!" agreed Pitt grimly.

"Thanks!" said Handy.

"Oh, don't thank me—it'll be a miracle, because you're not playing," explained Reggie calmly. "Sad to relate, old son, we're not on the list. Our great and glorious names are conspicuous by their absence."

"Not on the list!" thundered Handforth. "Who's playing goalie, then?"

"Crooks!"

"Crooks!" bellowed Handforth, in a voice that made the Ancient House shiver. "I don't believe it! Lemme look! Get out of the way, you fatheads! Don't crowd round like that!"

A big mob was pressing round the notice board. If a machine-gun had suddenly opened fire upon them they could not have scattered more effectively. Handforth simply charged in, and carved his way through the whole throng. Fellows fell like ninepins.

But Handforth found himself in front of the board. He tore the notice down, and glared at it with such a ferocious aspect that Pitt half expected to see the paper scorching and bursting into flame.

"My name's not here!" hooted Handforth wildly.

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Pitt.

"And—and Nipper's not here, or De Valerie, or any of the usual team," went on Handforth in a gasping voice. "I've never known such a thing! It's—it's impossible!"

"Not a bit of it," said Church. "We know what Buster is—and I'm not at all surprised to see this list. He doesn't pick a team according to merit, but just according to his own fancy."

"Yes, that's obvious," agreed Grey. "He's given himself the centre-forward position, and he's got all his pals here—every one! Six fellows who haven't even been tested on the field! And look there—Griffith as centre-half! Why, Griffith isn't even good enough to play as a reserve!"

"It's outrageous!"

"We're not going to stand this!"

"Boots must be mad!"

"And only two Ancient House fellows in the whole team!" roared Handforth. "Armstrong and Griffith—two of the biggest duffers that ever jumped into football togs! And Crooks in goal!"

"The game looks like being a bit of a comedy," said De Valerie. "And no alterations will be made—not even a suggestion to that effect will be considered. It's there, in black and white. The great Boots has said so. The oracle has spoken, and we've got to grin and bear it!"

De Valerie's voice was very bitter.

"It's an insult to the Ancient House!" said Handforth hotly. "It's an insult that can only be wiped out in—in—"

"Blood?" suggested Pitt.

"Yes, blood!" thundered Handforth.

"I'm going to punch Buster's nose until he leaks like a tap! I'm going to make his study look like a slaughter-house! He hasn't got me on the list, eh? We'll soon see about that!"

Handforth strode towards the doorway, but Armstrong clutched at his sleeve.

"You can't see Boots!" he said sharply.

"Can't I?"

"No—and you don't need to, anyhow," went on Armstrong. "I'm Buster's representative in the Ancient House. I'm the vice-captain."

Handforth slowly rolled up his sleeves, and regarded Armstrong with new interest.

"What's this piffle?" he asked scathingly. "Who ever heard of a vice-captain? And what the dickens do you mean—you're Buster's representative?"

"I mean what I say," replied Armstrong. "You needn't go to Buster—I can deal with the matter. And I can tell you straight away that you won't be included in the team."

Biff!

"Yaroooh!" howled Armstrong, sitting violently on the mat.

"There's some blood already!" said Handforth callously, as Armstrong's nose began to spurt liquid red. "It's all right, Armstrong—you needn't worry—I didn't hit you at all!"

"Didn't hit me!" moaned Armstrong, in a faint voice.

"No—I was bashing Buster," replied Handforth sarcastically. "You say you're acting as his representative—so I've given you a taste of what's coming to him in about two minutes! Some of you other chaps had better ring up for the ambulance! By the time I've done with Buster he'll be unconscious!"

"We'll go one better—we'll send for the undertaker!" said Pitt.

Handforth strode out grimly. He cleared the Ancient House steps in one stride, and rushed across the College House like a charging bull. He was about to enter the College House lobby when the Faithful Five appeared, and barred the way.

"What do you want?" asked Percy Bray.

"I've come here to see Boots——"

"Sorry, you can't see the captain without an appointment!" said Percy.

Handforth gulped.

"An appointment!" he choked. "An appointment to see Buster!"

"The captain's time is very fully occupied, and he can't be bothered with noisy Fossils," said Percy Bray. "Sorry, old man—but that's the order. If you have any important subject to discuss with Buster, write it on a piece of paper, and I'll put it on the skipper's agenda."

Handforth attempted to make an adequate reply, but no words would come. He wanted to say so many at once that they all jammed. So he gave one bellow, in order to relieve his feelings, and charged.

It was an unwise move.

Edward Oswald was a dogged fighter, and he never considered the odds. He succeeded in biffing Crooks and Denny, but before he could do any further damage he was seized by firm hands.

Then he was hurled forth upon the hard and unsympathetic ground.

He landed on his left ear, twirled over and seemed to attempt the task of boring his face through the Triangle. By the time he was up he was decidedly groggy, and

(Continued on page 15.)

YOU CAN BEGIN GRAND NEW NELSON LEE SERIAL TO-DAY!



CONTAINS THE VERY BEST DETECTIVE STORIES.

OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION

No. 45.

PRESENTED WITH "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY." October 13, 1923.



THE MISSING HEIR

A clever Detective Story, featuring the brilliant exploits of Nelson Lee versus his most dangerous and unscrupulous opponent, Professor Mark Rymer.

FOR NEW READERS.

But for a son by a secret marriage the heir to Lord Easington would fall to Professor Mark Rymer, the crafty and unscrupulous cousin of the late peer. The story opens in Sydney, Australia, with Nelson Lee and his opponent, Rymer, setting off in search of the missing heir who, as Richard Seymour, is employed as a stockman in the interior of New South Wales. Rymer's intention is to get Seymour out of the way of the inheritance. The detective and the professor reach Garoo Downs within a few hours of each other. Exciting experiences from bush fires and bushrangers delay their progress. At length, Rymer discovers that Seymour has been gone two years, and was last heard of in New Zealand. Lee holds up Rymer and the bushrangers in their lair. But they bar themselves in their shanty.

(Now read on.)

THE BESIEGED SHANTY.

THE rest of the sentence was drowned by a perfect hurricane of rifle and revolver-shots, for as soon as the bushrangers had barred the door they had turned their weapons towards the windows and had fired a withering volley.

Thanks to the detective's warning shout, however, not a single trooper was hit, and a moment later they had crawled to the spot where Nelson Lee and the rest were mounting guard on the door.

"What's their idea?" asked one of the men. "Why have they barred themselves in?"

"To gain time, I suppose," said the detective. "They'll make a concerted rush as soon as they've pulled themselves together, I expect. But they can't escape. There are fifteen of us here, and six more guarding the entrance to the ravine; so we've only got to wait until they show themselves, and then we can drop them, one by one, as they come out. Of course, we could bring the affair to

a speedier conclusion by attacking the door and breaking it down. But we should be certain to lose some lives in the attempt; and I hardly think it's worth while to pay such a price when we can obtain the same result by quietly biding our time. There are only two ways by which they can get out of the shanty—through the door, or through the windows; and they can't get out through either without our seeing them."

The troopers were unanimous in their approval of Nelson Lee's tactics. When five minutes had elapsed, however, without any move on the part of the beleaguered bushrangers, the detective began to feel uneasy.

"What in thunder can they be up to?" he muttered to himself. "Surely they're not going to stand a siege, and wait for us to starve them out!"

Five more minutes passed. Not a sound could be heard inside the shanty. All was dark and silent as the grave.

"Hang it all, I can't stand this suspense any longer!" exclaimed Nelson Lee. "I must find out what the beggars are doing."

Bidding the troopers remain at their posts, he crawled on his hands and knees towards the silent shanty. Upon reaching the door he applied his ear to the outside and listened again. Still not a sound. Cautiously he raised himself on his knees and peered into the dark interior.

Then a cry of mortified surprise burst from his lips.

The shanty was deserted! Bush Billy and his gang, together with Mark Rymer, had disappeared as completely and mysteriously as if they had melted into air!

THE SECRET TUNNEL.

IN order to explain the mysterious disappearance of the bushrangers, it is necessary to go back to the moment when Bush Billy smashed the lamp and plunged the shanty in darkness.

As soon as he had accomplished this feat, he yelled to his confederates to close and bar the door; and when this had been done a volley of rifle and revolver fire was directed at the windows.

The next moment he dived beneath the table. There was a sound of shooting bolts and creaking hinges; then a muffled thud, as of wood falling back on wood.

"Now, my lads, it's open!" whispered Bush Billy, emerging from beneath the table again. "Down yer go, one at a time!"

"Wot about Mister Professor?" asked one of the gang. "Are we going to take him with us?"

"Why, yes, we may as well," replied Bush Billy. "He's acted fair by us, and it's only right as we should do the same by him. Down yer go, professor!"

Mark Rymer crawled underneath the table. He then perceived that Bush Billy had opened a trapdoor in the wooden floor of the shanty. From a couple of iron hooks on one side of the opening hung a stout rope-ladder, the

lower end of which was lost in Stygian darkness.

The professor descended the swaying ladder, and presently found himself in a natural underground vault, about the same size as the shanty.

"Are they still watching the door?" asked Bush Billy, when they were all gathered in the underground cave, addressing Sam, who had been the last to leave the shanty.

"The troopers are," said Sam; "but just as I turned away from the window, that detective fellow started to crawl towards the door."

"Then it's time we were making tracks," said Bush Billy. "Pull down that ladder, somebody."

One of his followers seized the ladder and gave it a jerk, which threw it off the hooks and brought it clattering down into the vault.

"What will you do if they pursue you?" asked the professor, who was shivering like a man in the throes of ague.

Before Bush Billy could reply the detective's shout of surprise from above was heard.

"He's found out that the nest is empty!" said Bush Billy excitedly. "They'll be in the shanty in two ticks. In you go, my lads! Me and the professor will come last."

Like a flock of startled rabbits scuttling into their burrows, the bushrangers raced across the vault, and vanished down a narrow passage. When the last man had disappeared, the professor and Bush Billy followed suit, and almost before they were fairly inside the passage the crash of a bursting door was heard, followed by the tramp of the troopers' feet in the shanty overhead.

"They've broken down the door!" exclaimed the professor, as he and his companion hurried along the passage. "They're in the shanty! Hark! They've discovered the trapdoor! Nelson Lee is shouting for a lantern and a rope! They'll be after us in no time!"

"I hope they will!" said Bush Billy grimly. "See that?" He pointed to a dark object about fifteen or twenty yards farther along the passage.

"That's a barrel of blasting powder!" he said. "There's a slow match in the bunghole which is timed to burn exactly sixty seconds. The rock above is only waiting for a shock to bring it tumbling down. Twig the idea?"

"You are going to blow up the passage?" "Precisely!" said Bush Billy. "That's what the barrel's there for. It's a dodge we always meant to work if ever we were cornered."

By that time they had reached the barrel. A moment later Bush Billy had ignited the fuse, and he and Mark Rymer were tearing down the passage with the fleetness of the wind.

Twenty—thirty—forty—fifty seconds passed. Then Nelson Lee, with a lantern in one hand and his revolver in the other, appeared at the end of the passage.

"This is the way they've gone!" he cried, turning and addressing the troopers, who were swarming down into the vault by means of a rope. "Come along! We'll have them yet!"

He darted down the passage at the top of his speed. Suddenly, however, he checked himself with a gasp of alarm. He had just caught sight of the cask of powder and the smouldering fuse.

"Back! Back for your lives!" he yelled, wheeling round. "The scoundrels have——"

It was too late. Even as he spoke the gloom was rent by a dazzling flash of light, accompanied by a deafening roar, and fol-

Having hastily bound up his wounds, and ascertained that none of his companions were seriously hurt, the detective set to work to examine the fallen mass, in the hope of finding some way of getting past it. A very brief examination, however, sufficed to show him that no such way existed. At a moderate computation, at least five hundred tons of earth and rock had fallen into the passage, filling it up from side to side, and from floor to roof, like a tightly-fitting cork. To get past this obstruction, or under it, or over it, was impossible. To tunnel a way through it would have needed the services of a steam-navvy and a gang of labourers.



"Back! Back for your lives!" he yelled, wheeling round. "The scoundrels have——"

It was too late. Even as he spoke the gloom was rent by a dazzling flash of light, accompanied by a deafening roar, and followed by an avalanche of flying stones and masses of rock.

lowed by an avalanche of flying stones and masses of rock.

So violent was the concussion of the air that Nelson Lee was swept off his feet and hurled back into the arms of the troopers behind him.

Incredible as it may sound, however, the only injuries he sustained were a number of trifling bruises and a skin-deep wound on the side of the head.

That he was not more seriously injured was due, of course, to the fact that gun-powder only attains its maximum power of destruction when exploded in a confined space.

"It's a case of checkmate this time, sir," said one of the troopers ruefully.

"Perhaps, and perhaps not," said Nelson Lee. "It's 'check,' I admit, but it remains to be seen whether it's 'mate.' We have still another move left."

"What's that?" cried a dozen eager voices. The detective placed his pocket-compass on the ground, and pointed to the quivering needle.

"This portion of the passage runs due north and south," he said. "Supposing it continues to run in the same direction to the end, where will it come out?"

"On the other side of the hill at the back of the shanty."

"And what is there on the other side of the hill?"

"The Wangonilla Valley."

"Then the men we are after ultimately reach the open air in Wangonilla Valley."

"Of course!"

"Then that's where we must go."

"But what's the use?" asked one of the troopers. "The valley lies on the other side of the mountain-range, and the only way of reaching it from here, now that the passage is blocked, is by riding round by Goodman's Gap, a distance of nearly twenty miles. However fast we ride, we can't possibly reach the other end of this passage under two hours and a half, whilst Bush Billy and his men will be there in about twenty minutes."

"And what do you suppose they will do when they get there?" asked Nelson Lee.

"Scoot!" said the trooper. "Vamoose—skedaddle—make tracks. Clear out of this part of the country as quickly as ever they can."

"On foot?" asked the detective quietly.

"Humph! I'd forgotten they'd left their horses behind," said the trooper. "Still, I don't see how we can hope——" Suddenly he checked himself, and a gleam of intelligence flashed into his eyes. "By Jove, I begin to see what you're driving at!" he cried. "It's as plain as a pikestaff what Bush Billy and his men will do as soon as they reach the open air. They'll make a raid on the nearest station, and collar a nag apiece."

"Exactly," said Nelson Lee. "A bush-ranger without a horse is like a bird without wings. As soon as they reach the valley of which you have spoken, they will make their way to the nearest station in order to provide themselves with horses. Now, you know the Wangonilla Valley better than I do. Supposing we are right as to the situation of the other end of this passage, which is the likeliest station for them to raid?"

"Tom Bellamy's!" cried all the troopers in a breath.

"And how far is Bellamy's station from the probable outlet of this passage?"

"Eight or nine miles."

"How long will it take them to get there, reckoning from the time they reach the end of the passage? A couple of hours?"

"Every minute of it."

"And we can be there in two hours and a half?"

"In two hours and a quarter at a pinch."

"Then what could be simpler?" said Nelson Lee triumphantly. "All we've got to do is to ride to Bellamy's station as quickly as ever we can. The moon will be up in another hour, so that if the road is anything like decent we may possibly reach the station in time to give Bush Billy and his gang a rousing welcome when they arrive. In any case, we certainly ought to be able to reach the station before they have time to clear off with their plunder. Are you game to make the attempt?"

"Yes!" was the unanimous response.

"Then come along!" cried Nelson Lee.

He darted back into the vault, and swarmed up the rope into the shanty overhead. The troopers lost no time in following his example, and a moment later they were racing down the starlit ravine towards the plantation in which they had left their horses.

TOO LATE!

THE Wangonilla Valley!"

It was one of the troopers who spoke, addressing Nelson Lee. They had ridden through Goodman's Gap, and had halted on the edge of an elevated plateau which overlooked the valley. The silver sickle of the waning moon was high in the starry heavens, and the whole of the valley below lay spread out before them in a picturesque patchwork of pearly-white patches of light and inky-black blots of shadow.

From east to west the valley was close upon twenty miles wide. On each side was a lofty range of rugged hills, whilst running down the middle was a broad but shallow river.

The plateau upon which the troopers halted formed one of the lower slopes of one of the hills of the eastern range. At the foot of this range was a narrow belt of virgin forest, about a couple of miles in breadth. Between this forest and the river was an undulating grassy plain, with here and there a tiny clump of trees.

On the other side of the river, between the river and the range of hills on the west side of the valley, was an arid wilderness of broken and unfertile ground, thickly covered with prickly scrub, and interspersed with numerous gullies and ravines.

Almost in the middle of the grassy plain above mentioned, and plainly visible from the troopers' halting-place, was a compact block of wooden buildings, roofed with corrugated iron. The back of the buildings, which faced towards the south-east, was bathed in silvery moonlight. The front was immersed in a jet-black mass of shadow.

"That's Tom Bellamy's station," said one of the troopers, as he drew Nelson Lee's attention to this block of buildings. "And, unless I'm out of my reckoning"—he pointed to a distant hill at the southern end of the valley—"that's the hill at the back of the shanty in the Glen. If we are right in thinking that the underground passage comes out on this side of that hill, and if Bush Billy and his men are making for Bellamy's station, they ought to be somewhere on a line between that hill and those buildings. I don't see anything of them, though."

"Neither do I," said Nelson Lee. "All the same that doesn't prove that my prophecy was wrong. For anything we know, the bush-whackers may have already

The sentence ended in a startled gasp, for at that moment the black mass of

shadow in front of the station was suddenly bespangled with five or six flashes of light, which were followed a few seconds later by the clear, crisp crackle of an equal number of rifle-shots.

"There they are!"

Half a dozen voices uttered the words at the self-same moment.

"But why the deuce are they blazing away like that?" added one of the men.

station bespattered with flashes of light; again was the silence rent by the crackle of rifle-fire.

"That was Bush Billy and his men!" continued the detective. "They have taken cover some distance in front of the house, and are firing at the windows. By-and-by, if they follow their usual tactics, they'll make a rush, and attempt to carry the place by storm. Come along! We shall



In less time than it takes to tell, the wounded brute rolled headlong down the side of the chasm. The detective alighted on the small of his back on the very brink of the abyss.

"I should have thought that their wisest plan would have been to have crept round to the paddock or the stables and collared the horses, and ridden away as quickly and as quietly as possible."

"That's probably what they intended to do," said Nelson Lee. "But Bellamy and his men evidently saw them and have opened fire on them. All those flashes just now proceeded from the windows of the house. See!"

Again was the darkness in front of the

need to ride like the very deuce if we're going to circumvent them."

Suiting the action to the word, he drove his spurs into his horse's sides, and galloped down the hill at a reckless pace. The troopers followed suit, and a quarter of an hour later they had threaded their way through the gloomy mazes of the forest at the foot of the hill, and were galloping across the moonlit plain.

During the whole of the time they had been in the forest, the station was, of

OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION

course, completely hidden from view. Even as they rode across the plain they could only catch an occasional glimpse of its corrugated-iron roof, for the surface of the ground was undulating, and the station stood in one of the hollows. But though they could not see what was taking place, they could hear the rattle of rifle-fire, which told them that Bellamy and his men were still keeping the bushrangers at bay.

"We shall be in time, after all!" cried Nelson Lee exultingly. "We can't be more than a couple of miles from the station now. If Bellamy and his men can only hold out for another ten minutes or so—"

He checked himself, and uttered a groan of despair. Whilst he had been speaking the character of the firing had suddenly changed. The rifle-fire had ceased, and the angry bark of revolvers had taken its place. For a second or two the air was rent by a perfect pandemonium of shots and shouts, mingled with the clatter of breaking glass and the crash of splintering wood. Then all at once the tumult died down, and a gravelike silence reigned.

"You spoke too soon, sir," said one of the troopers, riding up to Nelson Lee's side. "Instead of being just in time, we are just too late!"

"Too late to save the lives of Bellamy and his men, perhaps," said the detective, between his clenched teeth; "but not too late, please Heaven, to settle accounts with their murderers!"

The trooper fell back, and a few minutes later they reached the rim of the hollow in which the station stood. This hollow was a good half-mile in diameter, and the station stood in the centre, so that when the troopers came within sight of the house, it was four or five hundred yards away.

At the first glance it appeared to be deserted, for most of the bushrangers were rummaging the house in search of plunder; whilst the rest, together with Mark Rymer, were in the stables, selecting the pick of the horses.

"We must first surround the house," began Nelson Lee; but almost before the words had crossed his lips, Mark Rymer emerged from one of the stables, leading Bellamy's favourite horse.

Upon seeing the troopers he gave a shout of alarm, whilst at the same instant he scrambled on to the back of the horse, which he had already saddled, and dashed away up the opposite side of the hollow at a furious gallop.

Half a dozen bullets instantly flew after him; but his life appeared to be charmed, for he still rode on, and a moment later he had gained the crest of the slope, and had vanished into the shelter of a clump of trees.

"Come back!" roared Nelson Lee, as several of the troopers started in pursuit. "Leave the professor to me! You stay here and look after this lot!"

"This lot" was Bush Billy and his gang, who now came flocking out of the house,

stables, and outbuildings, like a swarm of frightened bees. Before the scoundrels had time to recover from their surprise the troopers were amongst them—riding this man down, shooting this man at close range, or clubbing this man with the butt-end of a rifle.

Nothing would have given Nelson Lee more pleasure than to have taken part in this inspiring charge; but he had "other fish to fry," and after a parting shout of encouragement to his comrades, he galloped off in swift pursuit of the fugitive professor.

By the time he reached the clump of trees into which Mark Rymer had vanished, the latter had passed out at the other side, and was heading straight for the river, with the intention of crossing it and gaining the broken ground beyond.

On reaching the water's edge, however, his horse pulled up, and could not be induced to enter the shallow stream.

The animal's stubborn behaviour roused all the latent savagery in Mark Rymer's nature. With merciless ferocity he spurred the horse's quivering sides, and belaboured its flanks and neck with the butt of his riding-whip.

Unused to such brutality, the horse began to rear and plunge, to jib and buck, to prance and kick—to do everything, in fact, except go forward into the water.

In the meantime, of course, Nelson Lee was fast gaining ground. When he saw that his rival's horse had declined to enter the stream, the detective whipped out his revolver.

No sooner had he done so, however, than the light began to fail, and, on glancing up at the sky he perceived that a long, black bank of sable cloud was now in the act of drifting over the moon.

Realising that it would be absolutely dark in another second or two, he threw all scruples to the wind, and levelled his revolver at Mark Rymer's horse, which was now but thirty yards ahead, and was still cavorting on the river's bank. Ere his finger could press the trigger, however, the moon retired behind the clouds, and both horse and rider were instantly swallowed up in impenetrable darkness.

The next instant the sound of vigorous splashing fell on Nelson Lee's ears, and told him that Mark Rymer's horse had at last been forced to enter the stream. Fortune, in fact, had once more declared on the side of the professor; and by the time the detective had persuaded his horse to take the water, Mark Rymer had gained the opposite bank, and was galloping towards the hills on the western side of the valley.

Between the river and the foot of these hills was a wild expanse of desolate, uneven ground, fissured with innumerable chasms and crevasses, and thickly carpeted with stunted scrub.

As the moon was now hidden, Mark Rymer was obliged to proceed with caution,

since one false step might have landed him into a crevasse.

Presently, however, hearing the detective thundering after him, he plied both whip and spur with such barbarous persistency that his tortured horse was goaded into frenzy, and dashed on at a furious gallop.

About a mile and a half had been covered in this reckless fashion, when all at once, with a suddenness that was positively startling, the moon emerged from behind the clouds and flooded the scene with silvery light. To his dismay, Mark Rymer then perceived that Nelson Lee was but twenty yards behind him, whilst immediately in front of him—stretching right across his path—was the yawning chasm of a dried-up watercourse.

To clear this chasm, which was fully twenty feet in width, and of unknown depth, seemed an impossibility. What was to be done?

There was no time for hesitation. One glance sufficed to reveal the situation—one second sufficed for him to make up his mind.

Sitting well down in his saddle, he clenched his teeth, and rode right for the brink of the chasm. Upon reaching the rocky edge, he plunged his spurs into his horse's sides, and an instant later, with a wild whoop of defiance, he had "lifted" his mount across the yawning gulf, and had landed safely on the other side.

No sooner had he landed than he reined in his horse and literally rolled out of the saddle. Quivering with excitement, he scrambled to his feet and whipped out his revolver. By that time the detective had reached the edge of the chasm, and was in the act of "taking off." As the horse rose for the leap the professor levelled his weapon and fired. What happened next he could not see, for even as he pressed the trigger the moon retired behind the clouds, and inky darkness fell.

But across the darkness there came the scream of a mortally-wounded horse, accompanied by a hoarse cry of despair from Nelson Lee, and followed by a rumbling, rolling sound, that ended in a sickening crash on the jagged rocks below.

A GREAT SURPRISE FOR THE PROFESSOR!

TWELVE hours later Mark Rymer rode into Hermidale, a township on the line between Cobar and Sydney. It was then Wednesday afternoon. By Thursday he was back in Sydney, and on Saturday he sailed for New Zealand in the ss. Waihora.

The voyage lasted four days and a half. He landed at Wellington on the following Thursday morning, and immediately took train to Napier, the town in which Dick Seymour had last been heard of.

At seven o'clock on Thursday evening, the professor reached Napier. There he took up his quarters at the Clarendon Hotel, and

early next morning, freed now from the unwelcome attentions of Nelson Lee, he sallied forth and commenced his quest for Lord Easington's missing heir.

But in thinking that he had nothing now to fear from Nelson Lee, the professor was making a very great mistake!

When Mark Rymer had whipped out his revolver on the further side of the chasm, the detective had divined at once what the scoundrel's intention was. Instantly, therefore, although his own horse had already risen for the leap, Nelson Lee loosed his hold on the reins, kicked his feet out of the stirrups, and flung himself backwards off his horse's back.

At the self-same instant Mark Rymer's bullet buried itself in the animal's neck, and in less time than it takes to tell, the wounded brute rolled headlong down the side of the chasm, and was dashed to pieces on the rocks beneath. The detective, on the other hand, alighted on the small of his back on the very brink of the chasm, with the lower half of his body dangling over the abyss.

For one brief fraction of a second his fate hung in the balance, but, with a superhuman effort, he rolled himself over on his face, and dug his finger-nails into the hard unyielding soil.

Having thus anchored himself, as it were, he paused for a moment to recover his wind; then, inch by inch, he dragged himself over the edge till his safety was assured.

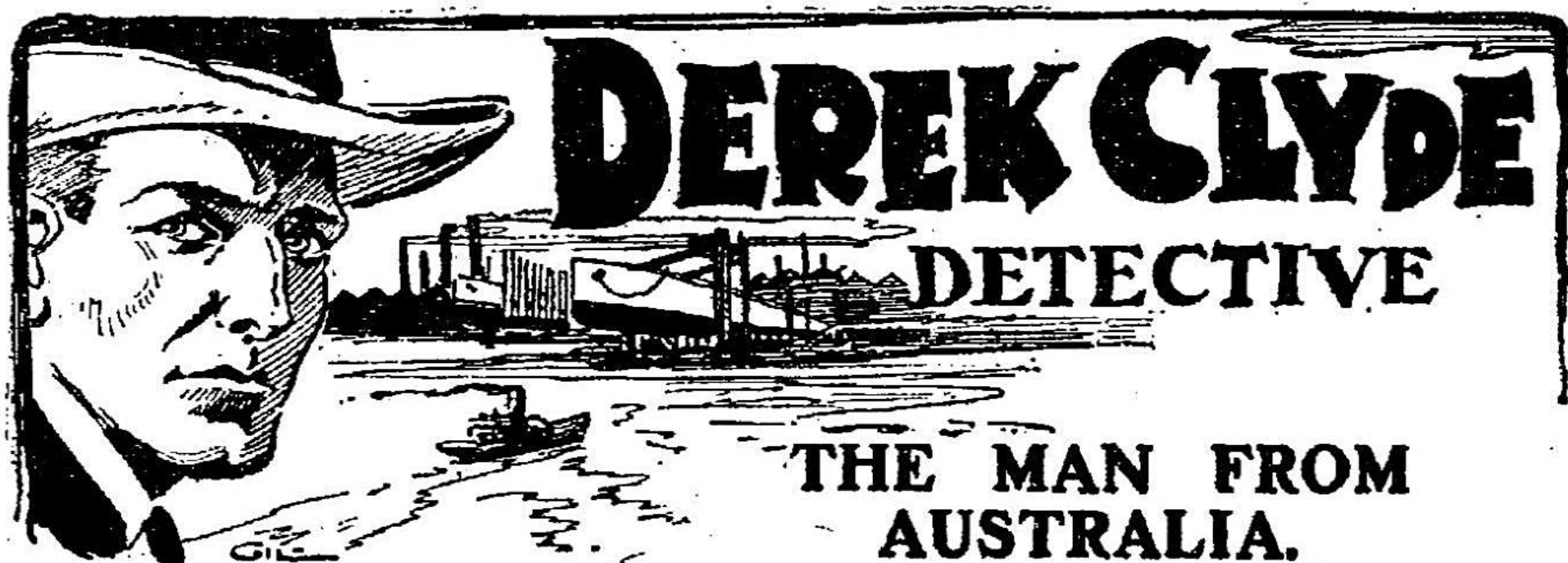
When he attempted to rise to his feet, however, he found that he had wrenched his knee to such an extent that walking was impossible. So, with a heavy heart, he abandoned the chase, and started to crawl back on his hands and knees to Bellamy's station.

Shortly before he reached the river he was met by a party of the troopers who had been sent to search for him. From these he learned that the whole of Bush Billy's gang, with the exception of Bush Billy himself, and either been captured or killed.

Bush Billy, it appeared, had been examining the horses in the paddock, when the troopers had surrounded the station, and as soon as he had heard the sound of firing he had jumped on to one of the horses, and made his escape.

Having carried Nelson Lee to the station, the troopers placed him in the murdered squatter's buggy and drove him in comparative comfort to Cobar. By the time he reached Cobar his knee had swollen to more than double its normal size; and from Wednesday afternoon until Friday night he was compelled to keep his bed, with an ice-bag on the injured joint. On Saturday morning, however, he was so much better that the doctor gave him permission to leave, and by Saturday night he was back in Sydney.

(This thrilling narrative continued next week.)

GRAND NEW COMPLETE TALES OF THE FAMOUS SCOTS DETECTIVE!**THE MAN UNDER THE BED.**

HOW'S business, Mr. Leland?"

Inspector Gaunt, of the Torquay Police, in making his usual round, had called at the Grandcourt Hotel. He was on friendly terms with Mr. Leland, the manager, and often called for a short talk—and something else.

"Very good," replied Leland. "One of the best seasons we have had for a few years. I was just afraid——"

He was interrupted by the sound of scurrying feet on the stairs; and the next moment one of the servants, a young woman, breathless, panic-stricken, with eyes of horror staring out of her head, burst into the room.

Mr. Leland jumped to his feet in consternation.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, paling visibly. "What's the matter?"

"There—there's a man in Mr. Beverley's room, sir!" gasped the horrified girl. "On the floor under the bed!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Leland. "Mr. Beverley left last night!"

"I know he did, sir! It isn't Mr. Beverley! It is somebody else! I have never seen him before!"

"Then who the deuce can he be? Under the bed? Is—is he dead?"

"I—I don't know. He looks like it. Or he may only be dying. Oh, I can't go up there again." And the girl covered her face with her hands, as if to shut out some awful sight.

Mr. Leland telephoned for a doctor, and then he and the inspector hastened upstairs. The sight they met was an appalling one. A man lay on the floor unconscious, his face battered, but, fortunately, still breathing.

The inspector looked grave.

"This looks a serious business," he said.

"Derek Clyde, the Glasgow detective, is in Torquay. Here is his address. Telephone for him at once. I should like to have his assistance, as this may prove to be a rather mysterious case. I will go up now," he added. "As soon as Mr. Clyde comes, send him to me."

Derek Clyde lost no time answering the summons, and when he arrived he found Dr. Blane bending over the injured man.

"I am glad you have come, Mr. Clyde," said the inspector. "It was good of you. This looks like a mysterious affair."

He introduced Clyde to the manager, who briefly and clearly related the facts to him.

"For the past ten days," he began, "this room has been occupied by a Mr. Roger Beverley. He was a fair gentleman of between thirty and forty, I should judge, with a tawny beard and moustache. He told me that he had been born in this country, but had spent most of his life in Australia, and that he had returned to England on a visit."

"He made the acquaintance of two other gentlemen while he was in Torquay, and on several occasions, always at night, he brought them in with him, and took them up to his room for an hour or so."

"Not once did I have a good look at either of them, but, to the best of my recollection, one was clean shaven and the other had a moustache. They never came into the office, and I never happened to meet them on the stairs."

"About nine o'clock last night I had a glimpse of Mr. Beverley going along the hall towards the staircase with these two gentlemen. I saw nothing more of them. One of them must have slipped down and out afterwards without my knowledge."

THE TELL-TALE ASHES.

BETWEEN eleven and twelve o'clock, when I was busy in the office, Mr. Beverley came in with his bag, and told me that he had to catch the last train up to town.

"I have been expecting a pal of mine from Australia," he said to me, "and I saw in a paper this evening that the boat by which he sailed had reached London. It was very stupid of me to forget that I was to have met him there."

"Those were the gentleman's very words, sir. He paid his bill and went off, and——"

Mr. Leland paused for a moment, and then, in a few words, he spoke of the dis-

covery the chambermaid had made in the morning.

"Was no sound heard from this room last night?"

"No, Mr. Clyde. A strong wind was blowing from the sea, and the waves were pounding on the beach, which is within a few yards of the hotel."

"What kind of a bag did Mr. Beverley have?"

"It was a brown kitbag, sir, fairly large."

"How was he dressed when he left?"

"He wore a soft hat, and a check suit of a rather striking pattern. He has been wearing it constantly since he came here."

Inspector Gaunt had been listening without comment. Knowing the detective as he did, he had concluded that he would give him a free hand. Clyde turned to the physician.

"What are your patient's injuries?" he inquired.

"He has been struck repeatedly on the face," Dr. Blane answered. "One of the blows must have knocked him down, and in falling he hit his head against the base of the wall or on the fireplace. There is concussion of the brain, but no fracture of the skull."

"He is likely to recover, doctor?"

"Yes, Mr. Clyde, there is no reason why he should not. He may be unconscious for several days, though. I am going to send him to the Cottage Hospital, where he will be under my care. I have sent for an ambulance."

As the physician spoke, steps were heard in the hall. There was a rap at the door, and two powerful men came in with a stretcher. They gently placed the injured man on it, and covered him with a blanket; and when they had departed, Dr. Blane going with them, Derek Clyde started to investigate. He glanced at the dressing-table, and looked into a chest of drawers; peered into a cupboard, and opened the doors of a wardrobe.

"Ah, something has been burnt here!" he murmured, glancing into the fireplace.

Taking a lens from his pocket, he put it to his eye, and examined some ashes of paper that were in the grate. He stirred them with his finger, and rose to his feet. For a few seconds he stood quite still, an absent expression on his face.

A moment later he stepped to a chair that was covered with dark red plush, and was close to the wardrobe. He bent over it, and, making use of the lens again, he intently scrutinised the seat of the chair. All his companions could see there was a faint smudge that was of a light colour. There was a gleam of perplexity in Clyde's eyes as he looked up at the wardrobe, which was an uncommonly tall one, reaching almost to the ceiling.

"Was there anything on the top of this piece of furniture, Mr. Leland?" he asked.

THE UNOCCUPIED ROOM.

"YES, Mr. Beverley kept his kitbag there," the manager replied.

"How do you know he did?"

"I noticed it on the top of the wardrobe when I was in the room a couple of days ago."

"Who occupies room 8 in this hotel?" was the detective's next question.

Mr. Leland stared in surprise, and so did the inspector. "There is nobody there, sir," the former answered. "The room has not been occupied for a week."

"Indeed? How is that, in this busy season?"

"It was damaged by the curtains catching fire, Mr. Clyde, and no guest has been in it since. There is some repairing to be done."

Clyde seemed to be pleased, for he rubbed his hands together, and his solemn countenance relaxed to the glimmer of a smile. He glanced at his watch, and lit a cigarette.

"I have finished here," he said cheerfully. "Come, Gaunt, let us go now. Well, Mr. Leland, you have given us all the information in your power. The police will set to work presently, and I trust that it will not be long until Mr. Roger Beverley has been found."

Inspector Gaunt, seated in his room at the police-station in the Devonshire Road, swung round from his desk as the door was opened. Derek Clyde walked in, with a cheerful nod, and dropped into a chair.

"I expected you before," said the inspector. "It was nine o'clock when you left me, and it is a quarter past twelve now. Have you learned anything?"

"A little," Clyde replied, as he began to fill his pipe. "I will speak of it presently. What steps have you taken?"

"My men have a description of Roger Beverley, and they are searching for him, on the slight chance of his being in hiding in the town. I have sent a similar description by wire to Scotland Yard, and also to the police of Exeter. But I daresay the fellow is in London, and if so, it will be difficult, if not impossible to trace him. I am as anxious to catch the other man, who must have helped Beverley in the assault. I suppose you have been looking for him."

"I have been, Gaunt, and I have learned something of him."

"Indeed? How is that?"

"I went straight to the Hotel Imperator, which closely adjoins the Grandcourt Hotel, and made inquiries. I asked which guest occupied room number 8, and was told that he was a Mr. James Ancroft."

Inspector Gaunt looked puzzled. "Why did you put that question, Clyde?" he inquired. "And what led you straight to the Hotel Imperator?"

OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION

THE MESSAGE.

"A DISCOVERY I made this morning at the Grandcourt," Clyde answered. "You will remember my examining the chair by the wardrobe. On the seat of that chair was a whitish mark, so faint that it was scarcely visible to the naked eye. But I perceived, by the aid of my lens, that it was a figure 8. It was obvious to me, therefore, that some person had stepped on the chair, that the figure 8 had been chalked on his boots, and that he could not have moved about much with those boots on."

"It is a clever deduction. You did not tell me of your discovery before. I understand, Clyde. Go on."

"I knew that Mr. Beverley could not have worn the boots, and, judging that the person who had left the mark was a visitor to Torquay, I naturally went first to the Hotel Imperator close by. As for Mr. James Ancroft, I will briefly state the facts relating to him. He registered from London, and he is a man of perhaps forty, with a fairish moustache.

"He was absent from the hotel last night from before nine o'clock until after midnight. He was not seen to return, but he was heard moving about in his room at half-past twelve.

"Between eight and nine o'clock this morning, while you and I were at the Grandcourt, this gentleman came downstairs, paid his bill, and left with his bag. I went to the railway station, inquired there, and ascertained that a man who fitted the description of Mr. Ancroft had booked to London by the nine o'clock train."

"Then you think that this Mr. James Ancroft was one of Roger Beverley's two friends, Clyde?"

"Well, I think the inference is warranted?"

"Yes, you are quite right. He and somebody else went with Mr. Beverley to his room at the Grandcourt last night. But why did Ancroft step on the chair? For what reason?"

"To get Mr. Beverley's kitbag from the top of the wardrobe, of course," said Clyde.

"No doubt," assented the inspector. "I suppose Beverley told him to hand the bag down to him. It is a queer business. I wonder what led to the quarrel between the injured man and the other two? I daresay the victim of the assault was robbed, Clyde?"

Clyde nodded vaguely. He took from his pocket, and handed to Inspector Gaunt, a slip of paper on which he had written, as follows:

"To Inspector Harkness, Scotland Yard, London. Meet 12.50 express, Paddington, and arrest on suspicion man of average height, slim build, with fairish moustache, wearing grey suit and bowler hat, carrying black bag like large suitcase. Hold until further instructions. Wire if make arrest."

Having read the message, the inspector pulled his watch from his pocket, and glanced at Clyde in consternation.

"It will be too late to send this!" he exclaimed. "It is half-past twelve now!"

Clyde smiled. "I sent the message off an hour ago, my dear fellow," he replied.

"Ah, that's all right! But James Ancroft may not go to London."

"The probabilities are that he will."

"He may alter his appearance during the journey."

"No, he won't. He feels that he is perfectly safe. I think we shall get him. The case has been moving rapidly."

"Thanks to you," said Inspector Gaunt. "As for the injured man, it won't be long until he is able to make a statement."

"In a day or so, I expect," Clyde replied. "There is the third man, but I am not concerned about him at present."

"And what of Roger Beverley? Did he go up to town last night, Clyde, or did he wait until this morning and travel with Ancroft?"

"He went last night. I am sure of it. And yet——" Clyde paused abruptly. "It is much more likely that he went with Ancroft," he said.

He rose as he spoke. "I'll be off now," he added. "I can't do anything more until I have heard from Inspector Harkness, as I probably shall in the course of the day."

That afternoon Clyde received a telegram from his friend Inspector Harkness, and sent a reply to it, and subsequently he paid a visit to the Cottage Hospital. He called there twice during the next day, and in the evening he wrote to Harkness, and posted the letter at once.

On the following day he rang up the hospital on the telephone, and early in the afternoon he dropped in at the police-station, and held a short conversation with Inspector Gaunt. He then went to the Cottage Hospital again, and had a few words with the nurse who was in charge of the injured man.

"Well, how is your patient?" he asked. "Still improving?"

"Yes, he is doing splendidly," the nurse replied. "He has taken food, and slept for hours. He is awake now, and able to see callers."

"He knows what happened to him, I presume?"

"Oh, yes; he spoke of that."

"Has he made any other statements?"

"No, Mr. Clyde. I wouldn't let him. I told him, as you instructed me, that he must wait until you came."

Clyde nodded. "That was quite right," he said. "I am expecting visitors from London shortly. Inspector Gaunt is bringing them." He glanced at his watch. "They should be here in about half an hour, nurse," he continued. "I will go to your patient's room and wait there."

A CUNNING INSPIRATION.

THE clean-shaven man, who had been assaulted at the Grandcourt Hotel was sitting up in bed, and Derek Clyde was seated by his side, when the expected visitor arrived.

Inspector Gaunt, and a plain-clothes officer from Scotland Yard, came into the room with their prisoner, who had been arrested at Paddington two days before, and had been brought handcuffed from London to Torquay. He was a slim man of medium height, with a fairish moustache;

ley's checks, and, leaning forward, he shook his fist at the prisoner.

"That is one of the rascals!" he cried angrily. "You have got the right man, Mr. Clyde! He is James Ancroft, and his friend's name was Delaval. I made their acquaintance some days ago, and their plausible, gentlemanly manners deceived me.

"It was at their suggestion that we played cards night after night, in my room at the Grandcourt Hotel, and the fact that I lost heavily on each occasion gradually



"I watched very closely when we played cards again and discovered to a certainty that I was being cheated. I lost my temper and kicked up a row!"

and he wore a grey suit and a bowler hat. His bearing was calm.

"Ah, here you are, Gaunt!" said Clyde. "And now, before I clear up the mystery, let me introduce you to Mr. Roger Beverley."

As he spoke he pointed to the patient, and the inspector looked in blank amazement from one to the other.

"This—this is Mr. Beverley?" he exclaimed. "You don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do," said Clyde. "There is no mistake."

A tinge of colour flushed to Roger Bever-

roused my suspicions. I watched very closely on Tuesday night, when we played again, and I discovered to a certainty that I was being cheated.

"Naturally, I lost my temper, and kicked up a row. I threatened the scoundrels, and Ancroft made a savage attack on me, dealing me several hard blows, and finally knocking me down. I struck my head in falling, and remembered nothing more until I came to my senses here in the hospital, and found to my bewilderment that my beard and moustache had been cut off."

Mr. Beverley sank back, exhausted by the

effort of speaking, and Clyde turned to the sullen prisoner.

"You need not make any statements unless you wish to do so," he said. "Perhaps you had better not. But I believe I can reconstruct the whole affair of Tuesday night. You were frightened after you had knocked Mr. Beverley down. You knew that he was badly hurt, and you were afraid that he might die.

"A cunning inspiration occurred to you, prompted by the facts that both you and your victim were fair, and that you were of much the same build. Your idea was to impersonate Roger Beverley and disappear, taking it for granted that it would be he for whom the police would search, and that you would have ample time to get out of reach before the trick could be discovered.

"Leaving your friend Delaval in the room, you slipped unobserved downstairs and out of the hotel, went to your room in the adjoining Hotel Emperor, and as furtively returned. You brought with you a false beard, which you had probably used on previous occasions, and also some other things which you needed. And then——"

A DEFIANT PRISONER.

"**Y**OU can spare me the details, sir," James Ancroft interrupted, in an insolent tone. "I am not denying anything."

"I prefer to finish my story," Clyde replied. "To continue, you cut off Mr. Beverley's beard and moustache and shaved him, and burnt the shaving-papers and the hair in the fireplace. You got into his clothes and dressed him in yours.

"You stepped on a chair to reach his kit-bag, which was on the top of the wardrobe; and in so doing impressed very faintly on the seat of the chair the number of your room at the Emperor, which had been chalked on the soles of your boots.

"Having packed Roger Beverley's things in his bag, you altered your features so deftly that you bore a striking resemblance to him, put on his soft hat, adjusted the false beard to your face, and departed with your companion after thrusting your unconscious victim under the bed.

"The man Delaval left the hotel without being seen, and you went into the office, and, passing as Beverley, paid the bill, and told the manager that you were going to London. You then walked over to the Hotel Emperor, and entered unobserved. And early the next morning, wearing a grey suit of your own, and without your false beard, you went off to the railway-station and travelled up to town. Are my deductions correct?"

"They are right in every respect, sir," the prisoner admitted, with an ironical smile.

"I understand from Mr. Beverley," Clyde resumed, "that there was a sum of £400

in a pocket of the suit you took from him. I presume that you——"

"Four hundred pounds in notes were found on this man, sir," the Scotland Yard officer broke in. "They were in a wallet."

"And now, what of Mr. Beverley's bag?" Clyde asked. "What did you do with it?"

"I hid it in the Rock Gardens," was the reply. "It is beneath a clump of bushes, up on one of the terraces."

"And your friend Delaval? Where is he?"

"He is in London, and he is safe there."

"You won't give any information about him, Ancroft?"

"Certainly not. You will never get him, you may be sure."

Clyde shrugged his shoulders. "Come, Gaunt, let us take this rogue to the police station and have him charged," he said. "Everything has been made clear to you, I presume."

That evening, in Inspector Gaunt's room at the police station, Clyde spoke of the deductions which had enabled him to so promptly solve the mysterious affair of the Grandcourt Hotel.

"The singed hairs gave me the first clue," he said. "I found a small number of them under the grate in the bedroom. From the nature of them I judged they had been cut from a beard or a moustache, and, as I had learned that Roger Beverley had a beard and moustache, I was led to think that it was he who had been shaved, and that he was the victim of the assault.

"The rest was easy. Knowing that the man who had left the figure 8 on the seat of the chair could not have walked any distance with his boots on—otherwise the chalk marks would have worn off—I went first to the Hotel Emperor, and got on the track of Mr. James Ancroft. The evidence is strong against him, and he will get a year or so in prison.

"I have enjoyed working on this case," he added. "It is finished now, and to-morrow I will be off. My holiday at Torquay has come to an end, and I daresay I shall go somewhere else before I return to Glasgow and settle down to my profession."

THE END.

NEXT WEEK'S FEATURES.

**THE DESPOT OF THE REMOVE;
or, the Ku Klux Klan at St. Frank's.**

Another splendid yarn of Nelson Lee, Nipper, and the St. Frank's Juniors.

OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION

and the

**GREAT NEW FOOTER
COMPETITION**

OUT NEXT WEDNESDAY!

ORDER TO-DAY!

(Continued from page 14)

the Faithful Five gazed upon him with severe eyes.

"Like to try again?" asked Percy Bray politely.

Handforth crawled away, his exuberance modified. He could see that an interview with the great John Busterfield Boots was a difficult matter. But his time would come! And then Buster would catch something! Handforth nursed his vengeance, and thought out all sorts of horrible tortures.

Indignation ran high in the Ancient House over that football notice. Most of the fellows were hot with anger—that is, most of the decent fellows. The rest, the rank and file, remained fairly indifferent.

"Don't make a song about it," he advised. "It won't do any good, and Buster will secretly grin. He wants to see us going off the deep end about it. Treat it with indifference, and take the wind out of his sails. I'm glad to see this footer notice."

"Glad!" echoed Tommy Watson.

"Glad!" said Handforth, in hollow tones.

"Yes," I replied. "It proves that Buster isn't half the leader I thought him to be. Any captain who makes a ghastly blunder of this kind is booked for a short life. He can't last long. Instead of playing the best team available, he's putting all his own friends into the Eleven, irrespective of their merits as footballers. And that's the most fatal mistake a skipper can make."

"Hear, hear!" said Pitt, nodding. "Nipper's right—as usual. I think Nipper's brain must work faster than ordinary brains. He always sees these things on the instant, and the rest of us get it later. Treat Buster with indifference, and we've got the laugh of him. And it won't be many moons before the conceited ass is kicked off his perch!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Let Buster and his supporters have their own way," I continued. "Take a tip from me—Buster's followers will soon get tired of him. He's full of all sorts of freak ideas, and it's quite likely that he'll spring a surprise or two. But he won't last until the end of this term."

"Until the end of the term!" echoed Handforth. "This place ain't big enough to hold Buster and I for more than a couple of weeks! One of us must go—and it won't be me!"

By the time afternoon lessons were over the excitement had died down. During lessons John Busterfield Boots had taken care to remain in the midst of his faithful chums. As soon as the Form was dismissed, the Faithful Five formed a body-guard round their leader, and they all hurried away to the College House. Buster had made himself a very exclusive individual, and would not grant an interview to anybody without full notice.

"Tommy-rot, I call it," remarked Alf

Brent, as he and Archie Glenthorne strolled to their own study. "I'm a bit disappointed, too, because Nipper promised to give me a chance in the First Eleven. He said I'd be pretty useful in the half-back line."

"Absolutely," agreed Archie. "I mean to say, why not? A chappie like you, positively bursting with chunks of energy, is just the sort to dash about in the football field, half-backing, and so forth!"

Alf grinned.

"I don't mind so much about myself, but I'm wild with Buster for choosing such a rotten Eleven," he said. "We've got the school to think of, you know."

"Oh, rather," said Archie. "Honour, and all that kind of stuff—what? I mean, these foul rotters are liable to drag the good old name through the mire. Dashed unpleasant, old dear. Let's hope that the blighters won't disgrace the old flag—let's hope they won't besmirch the good old colours!"

"Not much good hoping," said Alf. "Buster's team won't be able to make any showing at all. They're a bunch of hopeless duffers. If it wasn't for the honour of the school, the game would be pretty comic!"

"As far as I can see, it's up to us to rally round in strong support," said Archie. "I mean to say, we'll let the Grammar School chappies know the truth, and—"

Archie paused, as he opened the door of his study. Phipps was within the elegant apartment, and Phipps was in the act of wrestling with the fire, which insisted upon filling the study with smoke.

"Gadzooks!" said Archie. "Fog, and all that sort of thing! Phipps, dear old lad, what's the trouble? The atmosphere, let me remark, is absolutely poisonous! Vast quantities of carbon-monoxide, and such like!"

Phipps turned, flustered.

"I was trusting you would venture upon a little stroll before tea, sir," he said. "The chimney appears to be in a recalcitrant mood."

"Absolutely," said Archie. "The word appears to be somewhat deep, but I gather the old trend."

"Just give me a few minutes, sir, and I will have the fire burning well," said the valet. "Then I will lose no time in getting the tea upon the table. I suggest a little walk, sir. Most beneficial to the appetite, sir."

"As you say, Phipps—as you say," agreed Archie. "Not that the old appetite needs any stimulus—being somewhat large in any case. The good old nip of autumn is in the air, and the young master is in a healthy condish. But we will away, and leave you to the foulness."

Archie and Alf passed outside, and wandered down the passage. They decided to go for a short walk, as Phipps had suggested. And having obtained their caps, they strolled out through the Triangle, and

then went along the lane in the direction of Bannington Moor.

They chatted on the way. These two were the very best of friends, and had got along famously together ever since Alf had arrived at the old school. Their conversation turned mainly upon Buster Boots and his revolutionary ways.

Just as they were approaching the Mount, they observed two or three workmen engaged in the task of erecting a huge wooden board on the top of the red brick wall which faced the road.

The Mount was a fairly old house which stood quite to itself, a little way back from the lane. The moor was just near, and this house was, indeed, the last dwelling of any size for several miles. The place had changed hands several times during the past year, and during the recent holidays it had remained quite empty.

But with the beginning of the new term the fellows had noticed that big changes were being made at the Mount. A whole army of workmen had taken possession of the picturesque old house, and were adding a complete new wing to the building.

The work now appeared to be practically completed. Not only the new wing had been built, but two distinct outbuildings, with quaint roofs and leaded windows—looking something like chapels. The juniors had assumed that a rich man had got hold of the place, and was preparing it for the occupancy of his family and household.

Archie and Alf lingered for a few moments as they drew level with the red brick wall. They watched the workmen as the latter raised the big board. It was a substantial affair, beautifully painted and finished—and was obviously a sign of some kind.

"My hat!" said Brent. "It won't be a private family coming here, after all! The Mount's going to be turned into a sanatorium, or a home, or something like that! Let's have a look at the sign—"

He paused as the big board was raised and hoisted into position. The two juniors could now see the big gilt lettering—imposing and substantial. The words were all embossed in gold upon a rich dark background. And Alf Brent clutched at Archie as he read the sign.

"Great Scott!" he breathed faintly. "Look—look at that!"

Archie looked, and started as though he had been stung. And this is what he read:

"MOOR VIEW SCHOOL FOR YOUNG LADIES.

Miss Charlotte Bond, M.A., Principal."

"My only sainted aunt!" murmured Archie. "I mean to say, it can't be true, old lad! Surely the optical department is at fault! School for young ladies, what? Gad-zooks! Have we come to that?"

"Young ladies!" said Alf dreamily. "A blessed girls' school within half a mile of St. Frank's! And we didn't know anything

about it until to-day! I wonder if they'll be just kids, or real girls?"

Archie simply shook his head.

"Girls," he observed, "are all very well in their own way. I mean, absolutely! Dear old lad, girls are frightfully priceless—what, as it were, would the jolly old world do without them? Necessary, and so forth. But when they come waltzing into the landscape like this, it's about time to sit up and yelp! Absolutely! It appears that we shall have a whole gang of the fair creatures positively lurking about in the offing!"

Alf Brent grinned.

"Well, that's one way of putting it, of course," he agreed. "It was a bit of a shock at first, but I'm getting used to it now. Perhaps it'll be an advantage, in a way."

"Advantage?" repeated Archie, adjusting his monocle.

"Well, yes—these girls may turn out to be good sports," said Alf. "We shall be able to have a little diversion now and again, when things get dull at St. Frank's. And just think of the chances you'll have, Archie, for acting the chivalrous hero!"

Archie started again.

"Between you and me, old lad, I'm a dashed nervous chappie when it comes to young ladies," he confided. "I mean to say, young ladies have the effect of making me go all hot and bothered! I get so frightfully flustered and what not! Alf, old scream, I view the future with much mis-giving."

While Archie was speaking, a lady of somewhat ample proportions, and with a very sedate manner, appeared at the gate, and gazed searchingly down the lane in the direction of the village. She saw nothing but the bare and deserted road. And she turned and fixed a stern gaze upon the two juniors.

"What-ho!" breathed Archie nervously. "It appears, laddie, that it's up to us to do something or other."

He gracefully raised his hat and bowed. Alf Brent did the same, and the lady was gracious enough to acknowledge the salutation. She even went further, for she came out into the lane with the obvious intention of conversing with the two boys. They approached.

"Priceless evening, what?" observed Archie brightly. "If there is anything that we can do, dear lady—"

"If you see anything of the carrier's cart down the road, I'd like you to hurry it along!" said the lady severely. "A nice state of affairs! Here am I, away from the station three hours, and not a sign of my luggage yet!"

"That's pretty ghastly, of course—"

"It's disgraceful!" declared the large lady. "Positively outrageous! What in the world do these railway people mean by keeping my luggage all this time? I was faithfully promised that everything would be here within an hour, and that was at two

o'clock this afternoon! I shall make a serious complaint to the company! If you boys see the carrier, tell him to hurry up. I've never been so put about in all my life!"

Archie raised his hat again.

"I'm fearfully sorry, Miss Bond," he said gracefully. "You can absolutely rely upon me to dash about like anything. I'll see that the old luggage is whisked into the landscape——"

"Oh, no, you've made a mistake!" interrupted the lady, her severe expression changing to one of pleased benevolence. "I am not Miss Bond. I am Mrs. Tracey, the housekeeper——"

"Oh, sorrow—sorrow!" apologised Archie hastily.

Mrs. Tracey, however, was by no means displeased at having been mistaken for the Principal of the Moor View School. She positively beamed, and visibly expanded as the two juniors regarded her.

"If we see the carrier, we'll hustle him along with a flea in his ear, ma'am," said Alf Brent readily. "We didn't know this place was going to be opened as a girls' school. I suppose it'll be some time before the establishment opens?"

Mrs. Tracey regarded Alf with suspicion.

"There! I knew it!" she declared. "As I said to Miss Bond only last week: 'We shall have trouble with those boys from St. Frank's School,' I said. 'They are altogether too close, that's what they are!' I told Miss Bond straight out that it wouldn't do, and she'll find out I was right! And let me tell you, young men, it won't do for any of you boys to be friendly with Miss Bond's pupils. I'm sure I don't know what you young folks are coming to nowadays! It's positively dangerous, opening a girls' school so near by!"

Alf grinned.

"Don't you worry, ma'am," he said. "The St. Frank's fellows aren't interested much in children——"

"Children!" echoed Mrs. Tracey indignantly. "Oh, indeed! Let me tell you that none of Miss Bond's pupils are younger than fourteen—and the majority of them are between fifteen and seventeen."

"Oh, good!" said Alf. "I—I mean—really?" he added hastily.

Alf had actually made the remark about children for the purpose of finding out the real truth. And Mrs. Tracey had obliged him nicely. So the girls of this new school were between the ages of fourteen and seventeen! Young ladies, in fact!

Alf Brent, being a healthy, normal boy, was naturally interested. He was by no means "struck" on girls, but it occurred to him that there never had been any young ladies in the neighbourhood of the school. Miss Bond's pupils might prove to be a distinct attraction to the general scenery.

"Yes, young man," went on Mrs. Tracey. "And let me tell you that Miss Bond is very severe; she don't allow her young ladies

to talk to boys at all, not under any circumstances!"

"Really?" asked Archie mildly. "But, dash it all, the priceless young things must find life somewhat monotonous? I mean to say, girls are usually gifted to a ripping extent when it comes to talking——"

"Don't you be cheeky, now!" interrupted the housekeeper severely. "There's fifty girls coming down to-morrow——"

"What!" gasped Alf. "Fifty of 'em! And they'll be down here to-morrow! My hat! We ought to have known this earlier. We could have prepared some kind of welcome!"

"Oh, indeed!" said Mrs. Tracey. "Oh, indeed! Let me tell you, young man, that Miss Bond's pupils won't need any welcoming! And I'll advise you to take no liberties——"

"Don't worry, ma'am," grinned Alf. "Thanks for the information—the chaps at the school will be awfully interested. Come on, Archie; we have to search for that carrier, and hustle him along."

And, raising their caps again, the two juniors departed down the lane towards the school. Mrs. Tracey, shaking her head, went back into the new establishment which was destined to be the home of fifty young ladies.

Alf was quite right when he declared that the fellows would be greatly interested. They were. Many of them wouldn't believe the two juniors when they arrived with the news.

But it soon became known that the thing was an actual fact. A girls' school was to be opened quite near by—an exclusive academy for young ladies of high-class parentage and wealthy upbringing.

"Best piece of news we've had for terms!" grinned Reggie Pitt. "We've never had any girls near the school, and so a long-felt want is now supplied. I'm jolly curious to see what the fair damsels will look like. Let's hope the majority of them are pretty!"

Edward Oswald Handforth sniffed.

"You—you funny fathead!" he snorted. "Personally, I think it's an outrage for this Miss Bond person to come anywhere near this neighbourhood at all! What next? We've got Buster here, turning everything upside down, and now we're going to have a giddy girls' school right outside the blessed gates!"

"It's dangerous!" said De Valerie. "You know how susceptible Handy is. He'll be falling in love with all the brunettes——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth turned a vivid red, and charged at De Valerie like a cyclone. But Cecil had adroitly dodged, and was safe behind the crowd.

"Lemme get at him!" hooted Handforth wildly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth was held by many hands, and De Valerie succeeded in getting away to a safe place. He wasn't afraid of Edward

Oswald, but it would save a lot of trouble and commotion if he faded into oblivion until Handy had cooled down.

And there was no denying that the news concerning Miss Charlotte Bond's School for young ladies had aroused widespread interest. Even the fellows who sniffed and declared that girls bored them, were secretly impatient to catch the first glimpse of the fair neighbours.

CHAPTER V.

SAINTS VERSUS GRAMMARIANS.



HERE they come," said Church listlessly.

It was Saturday afternoon, and Handforth & Co. were lounging round the big entrance gates. The day was fine and crisp,

with a clear sky and a nip in the air that promised frost later on.

"Eh?" said Handforth, with a start.

"They're coming up the lane," replied Church.

"My goodness! And I meant to have my hair cut this morning," said Handforth hurriedly. "How's my tie? What about my collar—is it clean? Great pip! My boots are absolutely grimy!"

He hastened to tidy himself up, watched with amazement by Church and McClure. Never before had Handforth displayed such concern about his personal appearance. As a rule, he was quite indifferent.

"What's the big idea?" asked Church. "I didn't know you thought such a lot of the Grammar School chaps——"

"The what?" roared Handforth, with a violent jump.

"The Grammarians, of course," said McClure. "They're coming up the lane on their bikes. Who did you think—— Oh!" He suddenly paused.

"Why, I—I thought——"

Handforth paused, too, and went pink.

"Ha, ha, ha!" grinned McClure. "So you thought we meant the girls, eh? You deep bounder! Making yourself tidy, and all that! I thought you didn't care a toss about girls! Yet you nearly had a fit——"

Biff!

McClure ceased talking with surprising abruptness, and he howled instead. Handforth stalked away, redder than ever. He was angry with himself for having made such a mistake. His chums would tell everybody!

"The—the dangerous ass!" gasped McClure, as he rubbed his nose. "And he needn't think he can spoof us, either! He's let the cat out of the bag! He's just as keen on girls as a giddy Don Juan! Look at the way he was titivating himself up just now!"

"We shall have to keep our eyes on him," grinned Church.

Further discussion was impossible, for

the footballers from Bannington Grammar School arrived at that moment. The team was almost the same as the previous season, but there was a new skipper. He was a fellow named Street, and he had formerly played in the forward line. Street was now captain, and played centre. He had shown such ability that he had been promoted to the coveted position of skipper. He was known to all the St. Frank's fellows as a clean player and a fine sportsman.

"Where's Nipper?" asked Street, after he had been greeted by Church and McClure. "And where's the one and only Handforth? He's keeping goal this afternoon, of course? A good man—we shall have a job to get the ball past him. Still, we're going to do our best to win."

Reggie Pitt, who had joined them, nodded. "It'll be easy," he agreed. "You'll win all right."

The Grammarians stared.

"We'll win?" asked Street.

"By about fifty goals to nil, I should imagine," said Pitt calmly.

"No need to be sarcastic——"

"My dear fellow, I'm perfectly serious," interrupted Reggie. "You see, things are a bit different here this term. You won't be playing the usual team. In fact, you won't be playing a team at all. Just at present the Remove Eleven is a joke."

And Reggie Pitt, aided by Church and McClure, explained the situation to the astonished visitors.

"I say, this is a bit rotten," remarked Street, when he had heard all. "We were looking forward to one of the best games of the season this afternoon. In fact, we'd prepared ourselves for a terrific tussle, and we're only hoping for a draw, at the best. We couldn't very well expect to beat a hot crowd like you on your own ground. And you say there's not a single member of the ordinary team in the Eleven?"

"Not one," said Church. "Buster Boots himself is centre-forward, and the rest of the team are his own pals. Half of them haven't put in a minute's practice since the term began. You're in for an easy win."

The prospect of beating St. Frank's was a welcome one; for, after all, it would go down on the records as a victory if the Grammarians won. But the knowledge that they were up against a mere collection of duffers was a disappointment. The Grammarians had been expecting a keen game. And, being sportsmen, they did not see much fun in the idea of playing a dud team.

It wasn't long before I came on the scene, with Handforth and a few more. The situation was again explained to the visitors. They duly expressed their regret, and told us of their sympathy.

There was quite a record crowd round the ropes before the game began. Not only the regular juniors were there to a man, but throngs of other fellows as well. Nobody wanted to miss this match. All were curious

to see how Buster and his men would perform.

They looked quite a sturdy, well set up team as they emerged from the pavilion, attired in the well-known St. Frank's colours. Although they had never proved their prowess as footballers, they were nevertheless a finely-built body of youngsters.

Street ran his eye over them as they trotted on to the field.

"I believe those chaps were spoofing us," he murmured. "What's wrong with this crowd? They look every bit as good as the ordinary eleven. Still, we'll soon know the truth."

Some ironical cheers went up as Buster & Co. practised for a few moments in front of goal. Crooks, who was the custodian, performed all sorts of antics as he prepared to defend his citadel. He jumped about between the sticks like a Jack-in-the-box.

But he needn't have worried. Although several members of the team sent in some stinging shots, they sailed wide of the mark. Not a single shot found the goal.

"Shall we make the goal larger?" yelled De Valerie.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, you dumb-bells!" called Farman. "Make it snappy!"

The insult passed unnoticed. Buster and Co. were unaware that a "dumb-bell," in the great American language, was a term of considerable scorn. To be "dumb" is to be akin to an idiot.

Bryant, of the Fifth, was acting as referee. He had condescended to undertake this task after a good deal of persuasion, and he made it widely known that he was doing the Remove a big favour. But inwardly Bryant was delighted. These Fifth Formers were always pleased if they could be put into a position of importance—and Bryant was no exception.

"Come on—let's begin!" he said briskly. "Line up, kids!"

He gave a shrill preliminary blast of his whistle, in the same way as a referee will do at a professional match. The practice balls were kicked off the pitch, and the two captains joined the referee, and shook hands. Buster Boots tossed the coin.

"Heads!" said Street.

The coin showed tails, so Buster had won the toss. He looked very pleased with himself as he pointed down the field. Further cheers came from the ropes when it was seen that St. Frank's would have the advantage of the wind in the first half.

The teams lined up, and Bryant took a careful look at his watch. The two linesmen consulted their watches, also, and then the whistle blew. The game had started.

The opening was a surprise, for in the very first minute there came a bit of sensational play. The ball was lifted over to the Grammarian outside-left. He sped down the field like a streak of lightning, the ball in perfect control at his feet. Both Webb and Clapson,



Archie gracefully raised his hat and bowed. Alf Brent did the same, and the lady was gracious enough to acknowledge the salutation.

the Remove backs, bore down upon the visiting forward.

In the nick of time he centred—a beautiful kick which raised the ball in an arc, and dropped it within a yard of the racing Street. The Grammarian skipper trapped it neatly.

"Shoot!" roared the Grammar School supporters.

Street needed no telling. Crooks was dancing about between the sticks, waving his arms wildly. Street didn't hesitate a second. He sent in a drive which directed the leather towards a corner of the net.

Round the ropes, we held our breath. Handforth could have saved that shot with ease. Considering the fact that Street had an open goal in front of him, his shot had not possessed the speed it should have. Any decent goalie could have punched out the ball.

Crooks made a wild dive, slipped, and fell headlong. And the leather tamely passed over his head, and came to rest in a corner of the net.

"Goal!" roared the Grammarians.

"Great pip!" said Handforth, with withering disgust. "A goal—with a shot like that! Why, I could have saved that shot blindfold. And we've got to stand here and see these blessed Grammarians whack St. Frank's in this way! It's enough to make a chap sick!"

The teams lined up again, the Grammarians in great good humour. Nothing puts a team in finer fettle than an early goal. And the

visitors restarted the game with a keen determination to add quickly to the score.

They did.

Three minutes later came another goal. And the reason of it was apparent to the most inexperienced eye. To put it briefly and concisely, Buster's team was hopeless. Instead of playing football, they had made an exhibition of themselves.

And could it be wondered at?

There were only one or two juniors in the team who knew anything at all about first-class play—Bob Christine, Clapson and possibly Turner. The rest were mere novices. Indeed, there was every indication that Crowe and Denny did not even know the rules.

Buster himself, playing centre-forward, was pitiful. All he could do was to rush about, falling over the ball, miskicking, and generally ruining the whole front line. Bob Christine, who was playing inside-right, was nearly as disgusted as the spectators. He had no chance whatever to show his form. He was constantly impeded by the miserable attempts of his companions to control the leather.

The result, of course, was disastrous.

By the end of half an hour the score was the source of much merriment to the Grammarian onlookers. Fifteen to nil! Street and his men were scoring practically a goal a minute now.

They were doing exactly as they liked. For by this time they had got the measure of their opponents, and were literally making rings round them. The game was a farce. It developed into a comic spectacle.

"And we've got to stand by and look on!" groaned Handforth desperately.

"Not at all!" grinned Pitt. "Nobody's keeping you, old man—you can look the other way if you like. Personally, I think it's funny."

"Funny!" howled Handforth.

"You bet it's funny!" chuckled Pitt. "At first I was inclined to be wild—but what's the good of that? In a case like this you want to bring your humour into the affair. Forget the serious side of the matter—and look at the other point of view. The joke may be against us, but it's a joke all the same!"

"Yes, you're about right, old man," I grinned. "There's no sense in looking glum—we should only make ourselves ridiculous. And it's quite enough for Buster and Co. to be ridiculous!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A roar of laughter went up as two of the Bannington forwards indulged in a little comic relief. They were passing the ball from one to another, and leisurely strolling down the field. Webb, one of the Remove backs, was completely nonplussed. Again and again he tried to dash in, but the Grammarian forwards, being experts, evaded him with ease.

And then the ball was tipped over to Street, who calmly trotted towards the goal,

pausing about ten yards distant from Crooks. The St. Frank's goalie rushed out, seeing his chance to make a spectacular save.

With delightful ease, Street calmly avoided the attack, dodged round Crooks, and back-heeled the ball into the net.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The game certainly was developing into a sheer comedy, and even Handforth was obliged to grin just before half-time was reached. And when the whistle blew the score stood at nineteen to nil.

And, although I was apparently amused, there was a keen glint in my eyes. For John Busterfield Boots had made his first fatal blunder—a blunder that was liable to cost him the captaincy.

CHAPTER VI.

NOT PLAYING THE GAME!



HANDFORTH looked at me rather ferociously.

"A joke's a joke, but this is getting beyond that!" he said.

"What are you going to do about it, Nipper? And what are you looking so pleased for?"

"I'm not going to do anything about it—it's not my business," I replied. "And I'm looking pleased because Buster's made a pretty ghastly bloomer. Unless he's very careful he'll be kicked out of the captaincy within a week."

"He ought to be kicked out now!" said Handforth tartly.

"He's held himself up to ridicule—and that's the most fatal thing of all to a fellow of responsibility," I went on. "He's proved himself to be a bad captain. Instead of choosing a team according to merit, he's put all his own pals into the eleven. You see the result."

"Buster may last for a week or two longer, but his career will be short and sharp," declared Reggie Pitt. "Don't worry, Handy—the best thing is to take everything calmly."

"But it's a disgrace to St. Frank's!" stormed Handforth.

"In a way, yes," I said slowly. "But it's so farcical that nobody will take it that way. It's simply a case of Buster and Co. making fools of themselves. After this Boots will probably realise that a captain has certain responsibilities, and he can't abuse his powers with impunity."

In the meantime, Buster Boots was talking seriously to his players.

"It won't do—we can't go on like this!" he said gruffly. "My sons, we shall have to buck up in the second half."

"It's easy enough to talk!" snapped Bob Christine. "Look here, Buster, didn't I tell you what would happen? Didn't I warn you about playing all these unpractised men? Why, the whole team's a joke—the Third could beat us any day! Even the infants of the Second could knock spots off us!"

Buster glared.

"I didn't ask for your opinions!" he said sourly. "We've got to change our tactics—that's all. You fellows have got to put more rush into the game. Don't be so jolly meek and mild! Don't be too particular, either! In the second half we're going to show these Grammarians what we can do!"

Boots said a good deal more to his men—and gave them a considerable amount of advice which met with stern disapproval from Bob Christine—who, after all, was decent enough at heart. He had temporarily been won over by this blustering newcomer.

When the Remove Eleven emerged on the field for the second half they were looking far from crestfallen. There was a certain grimness in their expressions—a determination that was indicative of Buster's recent lecture.

And as soon as the second half had started there was a hush among the spectators. There were no longer any laughs, or any jeers.

For Buster and Co. were playing different football now—particularly Buster himself and the Faithful Five

Not that the play was in any way improved—on the contrary, it had deteriorated exceedingly. In the first half they had tried to play football. In the second half they abandoned the apparently hopeless, and adopted a system of rush tactics which was obvious.

Instead of playing the game according to rules, Buster's team savagely attacked any Grammarian who happened to have the ball. The visiting outside-right, for example, was racing down the field before centering, when he was faced by three opponents.

They didn't try to rob him of the ball in the ordinary way. In fact, they paid no attention to the leather. They tried that dodge which is so unpopular at professional matches—playing the man instead of the ball.

The Grammarian outside-right was charged over from behind with deadly force—a deliberate attack. This was done by Webb and Armstrong. And Turner nipped in and kicked the ball clear. But the spectators were by no means silent.

"Foul!" went up a roar.

"Turn those cads off!"

"Oh, foul!"

And, curiously enough, the St. Frank's fellows were shouting just as vigorously as the Grammarians. For, indeed, it had been a deliberate and palpable exhibition of dirty play.

Unfortunately, Bryant was not a very forceful fellow—he was not capable of dealing strongly with a situation of this kind. He blew his whistle, ran up, and seized the ball.

The visiting outside-right picked himself up, indignant.

"Didn't you see that, ref?" he asked hotly. "Those cads—"

"Don't make a song about it," interrupted Bryant. "It was a foul all right, and I'm

awarding a free kick. Get on with the game."

That kick resulted in an instantaneous goal. For Street dropped the leather so neatly that one of his men was enabled to tip it lightly into a corner of the net.

But the game grew worse instead of better.

Time after time Buster and his men fouled in the most cowardly manner. They were still "playing the man." At every opportunity they charged with sheer brutality, and minor injuries were frequent. It was as much as Bryant could do to control the game.

And it was only natural, perhaps, that the Grammarians should retaliate. They did no actual fouling, but charged at every opportunity. And this, of course, only added to Buster's disgraceful conduct.

The climax came after any amount of free kicks had been awarded to the Grammarians, and when Bryant was getting fed up. Time after time he had warned Buster and his men to put a stop to their dirty tactics. But his admonitions had led to no improvement.

And then came the worst offence of all.

Owing to a temporary misunderstanding between two of the Grammarian half-backs, Buster managed to slip through, and dashed away towards the enemy goal, thrilled with the thought of scoring.

He had no control of the ball, and it was only by sheer luck that he managed to keep it in front of him. He was accompanied on either side by Denny and Crowe. They all three rushed up the field together.

The Grammarian backs hurried to the defence of their goal, and tackled Buster fairly and determinedly. But while they were in the act of doing so the right-back was deliberately tripped by Denny—a palpable foul.

The left-back, his attention diverted for a second, was charged violently in the rear by Crowe, and knocked flying. Buster seized his opportunity and tore towards the goal. The visiting goalkeeper, however, made no attempt to save—being absolutely certain that the whistle would go. No referee on earth could possibly overlook two criminal fouls of that kind.

But Bryant, who was also flustered, forgot to blow his whistle as he rushed to the spot. And Buster Boots kicked wildly. It was really a miskick, and Buster sat down violently. But the ball, swerving, hit the edge of the left goalpost, and passed over the line into the net.

"Goal!" gasped Buster.

"You—you rotten cad!" shouted the goalkeeper. "Do you think that's going to count as a goal? After your beastly pals have been fouling like that? What's the matter with the referee?"

Bryant blew a belated blast on his whistle. The game had got quite beyond his control, and he knew it. All the players had stopped long before the whistle went. The Grammarians crowded round Bryant in an excited throng.

"What about it, ref?" demanded one. "Aren't you going to send those rotters off?"

"The cads!"

"It's up to you, ref, to—"

"Oh, shut up!" interrupted Bryant warmly. "I'm fed up with the whole thing! I agreed to referee a game of football—not a free fight! You can finish it out between yourselves—I'm sick of it!"

And Bryant, without even attempting to argue, stalked off the ground. The Grammarians followed his example.

"Hi! What's the idea?" roared Buster Boots.

"We're just as fed up as your referee is!" retorted Street. "I'm glad to find that he's a sportsman, anyway! We've had enough of this farce—we're not going to finish the game!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good for you, Street!"

Several cheers went up from the ropes, and quite a number of St. Frank's fellows joined in. They were every bit as disgusted as Bryant was, and heartily sympathised with the Grammarians.

John Busterfield Boots was at a loss. For once his ready wit deserted him. He had no solution to this problem.

"Come back!" he roared helplessly.

"We've got to finish this game out! I just scored a goal—"

A yell of derisive laughter went up. And by this time the Grammarians had entered their own section of the pavilion. Most of them were indignant and angry, but managed to keep themselves under control.

Buster and his pals had full possession of the field, and they stood there in a big clump.

"Oh, well, I suppose we might as well get in!" said Crooks, after a few moments.

"No good standing out here. I must say the whole game was a pretty ghastly frost! Let's clear off!"

The rest were quite ready. Most of them greatly fagged. They had not indulged in such strenuous exercise for a long time, and they were feeling the effects of it pretty severely.

So Buster's notorious eleven slunk off the field.

In the meantime I had entered the Grammarians' quarters in the pavilion—accompanied by Reggie Pitt and Tommy Watson and two or three others. Street and his indignant men gazed at us in a way that was half hostile.

"Feeling pretty pleased with yourselves, aren't you?" demanded Street gruffly. "A fine gang you've got here, I must say! Worse than a set of street corner hooligans!"

"Don't rub it in—you ought to sympathise with us!" I declared. "You don't think we approve of these rotters, I suppose? Six members of the team were new at St. Frank's this term, and they're all cads of the same kind—"

"Blessed if I can understand how they ever got into such power!" interrupted one of the other Grammarians. "There must be something pretty wrong here. The Remove's going to the dogs!"

"Fear not, O heated one!" said Pitt calmly. "The Remove is as good as ever it was—just a bit bent, that's all. It would take too long to explain all the details, and even then you probably wouldn't understand. But we just popped in to offer you our sincere regrets. We're just as wild as you are about this rotten game."

"Of course, I knew you chaps wouldn't agree with fouling like that," said Street. "It's a terrific pity, because we've always had such a high opinion of St. Frank's, too."

"Well, don't let that opinion be altered now," I said. "You mustn't regard the present Remove Eleven as representative of St. Frank's in the slightest degree."

"We don't," said one of the visitors. "But we feel swindled. We came over here with the idea that we were going to enjoy a fast, clean game. And look what we got!"

"It's not too late," said Pitt smoothly.

"Eh?"

"Plenty of daylight left—over three hours of it," went on Reggie. "You came over for a clean game, and if you like you can have it. Quite unofficial, of course—just a friendly. The proper fixture is abandoned, and we shall have to arrange about that later on."

Street's eyes gleamed.

"You mean you'll play us?" he asked.

"Of course!" I replied. "Ancient House versus you fellows. We can easily get up an Eleven that will be practically as good as the full Remove team. And we can promise you a good game."

"Done!" said Street promptly. "We came over here for some football, and it seems that we're going to get it!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE KING OF GAMES!



TEN minutes later everything was ready. The scratch eleven had dashed indoors and changed, and now took the field. Morrow, of the Sixth, having nothing better to do, had agreed to referee for us. But at the last moment he was called away by Mr. Clifford. This was a pity, for we had relied upon Morrow to keep order—in case Buster made a fuss. I felt pretty sure that Boots would cut up rusty when he saw what was going on.

We succeeded in getting hold of Phillips, of the Fifth. He wasn't much of a footballer, but he knew the game, and was a sportsman.

The team was made up as follows—Handforth; Church, Watson; Brent. De Valerie, McClure; Singleton, Tregellis.

West, myself, Grey, Pitt. Considering that it was an Ancient House team, pure and simple, there was plenty of strength in it. The forward line, indeed, could scarcely have been improved. The half-backs were decent, the backs proven defenders, and Handforth's prowess in goal was famous.

"This is ripping!" declared Street, as we came on to the field. "We never expected to get a decent game after that giddy fiasco. This is more like old times—to see you chaps on the field."

"Rather!" agreed De Valerie.

"Well, come on—let's begin!" said Handforth impatiently. "I've been dying for a game all the afternoon. And if you funny-faced Grammarians think you're going to score any goals, you'd better think again! Huh! I never felt in better form! You won't get anywhere near the giddy sticks!"

"We'll jolly well try!" promised Street.

Phillips blew his whistle, took the time, and a moment later the game started. Willy Handforth and Owen minor of the Third were acting as linesmen. They felt honoured by the appointments.

"Go it, Remove!" roared Chubby Heath, from the ropes.

"Hurrah! Now we'll see some football!"

There were quite a number of flags round the ropes, and a few Remove fellows, too—juniors who sympathised with the scratch team—Fellowe, Fatty Little, Archie Glenthorne, and a few more. Buster and his men had completely vanished—although many of their supporters were still on the scene.

"This is nothin' more nor less than an insult to Buster," declared Fullwood. "Who gave these cads permission to play the Grammarians?"

"Like their nerve to start a game on their own!" snorted Marriott.

"Wait till Buster comes out—he'll show 'em!" said Hubbard darkly.

In the meantime, the game was getting into swing.

Chubby Heath and Lemon and a few other Third Formers fairly hugged themselves as they saw the perfect movements of the St. Frank's forward line. What a terrific difference to the game that had just been stopped! Buster and his men had been a mere ragged mob on the field.

But now all was changed.

Real football was being played, and it was a delight to watch. The Grammarians, glad enough to be facing a genuine team, found themselves opposed to a body of players who knew what they were about. The sheer jubilation of playing caused my men to put their best efforts forward.

In the first five minutes of the game the forward line broke away. Seizing an opportunity, Sir Montie sent a long swinging pass over to the wing. Reggie Pitt trapped the ball in a flash, and he was away.

There was no danger of getting offside, and Pitt dealt with the situation with all his usual cool and remarkable skill. One of the Grammarian backs rushed up to tackle him. But Reggie, with supreme coolness, stopped dead in his tracks with the ball in full control. The next moment he gave the leather a tap, dodged round the baffled back, and was on his way once more.

A yell went up from the ropes.

"Centre—centre!" roared Chubby Heath wildly.

But Pitt needed no instruction. Judging his kick beautifully, he centred the ball so that it dropped right at the feet of the inside forwards—within ten feet of the goal mouth. Tregellis-West and Grey and I had run up, all ready to accept the pass.

The thing was over in a flash.

It was Jack Grey who got the ball. It fell right at his feet, and with one lightning first time kick he did the trick. Hesitation would have been fatal, for the Grammarian goalkeeper was ready to rush out and clear.

But as the leather dropped Jack Grey kicked—one instantaneous motion. The ball sped like a bullet between the posts, the custodian making a valiant but futile attempt to stay its progress.

"Goal!" yelled the crowd.

"Goal it is!" said Phillips, pointing to the centre of the field.

Street ran up, flushed.

"By ginger! That was a beauty!" he said enthusiastically. "Hard luck, Chris, old man!" he added to the goalkeeper.

"I couldn't even see it!" said Chris, the Grammarian goalie.

"First blood to us!" exclaimed Reggie Pitt genially.

When the game restarted both Pitt and Grey were marked men. That touch line run of Pitt's had rather startled the visitors. And Jack Grey's lightning acceptance of the pass had proved his merit, too. The goal had been one of those which are a sheer delight to watch.

In short, the game now being played was clean, honest football. And it wasn't long before the Grammarians had their revenge. Street, in a delightful run, cut clean through the St. Frank's defence. He beat De Valerie, Church and Watson, one after the other, and took a long shot at goal with only Handforth to beat.

It seemed one of those easy shots—but it wasn't.

The leather swung right across the face of the goal, curving trickily. Handy made a wild leap upwards, his judgment perfect. But the sun was in his eyes, and he was mortified to feel the ball slip between his outstretched hands. It entered the net at the very corner.

"Goal!"

"Hurrah!"

"I say, that was wonderful, old man!" I declared, running up and congratulating

Street. "Fine, Street—you're the real goods all right!"

We were enjoying ourselves tremendously. After all, this was a pure friendly game, and there never came into it the slightest trace of feeling. We were playing for all we were worth, revelling in the sheer delight of the great game.

During the next twenty minutes the play was fast and keen, the advantage now veering from one side, now to another. No goals were scored. Handforth was on his mettle, and saved shot after shot with remarkable skill. Chris, at the other end of the field, preserved his citadel with equal adroitness.

"This, I mean to say, is the good old stuff, what?" remarked Archie Glenethorne, as he lounged near the ropes. "It jolly well makes a chappie thrill like anything, don't you know! Gadzooks! Look at that! Carry on, laddie—that's the style! Oh, priceless!"

Archie was getting quite worked up—and no wonder.

For Reggie Pitt was on the job again. He was making another of his spectacular runs. This time, however, he was not permitted to get any centre, for one of the Grammarian backs dashed in skilfully, and there was a bit of a scramble near the corner flag. Reggie neatly tapped the ball against the back, and it rebounded over the goal line.

"Corner!" yelled a dozen voices.

Phillips pointed to the goal.

"You—you ass!" roared Willy Handforth, rushing up. "That wasn't a goal kick! I was standing here, and I saw it all! It's a corner!"

The Grammarian goalkeeper nodded.

"Yes, it's a corner, all right," he said. "Better give it, ref."

Phillips agreed. The sporting spirit of the Grammarians was splendid. With just a little indignation they could easily have overthrown the demands of Willy, the linesman. But they wished to gain no unfair advantages.

Pitt took the corner kick, and the spectators held their breath. They knew what to expect when Reggie took a kick from the flag. The Grammarians packed their goal tightly, and the St. Frank's inside forwards waited.

The whistle blew, and Pitt took a short run.

The leather left his foot, rose in a graceful curve, and soared clean over the face of the goal, only a foot from the posts. There was a wild scramble, but it was of no avail.

Stationed just at the side of the further post, I saw my chance. Leaping up, I got my head to the ball, and the next second it was in the net.

"Goal!"

"We're leading now," said Handforth joyously. "Go it, you chaps—get another, and make sure. But you needn't worry—

I shan't let anything else pass me! We've won this game all right."

Thrilling with the joy and excitement of the fine sport, the teams lined up once more, and were soon at it again. The St. Frank's fellows, in particular, were enjoying themselves. They had never expected such a treat as this.

Archie, adjusting his monocle, became more and more enthusiastic. He watched the game greatly thrilled.

"What-ho!" he murmured. "Phipps, as it were, must be consulted. 'I'm jolly well going to put it to the chappie. Why not? Why, I mean to say, shouldn't I start the old practising, and go ahead —'"

"What's that you're muttering about?" inquired Fatty Little, as he rolled up.

"Oh, nothing, old dear, nothing," said Archie hastily.

"I didn't know the chaps were playing football—I've just come from the village on my bike," said Fatty. "I was going to tell 'em the news."

"What news, old scream?"

"Girls!" replied Fatty.

"Girls?" repeated Archie, with a start.

"About fifty of 'em!" said the fat junior calmly. "All marching up the giddy lane with a severe looking old gal at the head of the line. I just happened to glance round at the gang, and she nearly froze me! Face like a door-knocker!"

Archie stiffened slightly.

"The gang?" he repeated severely.

"Yes, these girls."

"But, my dear old lad!" protested Archie. "I mean to say! That's a frightfully frightful way of referring to a collection of young ladies. Absolutely! You must allow me to protest——"

"Of course," said Fatty absently, "girls don't interest me. Never did. I'd rather see a dozen cream puffs than a dozen girls! But I must say these flappers look pretty ripping! As smart as you like, and not bad looking, either. You ought to stroll down the lane, and take a look at them."

"Absolutely not," said Archie frostily. "Upon my word! I trust I shall never do anything so frightfully ill-mannered! Taking a walk down the lane to look at the girls! I mean to say, it's not the thing!"

Fatty grinned, and walked off. And Archie continued watching the game. But, somehow, it seemed to have lost a great deal of interest. His thoughts were far away. He pictured to himself a double line of young ladies coming up the lane—sweet young things with golden curls and all that sort of rot.

And, unconsciously, Archie commenced lounging away. Just across Little Side there was a handy gateway, which led

directly to the lane. Anybody passing along the road could pause there, and watch the footballers. In just the same way, Archie himself could lounge easily against the gate, and observe any passers-by.

"I mean to say, why not?" he murmured softly.

Archie blushed somewhat as he continued on his way to the gate. He wouldn't admit, even to himself, that he was interested in the pupils of the Moor View School. But surely there was no harm in just taking a look at them—in

at the same time he would be able to view the procession as it walked past.

The Genial Ass of the Remove was rather startled at his own cunning. He hadn't thought himself capable of such mighty brain work. But there he was, and a few moments later he was extremely pleased that he had come.

Happening to glance casually over the gate, he observed the line of young ladies marching up the lane. They were in a long procession, marching in pairs, with an elderly lady leading the way.

Fatty Little's description of this lady



"Come back!" roared Boots helplessly. "We've got to finish this game out! I've just scored a goal——"

giving them the once-over, as Farman would have said.

At last Archie decided that it was quite wrong, and made up his mind to remain on the football field, watching the game. But by the time he came to this decision he was actually at the gate, leaning nonchalantly against it.

He was now in the unique position of being able to command two views.

By taking up a half-and-half attitude, he could keep one eye on the game, and one eye on the lane. Anybody coming along would naturally take it for granted that he was watching the football. And

was most unwarranted. Miss Charlotte Bond, M.A., far from being austere and ugly, was both comely and kindly in expression. She was quietly dressed, her face was lined, and she wore glasses. But she was obviously a woman of great refinement, and good breeding. And she had a sweet, motherly look about her.

It must be confessed, however, that Archie took only one cursory glance at the leader of the procession. The procession itself was far easier to look upon. In fact, Archie had never seen anything so restful before.

The leading ladies were the more elderly,

The procession trailed away to the smaller young ladies at the rear. But there was really very little difference. All were smartly attired—most of them with semi-high heeled shoes, silk stockings, and gaily coloured sports coats of every hue. Some wore woollen jumpers and tam-o-shanters, others favoured neatly tailored costumes.

And the girls themselves appeared to be hand picked. Just a few of them were plain, but there wasn't one who could be described as ugly. The majority were good-looking, and quite a number were exquisitely pretty. Some had curls, some bobbed hair, and some entrancing tresses.

Archie's heart fluttered alarmingly as he gazed upon this uncommon assortment of feminine charm. Such a diversion had never been present in the neighbourhood of the old school before.

There was no doubt about it—the newcomers were absolutely the real thing!

CHAPTER VIII.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE ENDURING!



ARCHIE GLEN-THORNE gave way to an irresistible impulse.

He didn't exactly know how it happened. He couldn't remember, afterwards, how he had plucked up sufficient courage to perform the daring move. But almost before he knew it, he had vaulted over the gate, and was raising his hat with much ceremony. He bowed low.

"Greetings, old tulips!" he said genially. "I—I mean to say, greetings, fair ladies! Welcome to the jolly old neighbourhood! Absolutely! Kindly allow me to offer my respects!"

The procession paused, and Miss Bond smiled tolerantly.

"Thank you, young man," she said, in a soft voice. "As we shall be such close neighbours in the future, I hope we shall be quite friendly."

"Oh, rather!" replied Archie. "I mean to say, rather twice! Here we are, as it were, altogether what? I must be allowed to remark that the landscape is looking dashed beautiful this evening!" he added inconsequently.

But, somehow, Archie was looking directly at the line of young ladies. The girls were smiling and giggling among themselves. And Archie, suddenly realising that he was being gazed upon by dozens of pairs of feminine eyes, went hot all over, and turned a beautiful red.

"What—what, about the old football, what?" he stammered. "Over the jolly old hedge, don't you know? The chappies are playing like anything! They'd be awfully bucked if you just took a look at them!"

Archie hardly knew what he was saying—all he wanted was to get these young

ladies to look somewhere else instead of him. And the football match, so near at hand, was the only solution he could think of.

The leading girls of the procession were not slow to take advantage of the invitation. They broke ranks, and climbed up the grassy bank by the side of the road. Thus they were able to gaze over the low hedge and look full upon the green expanse of Little Side.

Miss Bond did not interfere. A slight diversion of this kind was nothing to worry about—besides, her pupils were naturally interested in the great public school which was so near her own modest establishment.

The other girls quickly followed the example of the leaders, and in another moment the entire throng was lining that bank, and gazing over on to the football field. They extended along the hedge for a hundred yards.

"Oh, shoot—shoot!" cried one of the young ladies excitedly.

"That's the way—pass to the inside man!" called out another girl. "Now then—steady yourself! Shoot, man—shoot!"

Archie listened, dazed. He had never expected anything of this kind. He had never dreamed that he had started anything so frightful. And these girls seemed to know all about the rules of football, too.

The Grammarian goal was back to the hedge, and so the St. Frank's forwards, advancing to the attack, were in full view of the young ladies. It so happened that Jack Grey and I were sweeping down the field, intent upon scoring.

But Jack, happening to glance up, nearly fell over backwards. For there, in one long line, were dozens and dozens of excited-looking girlish faces. Arms were swaying, and the enthusiasm seemed to be increasing.

"Great Scott!" gasped Jack Grey.

He suddenly became enormously confused. He felt awkward. The effect of those watching eyes were surprising. Jack was no longer capable of first-class football. I passed to him neatly, giving him the opportunity to shoot a first-class goal.

But Jack stumbled over the ball, sat on it, and a yell of laughter went up—to be echoed by peals of silvery mirth from the hedge. Jack sat there, as red as a beet-root from several causes.

In the meantime, the Grammarian backs recovered themselves, and cleared their lines.

But the game was somewhat put out of joint—at least, for the next few moments. But then the juniors braced themselves, and determined to make greater efforts than ever. They had never expected to have an audience like this.

"Oh, aren't they wonderful?" exclaimed one of the girls. "Look, Irene! Just look at the way those boys are playing!"

"Gorgeous!" said Irene enthusiastically. "Who are they?"

She turned round, and Archie suddenly

gulped. She was looking straight at him—and Irene was one of the prettiest of the whole bunch. She had golden hair, neatly bobbed, and sparkling blue eyes. Archie went weak at the knees.

"Er—I—I— Absolutely!" he said incoherently.

"Who are these boys—which Form?" demanded Irene.

"Yes!" said Archie, in a feeble voice. "Oh, rather, I mean to say, what form? Of course—of course! The Remove, dear old thing! Pardon me—I should say, Miss Irene! Absolutely!"

"Oh! The Remove," said Irene. "That's fine! Aren't they splendid?"

She turned to the game once more, and Archie felt his strength returning. Somehow, whenever a pretty girl looked at him squarely in the face, he went all limp and weak.

And while this little scene was in progress—while the footballers were making every effort to show their very best efforts—John Busterfield Boots was preparing for something.

He and his whole Eleven had gone straight indoors after the original game had been smashed up. Having dressed, Buster & Co. now gathered in the Triangle. And Ralph Leslie Fullwood was talking vigorously.

"I don't know what's the matter with you, Boots!" he declared. "You're not going to let this go on, I suppose?"

"Leave it to me——"

"You've said that already!" shouted Fullwood. "But talkin's no good—we want some action! Here are these lads, led by Nipper, playin' the Grammarians. Why, it's a challenge to your authority! It's an insult to your position as skipper! The game ought to be stopped!"

Buster Boots was grim!

"Nobody asked you to give advice!" he said tartly. "I know what I'm doing—I've had my eye on Nipper and his gang for the last twenty minutes."

"Then why don't you act?"

"I'm going to act—when the time suits me," replied Buster. "Keep cool—that's my motto! There's never any sense in getting excited. It'll be a lot more effective if we smash this game up after it's been going for half-an-hour."

"Oh! Then you are going to smash it up?"

"Yes—now!" replied John Busterfield Boots curtly.

He turned round, and gave some sharp orders. The Faithful Five nodded, and repeated the orders, and went round gathering squads of juniors. Then, in a big throng, they marched straight on to Little Side.

It so happened that a particularly thrilling piece of play was afoot. Reggie Pitt was again doing wonders. The forward line was sweeping up to the attack of the Grammarian citadel, and the situation was tense.

And there, watching with enormous interest were the Moor View girls.

"Hi! Get off the field!" roared Handforth, as Buster & Co. marched straight on to the field of play. "Clear off, you rotters."

Handforth had nothing to do; his own end of the field was deserted while this attack on the Grammarian fort was in progress. And he stared with startled eyes as Buster and his crowd ran into the thick of the game.

Reggie had just centred the ball, and the inside men were waiting to take advantage of the pass. But Buster Boots intercepted the leather, jumping up and catching it in his hands. He flung the ball far off the pitch.

"And that's that!" he said calmly.

Pandemonium reigned. Even the young lady spectators were forgotten in this exciting moment. Buster's unsportsmanlike action filled all the players with wild indignation.

"What's the idea of this, Boots!" I shouted, running up.

"You're not going to play this game—I'm skipper, and I forbid it!" retorted Boots curtly. "And, what's more, you're going to clear off the field. I don't allow any insubordination!"

"Why, you—you madman!" I said hotly.

At the same second Armstrong pushed his fist into Church's face. That was the firing of the fuse. Handforth, running up, seized Armstrong by the scruff of the neck, and hurled him aside. Two members of the Faithful Five started fighting. Like the spread of a fierce conflagration, the fight developed.

And in less than twenty seconds the entire crowd was engaged in a free fight—something which almost became a riot. The juniors shouted and yelled and hammered at one another fiercely and vindictively. It was a pitiable exhibition.

And, horrors of horrors, this dreadful scene was enacted in full sight of the girls from Moor View School! Nothing could have been more unfortunate. For first impressions are enduring—and this was the impression the girls obtained of the St. Frank's Remove: A fighting, kicking, unruly mob!

Miss Charlotte Bond gave some sharp orders.

But the girls needed no instruction. With contemptuous expressions on their faces, they dropped down from the bank, and quickly formed into the same double line as before. They had seen enough of the Remove!

Archie Glenthorne was nearly exhausted with horror. Such a thing as this had never entered his calculations. He gazed at the fight with glassy eyes. Then he turned towards the procession—which had just started off.

"One moment, please!" he shouted. "I mean to say, kindly refrain from misjudging the dear old lads——"

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

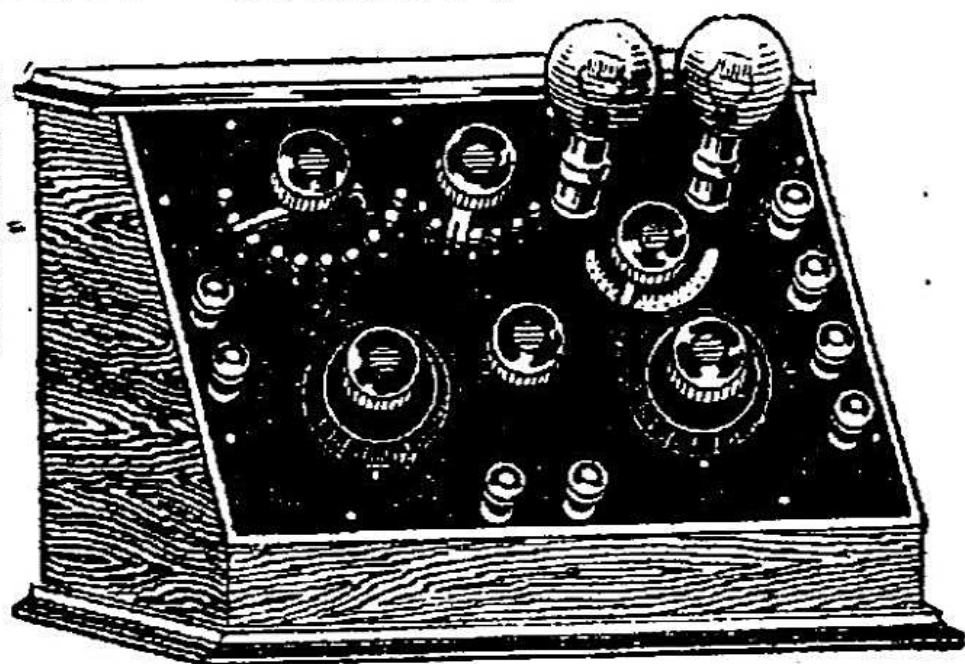
Wonderful Footer Competition

STARTS NEXT WEEK!

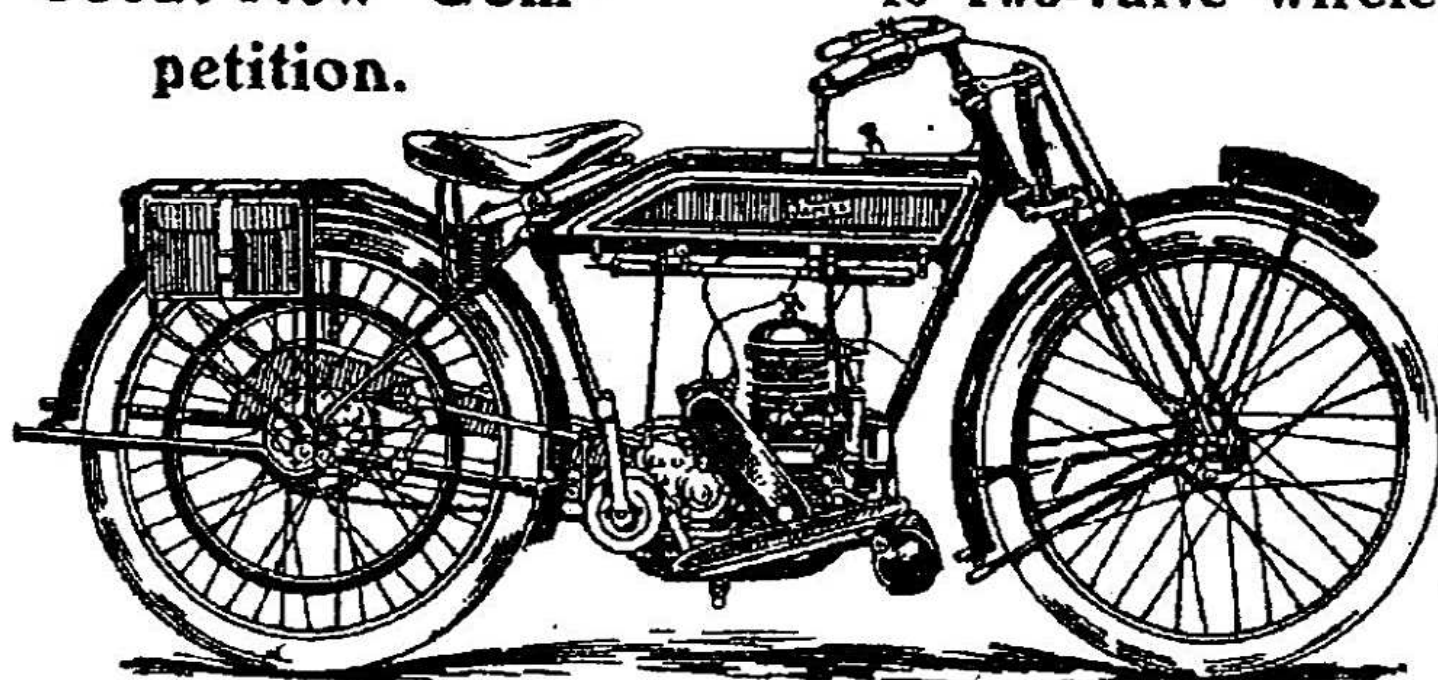
First Prize :
£100

Second Prize :
£50

These splendid prizes are only a few of those which must be won in our Great New Competition.



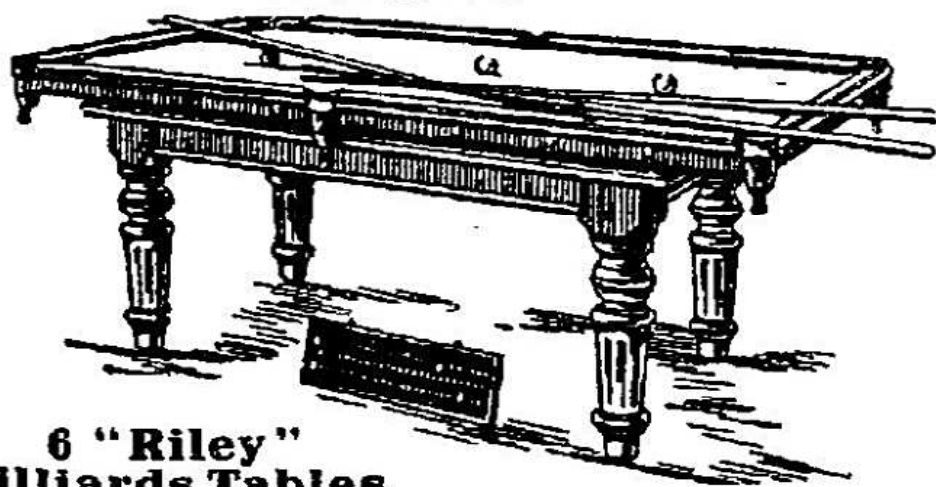
10 Two-Valve Wireless Sets



30
"James"
Motor-
Cycles



20 Gramophones



6 "Riley"
Billiards Tables

You can set about winning one of these Magnificent Prizes Next Wednesday.

Order your copy of the
NELSON LEE LIBRARY
NOW!

But Archie paused, the words freezing on his lips.

The looks he received were so cold and icy that a shiver seemed to pass through his entire frame. Instead of the sweet smiles which had been bestowed upon him earlier, he now got nothing but frosty glances of scorn.

With their chins high in the air, and tossing their pretty heads, the girls marched on their way to their new home. Archie felt like dropping through the ground itself. He wished a gap would open so that he would sink into it.

And the worst of it was, the fight ceased almost as soon as the girls went on their way. They didn't notice—they probably thought that the fight was still continuing.

But, realising that the whole thing was senseless, I had been shouting to the fellows to check it up. And, at last, the excited juniors cooled down. The game, of course, was ended—the second game that had been ruined that afternoon.

"You'll have to answer for this later, Boots," I said curtly.

Buster Boots laughed.

"Answer for what?" he sneered.

"For dragging the name of St. Frank's into disrepute!" I repeated. "No other Remove skipper has done that—and you

won't be allowed to do it again! If you're not ashamed of yourself, you ought to be!"

My tone was biting, and I turned away from Buster without another word. I tendered my full apologies to the Grammarians, and they understood. They went off disappointed, but cheerful.

During the evening John Busterfield Boots issued a decree that any fellow who jibbed against his rule would be dealt with drastically. Buster knew that his power was waning already—but he had a card up his sleeve.

"Just wait a day or two, and I'll have the whole crowd round me like sparrows after crumbs!" he declared. "As soon as the Remove Recreation Club is opened the fellows will be docile."

But nothing could repair the damage that had been done. The girls of the Moor View School had seen the Remove at its very worst. And it was likely to be a long time before that first impression was removed.

Buster Boots had started badly, but his early downfall was not so certain as many believed. For Buster was cunning, and he had many schemes hidden away—schemes that he would bring forth as they were required.

His reign as boss of the Remove was by no means over!

THE END.

By
Appointment to



H.M. Queen
Alexandra.

Scrumptious!



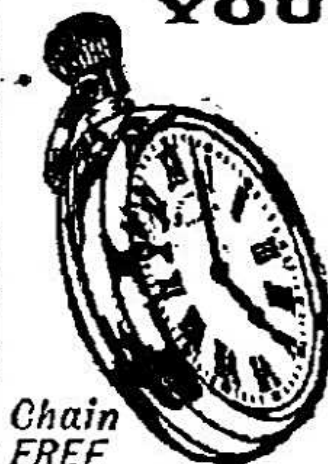
**SHARP'S
SUPER-KREEM
TOFFEE**

2/6 Weekly

or 39/6 cash buys a Mead Gramophone with giant metal horn, extra loud soundbox, massive oak case and 40 tunes. Carriage paid. 10 Days' Trial. 200 Needles and 5/- "Roo-let" gramophone game FREE. Table. Grands with Wireless Set. Portables and Cabinet models at **HALF** SHOP PRICES. Write for Catalogue. **MEAD** Company (Dept. G105), B'ham.

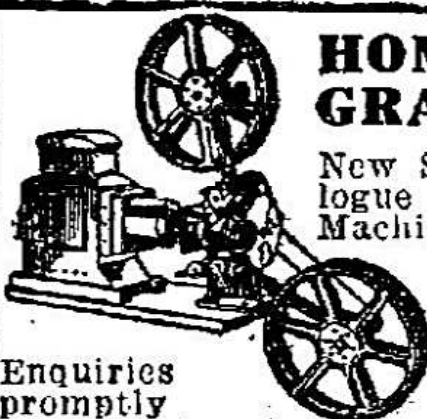


YOURS for 6d. ONLY



Chain
FREE

This handsome full-sized Gent's Lever Watch sent upon receipt of 6d. After approval send 1/- more, the balance is then payable by 6 monthly instalments of 2/- each. Guaranteed 5 years. Chain offered Free with every watch. Wrist Watches, etc., on same terms. Cash returned if dissatisfied. Send 1/- now to **Simpson's, Ltd.**, (Dept. 122), 94, Queen's Road, Brighton, Sussex.



**HOME CINEMATO-
GRAPHS and FILMS**

New Season's Illustrated Catalogue of Toy and Professional Machines and Accessories, now ready. Films, all lengths and subjects, for sale or exchange.

Enquiries
promptly
attended to.

FORD'S (Dept. A.P.),
13, Red Lion Square,
London, W.C.1.

Yours for 3d. deposit.

The "Big Ben" Keyless Lever Watch on **THE GREATEST BARGAIN TERMS** ever put before the British Public by one of London's Oldest-Established Mail Order Houses.



FREE An absolutely Free Gift of a Solid Silver English Hall-marked Double Curb Albert, with Seal attached, given Free with every Watch. Specification: Gent's Full-size Keyless Lever Watch, improved action; fitted patent recoil click, preventing breakage of mainspring by overwinding. 10 Years' Warranty.

Sent on receipt of 3d. deposit; after approval, send 1/9 more. The balance may then be paid by 9 monthly payments of 2/- each. Cash refunded in full if dissatisfied. Send 3d. now to

J. A. DAVIS & Co.
(Dept. 87).
26 Denmark Hill,
London, S.E. 5.



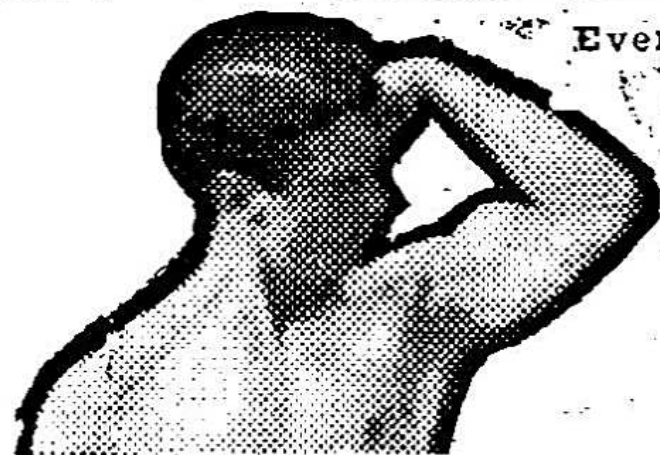
MAGIC TRICKS,

etc. Ventriloquist's Instrument. Invisible. Astonishes. Imitates birds, beasts, etc. Lot 1/- (P.O.). Wonder Co., 43, George St., Weston-s-Mare. (Business by post only.)



HEIGHT COUNTS

in winning success. Let the Girvan System increase your height. Send P.C. for particulars and our £100 guarantee to Enquiry Dept. A.M.P., 17, Strand Green Road, London, N. 4.



A. DANKS.

Every Boy Can Become a Strong and Healthy Young Man.

Readers will no doubt remember the splendid offer Mr. A. Danks, the British athlete, recently made of his WELL-KNOWN Half-Guinea Course of Lessons and **STRENGTH DEVELOPER** for 8/9. Thousands of undeveloped and ailing boys took advantage of the offer, and they are now in possession of strong, robust bodies, Deep Chests well-developed Arms and Legs, able to fight and win, and, in fact able to make a way in the world. You **NEED NOT ENVY THESE YOUNG FELLOWS**, as YOU ALSO CAN OBTAIN similar benefits if you send 8/9 for the Course of Lessons and Developer, and practise ten minutes daily. Send P.O. NOW to **Alfred Danks, Dept. U, 263, Victoria Road, Alexandra Park, N. 22**, and you will receive the Lessons and Developer per return. Readers abroad must send 2/- extra to cover additional postage, etc.

Printed and Published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Subscription Rates: Inland and Abroad, 11/- per annum; 5/6 for six months. Sole Agents for South Africa: The Central News Agency, Limited. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Limited; and for Canada: The Imperial News Co. (Canada), Limited.

1/2-PRICE

The 'BIG-VALUE.'

A fine New Model Accordion, 10 x 9 x 5 1/2 ins., piano-finished, 11-fold metal-bound bellows, 10 keys, 2 basses, &c. Sent by return post, to approved orders, for 1/- deposit and 1/3 postage, &c., and promise to send 2/- fortnightly till 17/6 in all is paid. 2/- **TUTOR**

FREE Cash price 15/-. Post Free (**ELSEWHERE DOUBLE**). Delight or Money Back. **FREE**—Illustrated Catalogue Post Free. Big Bargains, Watches, Clocks, Musical Instruments, &c.—**PAIN'S PRESENTS HOUSE**, (Dept. 9 B), **HASTINGS**. (Established 1889.)

HOME CINEMATOGRAPHS. Send for Lists of Machines, Films, etc. Sample Film, 1/-; post free.—**Desk E, DEAN CINEMA CO., 94, Drayton Avenue, W.13.**

Height Increased **5/-** Complete In 30 Days. **5/-** Course.

No Appliances. No Drugs. No Dieting. The Melvin Strong System; **NEVER FAILS**. Send stamp for particulars and testimonials.—**Melvin Strong, Ltd.** (Dept. S), 10, Ludgate Hill, London, Eng.



FREE—50 **POLAND STAMPS**—to applicants for Blue Label Appro's enc. post. **B. L. Coryn, 10, Wave Crest, Whitstable, Kent.** (Collections bought.)

CINEMA & FILM BARGAINS! Cowboy, Comedy, and Drama Films, 50-ft., 1/-; 100-ft., 1/9. Cinemas from 4/9 (post 6d.). Stamp for Bargain Lists.—**A. E. Maxwell, George St., Hastings.**

FREE

Catalogue of Boots, Suits, Costumes, Watches, Rings, Clocks, accordions, etc. Easy terms from 3/- monthly. **MASTERS, LTD., RYE**

Stop Stammering! Cure yourself as I did. Particulars **FREE**.—**FRANK B. HUGHES, 7, Southampton Row, London, W.C.1.**

WIRELESS COMPLETE CRYSTAL RECEIVING SET 3/- GUARANTEED 25 MILES.

Haydine & Co., 647, Fulham Rd., London.

FILMS 100 ft. Sample, 1/6 post free, with list. Machines from 7/6.—**"RADIO" CHEAP!** FILMS, 34, Church St., West Ham, E. 15

Be sure and mention "The Nelson Lee Library" when communicating with advertisers.