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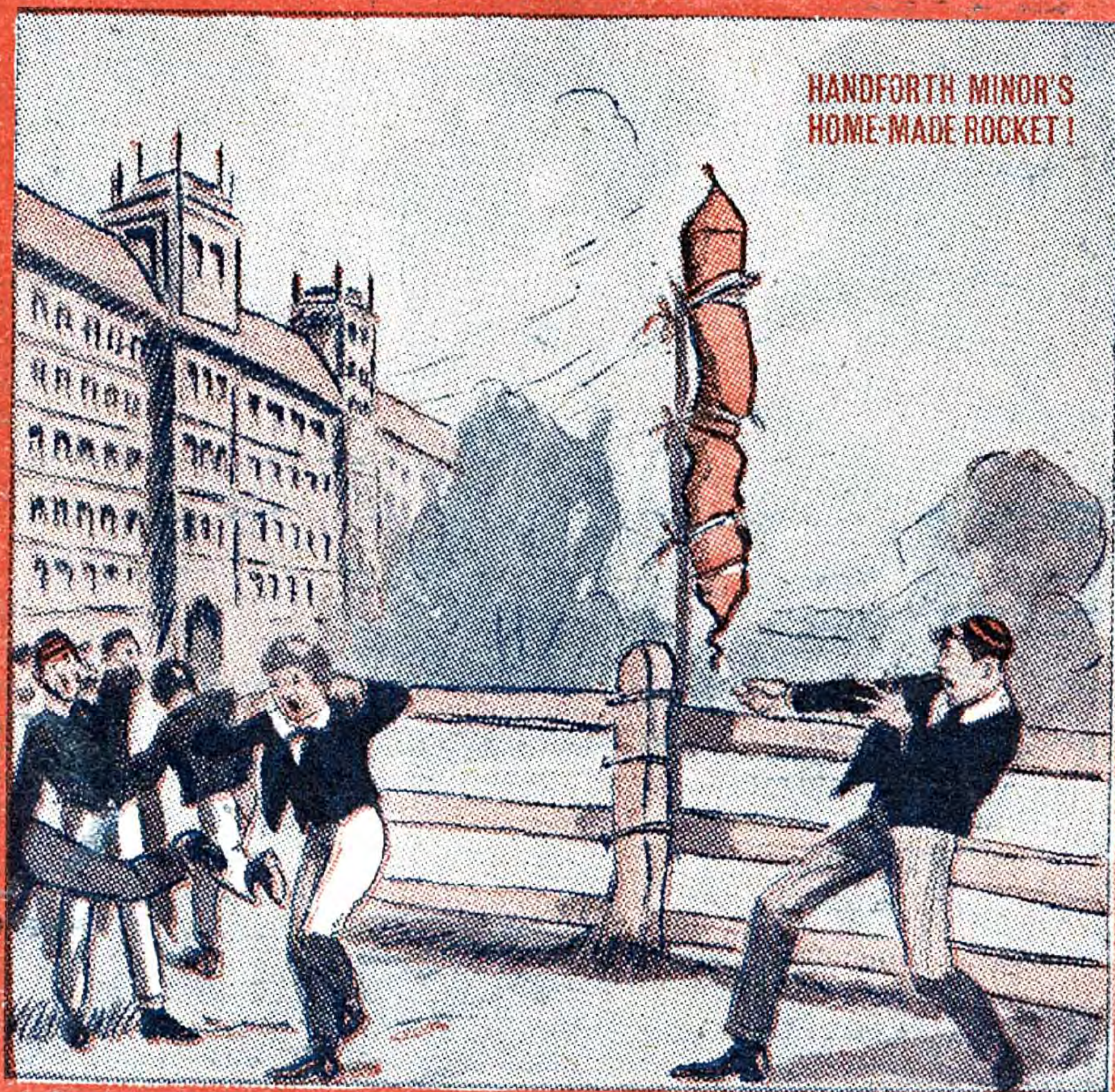
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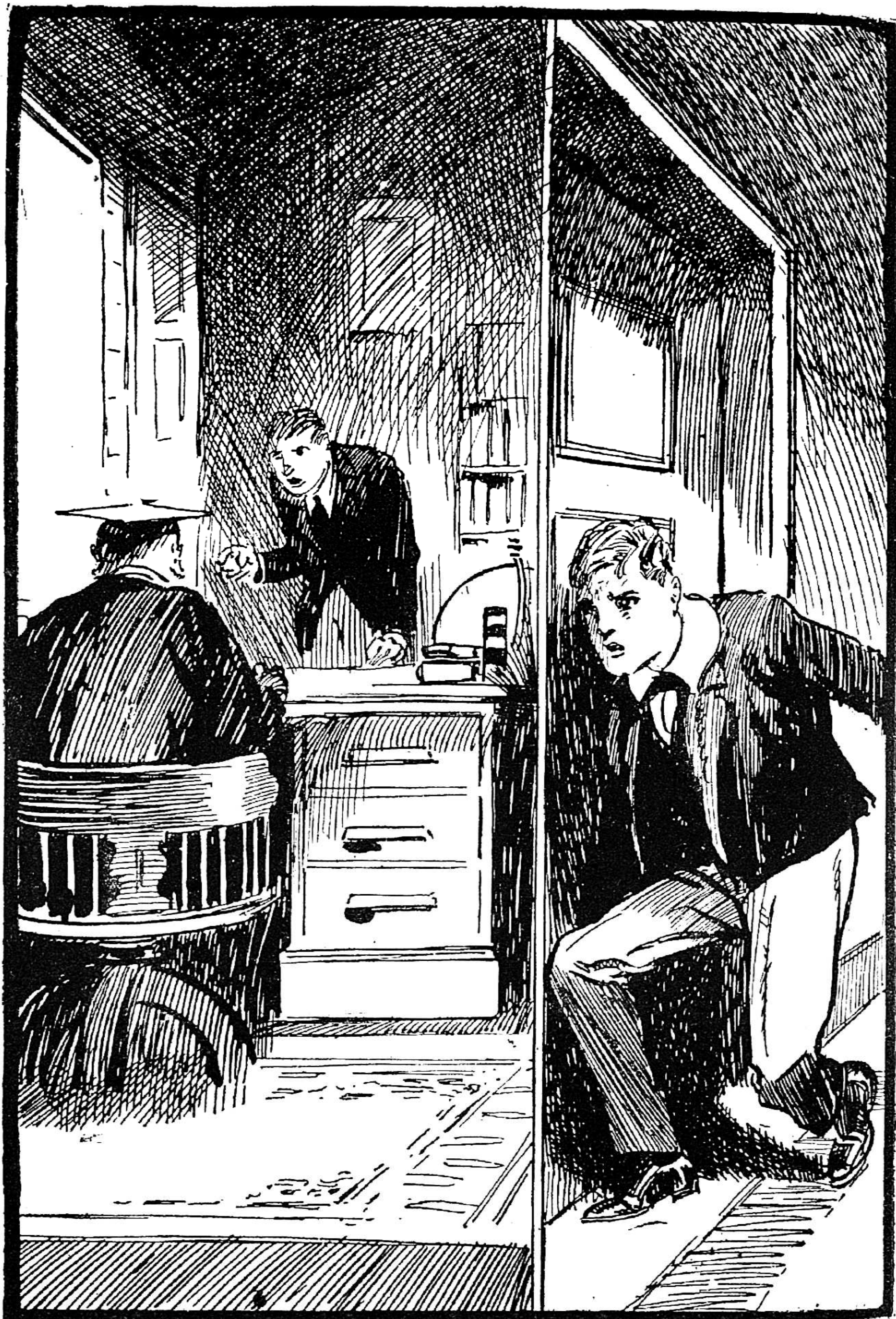
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**HANDFORTH MINOR'S
HOME-MADE ROCKET!**

THE "FIFTH" AT ST. FRANK'S!

A Lively Story of the Guy Fawkes Celebrations at St. Frank's.



Alarmed, Buster had risked a flogging by creeping up to the door and applying his ear to the keyhole.

The Fifth at ST. FRANK'S

A lively story of the St. Frank's celebrations of Guy Fawkes Day, introducing the final attempt of Buster Boots to retain the leadership of the Remove. Defeated at his own game of individually bullying his opponents into submission, in the following story he adopts diplomatic and persuasive tactics. All the time, however, Nipper is gradually winning more supporters, and Buster Boots is going out of favour.

If there are any readers who have not yet entered for the Great Footer Competition, they will have one more opportunity in our next issue of winning one of the numerous prizes offered, for I am republishing next week the first three series of pictures with the fourth series. So put your thinking caps on, my chums, and see if you can win a motor-bike, a billiard table, a two-valve wireless set, or any of the large number of wonderful gifts waiting for you.

THE EDITOR.

*The Narrative Related Throughout
by Nipper.*

CHAPTER I.

BUSTER'S DILEMMA!

THE Supreme Six sat in solemn council. No, not a secret society—just six members of the Remove Form at St. Frank's, squatting in various odd corners in Study Q, in the College House. And John Busterfield Boots was grim.

This latter young gentleman happened to be the captain of the Remove. That's

rather a happy expression, when you come to think of it—because Buster wasn't skipper because he deserved to be. It had just, well—happened.

For several weeks the great J. B. B. had been running the Remove on novel lines. Any junior who dared to oppose him was subjected to every kind of petty tyranny and persecution.

Buster was the Boss—the absolute dictator.

He wouldn't allow anybody else to inter-



fere with his ruling power. Physically, he was easily the master of every other fellow in the Remove—with the possible exception of myself. But the fact that he had beaten me in an elaborately staged boxing contest was the sole reason for his election to the captaincy.

But the actual facts were not identical with appearances. I had received the knockout because on the afternoon of that fateful fight I had been in the throes of a particularly wicked cold—one of those influenza-like affairs that sometimes sweeps over a chap, sends his temperature soaring, and makes him ache in every joint.

Put briefly and bluntly, I had been in the worst possible condition to enter any boxing contest. And John Busterfield Boots, being an expert in the fistic art, polished me off with comparative ease.

But at present, in my normal condition of bubbling health, I was confident that I could smash Buster within four rounds. And, what was more to the point, Buster knew it.

Consequently, his recent reign of terror had come to a swift finish.

I'll just explain why. Three-fourths of the Remove were behind Buster to a man. They liked him—they were pleased with his methods. In his capacity of skipper, he had given them more hectic pleasures than they had ever enjoyed before. Consequently, until their eyes were opened to his iniquitous example, they regarded him as a leader supreme.

The Removites had swiftly learned that to oppose Buster was to invite trouble. Buster insisted upon having his own way. Any objections from his followers met with violence. A thud, a crash, and the unfortunate opposer had dazzling visions of many stars. Buster was swift in action.

But there were a select few who openly refused to recognise Buster, and who had separated themselves entirely from his influence. These fellows had dubbed themselves the Die-Hard Party, and they had elected me the leader.

The Die-Hard Party had been formed on the spur of the moment. Boots had opened his infamous Recreation Club—a place where the juniors could go in their leisure time and indulge in roulette, card-playing for money, and so forth. And this astounding club actually existed under the very noses of the masters and prefects, and nobody suspected. Buster had planned everything so cunningly that there was little or no danger.

And even those Remove fellows who had previously regarded roulette as shocking were ready enough to join in. It wasn't the game itself that shocked them—but the possibility of being discovered and punished. To be able to enjoy these forbidden pleasures in perfect safety was something novel. And the fellows jumped at the chance—particularly after Buster had used

words of persuasion with his own smooth and masterful tongue.

But the Die-Hards, twelve in number, had cut themselves adrift.

They formed themselves into an Opposition—an Opposition which John Busterfield Boots absolutely refused to officially recognise. He knew that the Die-Hard Party existed, but he never spoke of it to the rank and file of his followers.

Instead, he had instituted a Terrorism in order to stamp the Opposition out.

Fatty Little, Archie Glenthorne, and Alf Brent had been persecuted and subjected to every kind of tyranny until they succumbed—leaving the Die-Hards only nine in number. And then, at that point, I had started something.

Previously I had waited, taking Buster's measure.

And then, with one swift blow, I brought the terrorism to a stop. And it was so surprisingly simple, too. I had merely borrowed a leaf from Buster's own book, and had turned the tables—with interest.

All the previous day, the great J. B. B. had gone through torture.

The persecution that he had used against the Die-Hards was a mere bagatelle compared to his own sufferings. From morning till night he had been kept on the jump. When it came to taking some of his own medicine, he didn't like the experience at all. For he received the medicine in a much more highly concentrated form.

In spite of all his precautions, Buster had been captured at midnight. He had been seized at the very door of his own dormitory, while the Faithful Five were awake, and on the alert. But Buster's loyal friends had known nothing of the trouble until afterwards.

Boots, firm in the grasp of the avenging Die-Hards, had been given the choice of two alternatives. Firstly, he could give his word of honour that all terrorism would cease from that moment; or, secondly, he could be taken into the Remove dormitory, and I would fight him as he stood, with bare fists.

It had not taken Buster long to decide.

Just at present I was in the pink of condition, and Buster was aware of this. He knew that a fight could end in only one way—his own defeat. And for him to be knocked out in the presence of his most ardent supporters would put an end to his power once and for all.

Buster had, therefore, given his word of honour that all terrorism would cease, and that the Die-Hard Party would be able to go its own sweet way, unharmed.

Indeed, this was the only course that Buster could adopt—since the other was absolutely unthinkable.

And, although terrorist methods were now denied him, he realised that he was still the captain, and, by a little cunning,

ning manipulation, he would be able to maintain his supremacy.

Violence had failed—it was now time to give diplomacy a testing. And Buster had sufficient confidence in his own ability to pull it off with complete and permanent success.

While a prisoner, he had also been compelled to release Little and Glenthorne and Brent from their promise—and they were now free to go back to the Die-Hards if they chose.

But Buster had said nothing about all this to Percy Bray, Crooks, Denny, and two other members of the Faithful Five. Boots had merely gone back into the dormitory, saying that there was no longer any necessity to keep watch.

And now it was evening—evening of the following day. Buster had been very quiet and thoughtful since morning, and the Remove had wondered. The Faithful Five had more than wondered—they had worried. It wasn't like their great leader to take things lying down.

So Study Q was turned into a council chamber.

And Buster, having thought over the matter all day, coolly and casually told his chums what had taken place. He didn't go into any painful details, but gave them the gist.

"Then you gave Nipper your word that you wouldn't interfere with any more of the Die-Hards?" asked Percy Bray, in dismay.

"Exactly."

"But that's a bit rotten, you know!" objected Webb. "What about our plans to capture Pitt and Grey, and put the cads through the mill?"

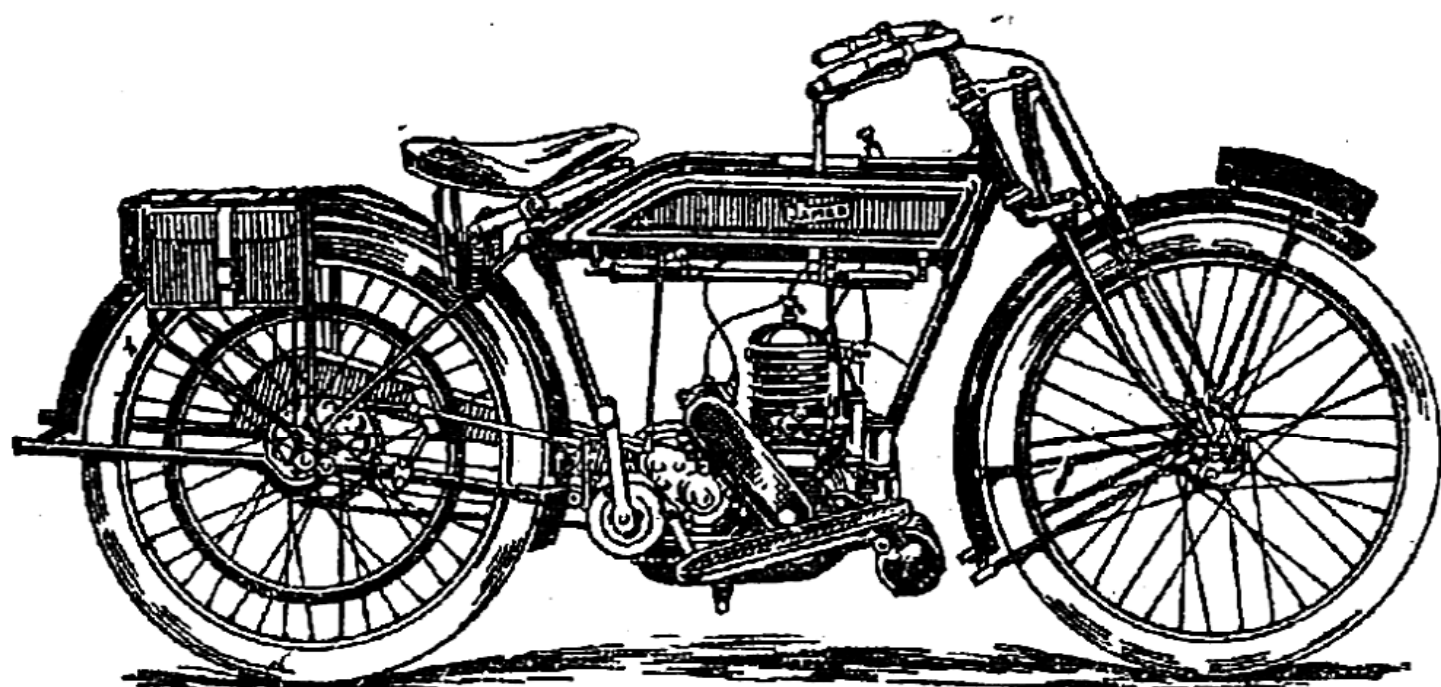
Buster shrugged his shoulders.

"Why ask unnecessary questions?" he said. "I've told you what happened."

"Do you mean that we're not going to touch Nipper's rotten crowd again?" asked Crowe.

"Oh, that's dead!" said Buster calmly.

"Hang it all, old man!" protested Percy Bray. "You don't mean to tell us that you're going to knuckle under like that? What does it matter about the things you told Nipper? We can go on just the same, can't we?"



30 of these Splendid Motor-bikes MUST BE WON!

John Busterfield Boots looked at his followers calmly.

"When I give my word, it's a solemn occasion," he replied. "I promised Nipper that neither I nor any of my supporters would attempt to harm the Die-Hard Party by any methods of persecution or violence. And I meant what I said."

"In other words, you admit that our teeth are drawn?" asked Bray, unable to resist a slight sneer.

"I don't admit anything of the sort," replied Boots. "And I shouldn't advise you to be so free with that tone, either. You're my pal, Percy, but I don't put up with jeering from anybody."

"Oh, don't get touchy——"

"My sons, you don't seem to realise the position," continued Buster. "We can't use violent methods any more—for the simple reason that Nipper has aroused himself out of his sleep. In other words, he's quite prepared to retaliate."

"But, hang it, you needn't be afraid of him!" said Bray.

"It's not a question of being afraid—we don't want our movements hampered by any petty warfare," continued Buster, smoothing matters with his usual ease. "And, apart from all that, I'm not going to argue. I've given my word of honour, and that's enough."

"But—but I don't see——"

"What you don't see, Percy, fails to interest me," interrupted Boots. "I've been thinking all day—and I've come to certain conclusions. I don't know whether you've noticed it, but there are certain indications that Nipper is preparing a campaign."

"Noticed it!" put in Crowe. "Why, everybody can see it!"

"Now that Nipper's assured there'll be

no more terrorism, he's going straight ahead, and his first move will be to rob us of as many supporters as he can win over to his side," proceeded Boots. "That, of course, won't do. We've got to put a spoke in his wheel."

"That's something of a dilemma!" declared Webb dubiously.

"Well, it was—but I think I've got a solution," replied Buster. "Strictly speaking, we're something like two political parties—a Government, if you wish. We're the Government of the Remove, and the Die-Hard Party is the Opposition."

"But you won't recognise the Opposition?"

"Until now I haven't, but the time is just ripe to give it my official notice," smiled Buster. "Instead of trying to kill this Opposition by secret methods, we'll use methods of diplomacy, and I've got an idea that we shall be able to tie Nipper's hands pretty helplessly."

"But how?" asked the Faithful Five, staring.

"I don't intend to go over the whole matter twice, so you'll have to wait until I address the Remove," replied Buster. "I want you fellows to shoot out in all directions, and gather the forces together. In other words, there's going to be a full Form Meeting—and there mustn't be a single absentee. Tell all the fellows to gather in the big lecture hall at seven o'clock."

"But can't you give us an inkling?" persisted Bray.

"My dear man, there's nothing in it!" said Buster coolly. "I'm going to be frank with the entire Remove, and see what happens. That's all. Up till now we've worked in the dark—in future we'll work in the open. It's what Nipper wants, and he'll get it. But I rather fancy the honours will be with me."

And the Faithful Five, still puzzled, hastened out and spread the news that a meeting of the entire Remove was ordered for seven o'clock.

CHAPTER II.

THE COMPACT!



"HALLO! What's in the wind?" asked Reggie Pitt mildly. "Form meeting—seven sharp!" said Crowe, as he hurried on.

Buster's henchmen were in the Ancient House now, telling all and sundry about the meeting. There would be no absentees. It was wet and foggy outside, and none of the fellows were away from the school.

And a Form meeting was an affair of vast importance. Juniors disobeyed the skipper's order at their peril. There was an un-

written law that under no circumstances should anybody miss being present at an official Form gathering. It was a sheer crime to plead an excuse. And this tradition held good for all other Forms at St. Frank's, too.

"Some new scheme of Buster's, I suppose," remarked Jack Grey, as Pitt gazed after Crowe's retreating form. "I wonder what the great man is up to now? After last night—"

"That's about it," nodded Reggie. "Nipper's been expecting something to happen. And now Buster's getting ready for the fray. This meeting looks like being interesting."

"Well, we've got to attend," said Jack. "No getting out of it."

The chums of Study E had plenty of time, for it was only a little after six. They were about to stroll in the direction of the Common Room when the door of Study C opened, and Alf Brent walked briskly out.

"Talk of demons, and here they are!" he remarked politely.

"Speaking about us?" said Pitt.

"Yes—Nipper wants you at once," replied Alf. "Die-Hards holding full meeting. We're all gathered together except you two. Come on!"

Pitt and Grey followed Alf Brent back into the study. It was pretty well crowded, containing its rightful occupants—Sir Montie Tregellis-West, Tommy Watson, and myself, to say nothing of Handforth & Co., Fatty Little, Archie Glenthorne, and the youthful Duke of Somerton. These, with the three who were just entering, formed the complete Die-Hard Party.

"You soon roped them in, Alf," I said cheerfully, as the door was closed.

"Found them just outside," said Brent.

"Good!" I continued. "Now, my sons, we're going to have a little discussion on policy. As leader of the Opposition, I just want to point out exactly how we shall proceed to operate."

"Hear, hear!"

"Wait a minute," said Pitt. "We've all got to attend—"

"Don't I have any say in this matter?" interrupted Handforth ruthlessly? "In my opinion, we ought to get to work, take Buster's crowd one by one, and give them a good hiding! After that we'll go and smash up their Recreation Club, and—"

"Violence—violence! That's all you think about, old man," I chuckled. "But you seem to overlook the fact that violence is finished with. Last night we made Boots give his word of honour that there would be no more terrorism. Our whole object is to start a peaceful campaign."

Handforth grunted.

"It may be all right, but it doesn't suit me!" he growled.

"My dear chap, let me speak," I said. "I've heard one or two of you doubting

Buster's integrity to-day. You have expressed the fear that he won't stick to his word. Personally, I think he'll keep faith."

"I wish I could agree," said Watson, shaking his head.

"Buster's a peculiar chap, but he's not altogether a rotter," I continued. "He'll respect that agreement, and that will enable us to go ahead openly and without any danger of being victimised. Our policy, as the Opposition, will be to start an intensive campaign to induce as many fellows as possible to come under the Die-Hard banner."

"Absolutely!" said Archie, clapping his

the club, they'll probably see the light of reason and come over to us."

"Hear, hear!" said Reggie. "Persuasive methods are the best."

"No threats or violence," I went on. "We'll just appeal to the fellows' better natures. Why, within a week the Die-Hards will be supreme. Buster's power will vanish like a plate of beef-patties before Fatty Little's attack."

"Here, I say—" protested Fatty feebly.

If John Busterfield Boots had been present at this meeting he would have realised how absolutely accurate his fears were. He had been afraid all the while that the abolition of terrorism would lead to a burst of in-



"Now!" breathed Willy. The fuses were lighted, and the next moment the crackers were sent whizzing into the centre of the lane—in fact, right amid the feet of the three young ladies who had just arrived at the spot.

hands. "What-ho! That, I mean to say, is the good old stuff to give them!"

"As soon as the chaps know that they're safe, they'll give their support to me," I continued, warming to my subject. "I'm certain that I shall be able to persuade plenty of the chaps to drop that rotten recreation club. We'll go about quietly, taking fellows aside and talking to them."

"Might as well talk to so many gate-posts!" snorted Handforth. "The only safe way is to punch their heads!"

"Punching their heads, Handy, would merely make them more obstinate," I said. "But if we talk to them quietly, without lecturing—just a little friendly chat, asking them what benefit they're getting out of

tense peaceful penetration on the part of the Die-Hard Party. It was for this very reason that Buster had called a Form meeting—to spike this gun before it got into action.

We were going into further discussions of our new policy when Reggie Pitt interrupted.

"It's my belief that Buster's going to start something," he said. "If not, why has he called a Form meeting?"

"Form meeting!" I repeated sharply. "When?"

"This evening, at seven."

"I've heard nothing about it."

"My dear chap, I told you ten minutes ago," said Pitt. "Why, by Jove, I remember now! Handy interrupted me, and I

didn't tell you, did I? But it's a fact. There's a meeting of the whole Form called for seven sharp."

I glanced at my watch.

"Plenty time yet," I said. "Only just half-past six. By jingo, what's in the wind? Buster's going to start something all right!"

Handforth glared at me.

"But you're not going to attend this meeting?" he demanded wrathfully.

"Of course!"

"But—but we're the Die-Hards!"

"That makes no difference!"

"No difference!" snorted Edward Oswald. "We don't belong to Buster's party! Why should we attend his rotten meeting?"

"For two reasons," I replied grimly. "Firstly, it's most important that we should know what's going on, and secondly, we can't get out of it. A matter of tradition, old son. We can't disobey the unwritten laws of the old school. When a Form skipper calls a meeting, it's not merely an order but an absolute command. Opposition or not, we've got to show up."

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, well, I suppose you're right!" agreed Handforth. "Now you put it that way I can understand. But if Buster starts any funny business it won't take me long to biff him."

I sighed.

"What a chap you are for biffing!" I said patiently. "I'm not very enthusiastic about this meeting. I've got half an idea that Buster means to blunt our swords. He's a cunning beggar, and in one way or another he'll manage the trick. But I shan't let him pull over any funny stuff—as our American friends would express it."

There was very little else to discuss, for we could not fix our own policy until we had heard Buster's speech. Instinctively I knew that he was going to make a big attempt to recover the ground he had lost. It would be interesting to see how he proposed to do it.

By seven o'clock the Remove was present in the lecture-hall to a man.

Nobody attempted to keep away. The Die-Hards were eager enough to find out how the wind was blowing, and Buster's own supporters needed no second intimation. They were keen upon hearing the speech.

The Buster Party, it must be remembered, was in a position of supremacy. The College House Remove intact was behind J. B. B., to say nothing of three-quarters of the fellows in the Ancient House. Outwardly, it would appear that Buster had nothing to fear. His own party was so huge in comparison to the insignificant Die-Hards that he could afford to laugh at the feeble Opposition.

But Buster didn't laugh; he knew the danger.

"Good old Buster!"

"Go it, J.B.B.!"

"Let's have the speech, old man!"

John Busterfield Boots, who was standing upon the raised platform of the lecture-hall, held up his hand for silence. There was something about his very attitude—his presence itself—that commanded instant obedience. Buster was certainly a leader. His sturdy form, his red hair, his rugged face, all told of the indomitable will-power within him.

Buster was greatly cheered up by that rousing reception. He smiled, half to himself and half to the throng. He meant to appear in a new light this time—not as a dictator and a tyrant, but as a peaceful upholder of general harmony.

"I don't suppose I shall keep you very long, chaps," he said easily and conversationally. "In any case, I'll finish long before you've had time to get weary. You all know, of course, that during the last week or so we've had a few ups and downs. On occasion I have been compelled to take drastic measures with a few obstinate delinquents."

"Serve 'em right!"

"Hear, hear!"

"But I have come to the conclusion that violence is not altogether desirable," continued Buster grandiloquently. "It would displease me greatly to realise that my power as Remove captain is based solely upon the use of the mailed fist. I don't want to rule by terrorism, but by peace and kindness."

"My only hat!" breathed Pitt. "Hear, that?"

"As an example of pure, unadulterated nerve, it would want a lot of beating," I murmured. "This fellow's got the assurance of a dozen. Of course, I can understand what his game is now."

"What is it?"

"Why, he's simply making the best of a bad job," I replied. "He knows he can't use violence any more, because he's afraid of us. But it wouldn't do to tell his supporters that. So he's making capital out of the whole affair."

"Can't you get on your hind legs, and tell all these asses the truth?"

"My dear chap, they're under Buster's sway—they wouldn't believe me!"

"H'm! I suppose you're right."

In the meantime Buster was continuing.

"In future," he declared, "nobody will have the slightest fear of being forced into any kind of submission. The whole Form, from this minute onwards, will be left to decide its own path. I don't want to have any unpleasantness or quarrelling. Let there be peace in the Remove."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Buster!"

"What about those rotten Die-Hards, Nipper and his gang?" yelled Bell.

John Busterfield Boots nodded.

"I am coming to that point now," he

said calmly. "I suppose it will be the kindly thing to recognise this paltry Opposition; for it is paltry. These misguided fellows, led by Nipper, have been foolish enough to separate themselves from my control. Don't misunderstand me. Absurd as Nipper is in his isolation, I don't accuse him of any treachery towards the Form. I have no animosity towards him!"

"Thanks!" I said ironically.

"Neither do I wish to coerce these Die-Hards in any way whatever," continued Buster. "From now onwards every fellow in the Remove will have his individual freedom. By this I mean that he will be able to choose his own path. Those who prefer to stick by me will have a whole series of good times throughout the term. But if there are any fellows who desire to go over to Nipper and the Die-Hards, they are perfectly free and welcome to do so."

"That's fair enough!"

"Hear, hear!"

"All right, Buster; we'll stick to you!"

"Rather!"

"You will have noticed that Little, Glen-thorne, and Brent have returned to the Die-Hard fold," went on Buster coolly. "Many of you have wondered at this—you have considered that it was totally opposed to all my principles. But let me assure you that I personally gave my permission to these three fellows to decide their own course."

"Gadzooks!" murmured Archie. "I mean to say, that's dashed rich—what?"

"You—you deceiving rotter!" shouted Handforth, shaking his fist at Buster. "Why don't you tell the chaps the truth?"

"Dry up, Handy!"

"Don't interrupt!"

Handforth strode forward and glared at Buster hotly.

"Why don't you tell your idiotic supporters that you were collared by the Die-Hards last night?" he roared. "Why don't you tell them that we forced you to come to this arrangement, and that you're simply whacked, eh? Why don't you tell 'em all that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Buster's supporters roared with merriment. "What did I tell you?" I whispered to Reggie. "They don't believe it."

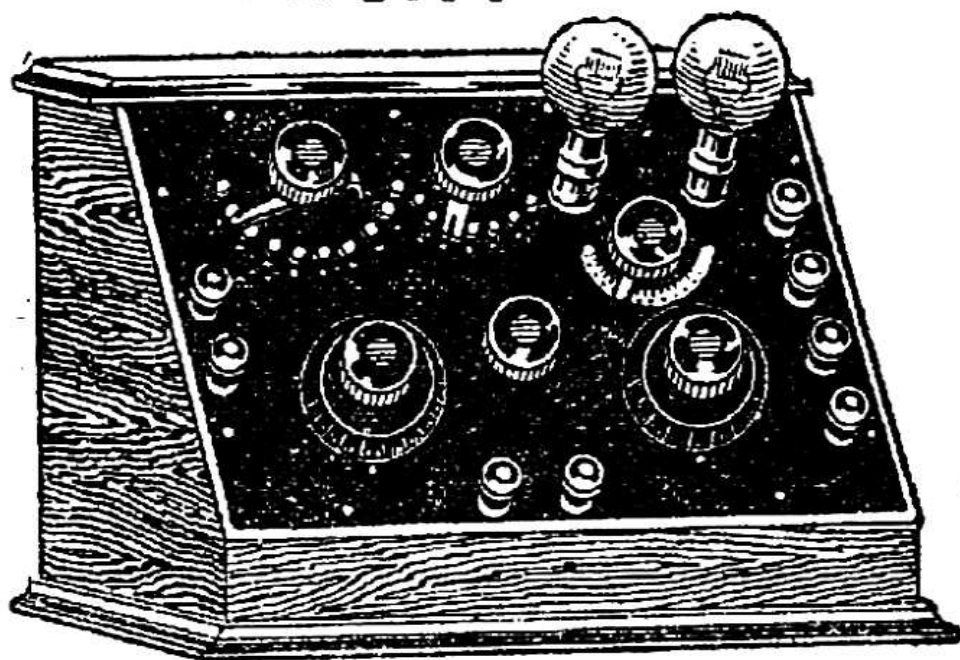
Handforth faced round and glared again.

"Funny, isn't it?" he thundered. "But I think it's about time somebody told the truth here. Buster's simply doing as he was told. He knuckled under, and this is the result. The Die-Hards have got him on toast, and he knows it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Boots' Party roared again. It was so palpably ridiculous. To imagine that an insignificant Opposition could force Buster to do anything! It would have been better perhaps if Handforth had not said anything at all. John Busterfield Boots remained perfectly calm and cool.

10 TWO-VALVE WIRELESS SETS TO BE WON!



"Finished?" he asked at length. "Good! Of course, it doesn't do to take too much notice of these fellows," he went on indulgently. "They're such a small party that they try to make up for it by creating a lot of noise. You'll always find that it's the agitators who make all the din!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Before the interruptions, I was dealing with the subject of the Opposition," continued Buster, in his best style. "Now hitherto I have studiously ignored the Die-Hard Party—"

"Ignored us!" gasped Alf Brent. "And you persecuted us like that?"

"Precisely!" said Buster calmly. "I have ignored this Opposition officially, if you understand what I mean. I have never allowed the Die-Hard Party to exist openly and as a recognised force. But now that we are changing the whole policy of the affair it is different. The Die-Hards are at perfect liberty to form this Opposition if they wish to."

"Dashed good!" said Archie, gazing round through his monocle. "What about a few more dear chappies in the fold, as it were? It seems to me, don't you know, that the time is somewhat ripe for a frightful amount of rallying round! Volunteers, what? Support the good old colours, and all that sort of thing!"

Buster shot a sharp glance round the lecture-hall.

"Wait a minute!" he said sharply, his tone quite urgent. "Not so much about this rallying round! Having officially recognised the Opposition, I have a proposal to put forward. And this proposal, let me add, is absolutely fair and equal to both Parties alike."

I stepped forward, instinctively suspicious.

"Let's hear this proposal," I said grimly.

"Certainly—that's just what I'm about to do," said J.B.B., nodding. "In a way, Nipper, I'm a bit sorry for you—"

"You can keep your sorrow for yourself!" I interrupted blandly.

He bit his lip.

"You occupy the position of a deposed leader," continued Buster, with some haste. "Not unnaturally, you are embittered and disappointed. And it is only natural, perhaps, that you should organise this feeble Opposition."

"Not so feeble, either!" I said pleasantly.

"Considering that your supporters only number eleven, your remark is palpably humorous," smiled Buster, while his supporters cackled. "It is to be expected that a fellow in Nipper's position should miss his former power," continued Buster, gazing over my head. "He hates to admit,

Hards can do just as they please. They will not be interfered with. Now, I ask you, is that fair?"

"Rather!"

"Of course it's fair!"

"Having given the Opposition this assurance, I naturally expect Nipper to reciprocate," said Boots cunningly. "We will not interfere with the Opposition, and the Opposition must not interfere with us!"

"They'd better try it on!" grinned Armstrong.

"Oh, it's quite likely—don't fool yourselves!" said Buster. "But no violence, of

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even to himself, that he's no longer a driving force."

"My hat!" exclaimed Pitt. "How do you make that out?"

"My scheme is to come to an amicable agreement with the Die-Hards," went on Buster imperturbably. "And I don't think we can do better than discuss this matter now—on the spot. No need for committees or conferences. My motto is—action!"

"Go ahead!" I said. "Choke it up!"

"Speaking for myself and the whole of my party, I give a complete and full assurance that no attempts will be made to induce any of the Die-Hards to come under our flag," said Buster. "In short, the Die-

course. Oh, dear, no! Their policy, I have no doubt, will be to use gentle methods—to persuade my supporters to leave me. But as I have given my word that we shall not interfere with them, I demand Nipper's word that they will not attempt to sway any of us!"

I looked at Buster very straightly. I was wary. Unless I was very careful, Buster would cut the ground from under my feet with his cunning. My supporters were looking at me anxiously.

"Don't you agree to anything, old man!" said Watson. "Boots daren't use violence; and it doesn't matter a hang if he tries to talk us into joining his crowd—we'll never

leave the Die-Hards. Don't give any promise!"

"Hear, hear!" said Brent heartily.

A contemptuous expression came upon Busters' face.

"You hear?" he asked sneeringly. "And these fellows call themselves sportsmen!"

"Yah! Cads!"

I realised that the fellows were in just that mood when things would seem warped. Buster's smooth tongue had influenced them too much. If I refused to fall in with his proposal, the whole crowd would be antagonised. And then there would be small hope of persuading any of them to join us. Buster was certainly cunning. And by giving my word I should tie my hands. But it was the only thing to do."

"One moment!" I said calmly. "You question that we are sportsmen, eh? I, as leader of the Die-Hards, give my word of honour that Buster's supporters will not be canvassed in any way; they will not be asked to join us—"

"What!" yelled Handforth.

"But only on one condition," I added grimly.

"Oh!" said Buster. "And what condition is that?"

"It's not a particularly difficult one to agree to," I replied. "I shall require the whole Remove to be left to choose for itself. The fellows must make up their own minds, and sort themselves out accordingly, without any persuasion on either side."

"Good!" said Buster. "I'm agreeable to that!"

"Furthermore, the leader with the majority of supporters is automatically the Remove skipper," I continued.

"Well, of course," said Buster readily. "That's understood. I've got the most supporters—" He paused, and looked at me sharply. "What are you trying to get at?" he added, with a suspicious note in his voice.

I smiled at him.

"Pretty obvious, isn't it?" I said urbanely. "Let me repeat what I said—the leader with the majority of supporters is automatically the Remove skipper. In other words, if a good few of the fellows come over to my banner—freely, and without coercion—there's just a possibility that I shall obtain the majority. The very instant my followers outnumber yours, Buster—at that instant you resign the captaincy, and I take your place."

"By gad! That's dashed clever!" said Archie admiringly.

Buster Boots set his jaw firmly—he saw that I was quite alive to his game, and ready to meet thrust with thrust. He had to agree.

"It's all absurd, of course, but I give the suggestion my approval," he replied. "But there must be no crooked work on either side. Not much chance of your getting a majority, Nipper."

"No?" I said sweetly. "We'll see, old man!"

And the meeting broke up—the two parties having come to a complete understanding. Upon the whole, I was perfectly content with the new policy.

In short, I could see Buster's downfall looming in the offing, as Archie would have remarked.

CHAPTER III.

GETTING READY FOR THE FIFTH!



"**R**OTTEN!" said Handforth disgustedly.

The Die-Hards had again collected in Study C.

"Rotten!" repeated Handforth. "I'm surprised at you, Nipper! You've let us down! Instead of telling Buster to go to the dickens, you simply let him tread on you! Now, if it had been in my power to answer—"

"We won't go into that, old son," I chuckled. "We can easily guess what you would have done! But don't worry—everything's all serene."

"But what about our plan to talk to the chaps?" asked Jack Grey.

"Of course, that's abandoned," I said. "We were absolutely compelled to agree to Buster. If we hadn't done so, nine-tenths of the fellows would have turned against us—and then we shouldn't have had an earthly chance. As it is, they regard the Die-Hard Party with smiling tolerance. We'll all be pally. But I'm willing to guarantee one thing."

"What's that?"

"Within a few days we shall have the chaps coming to us of their own free will—and asking to be enrolled under our banner," I replied confidently. "Just you wait and watch! Upon the whole, I'm inclined to believe that this is the best solution to the whole problem. Without lifting a finger, we shall get our majority, and then I'll be skipper again."

"When—at the end of next year?" asked Handforth sarcastically.

"No—at the end of a week!" I replied.

"You—you silly ass!" snorted Handforth. "It's impossible."

"If I was in the habit of betting, I should take you up on that!" I grinned. "But just mark my words! Within a week from to-day, without any of us lifting a finger to further our cause, I shall be in my old position as Remove captain. Let's see if I'm a true prophet or not."

And the affair was dismissed. All the talk in the world wouldn't alter it now. But the very fact that peace had come was a great step forward. The two parties were in harmony, and the terrorism was dead.

In the meantime, something else was occupying the attention of the Remove. It was getting on towards that celebrated day,

dedicated to a vigorous gentleman with the name of Mr. Guy Fawkes—November the Fifth.

Some big celebrations were being planned. There would be a great firework display on Big Side, with showers of rockets, maroons, Roman candles, set pieces, and everything imaginable in the firework line.

The whole school had contributed.

Even the Fifth and Sixth were enthusiastically participating in the scheme, and Morrow of the Sixth had the matter in hand. He was the treasurer, and he had ordered a big firm in Bannington to provide the spectacle. And all the fellows—particularly the juniors—were longing for a fine "Fifth." Bad weather would be a dreadful disappointment.

The only thing was to hope for the best. The weather is something that all the might of man, and all the wonders of science, cannot alter. Nature, when you come to think of it, is generally in the habit of having her own way.

On the day following the "recognition" of the Die-Hard Party there were no special events. Guy Fawkes Day was close at hand, and the juniors had rather lost interest in the Remove's internal troubles.

"Not very encouraging for Nipper," remarked Alf Brent, as he and Archie Glen-thorne strolled down Belton Lane towards the village that evening. "We haven't had a rush of fellows to join our select ranks."

"Absolutely not," replied Archie. "I mean to say, the position is not far from being putrid. Here we are, so to speak, the good old Trusty Twelve, and nobody comes waltzing along to share our joys and sorrows. Foul, what?"

"I expect things'll wake up a bit after the Fifth," said Brent. "Nipper thinks so, anyway. When the fireworks are all over there'll be nothing else to interest the chaps, and they'll roll up in their myriads. We shall have to keep a staff going to cope with the stampede."

Archie shook his head.

"I suspect, old onion, that you are attempting to be facetious," he said disapprovingly. "The matter is serious. Absolutely! As I was about to remark—'Gadzooks and dash it!'"

"And why the 'gadzooks and dash it,' old man?" grinned Alf.

"I—I mean to say!" breathed Archie. "Gaze! Behold! In other words, cast the old optical instruments into the offing, laddie! Do you see what I see, or not?"

Alf Brent looked ahead, down the lane, and started.

"Girls!" he said.

"Absolutely!" muttered Archie, in alarm.

He had not made any particular preparations before coming out, and now he hastily adjusted his tie, and gazed at his shoes, and turned to Alf with an expression of keen distress upon his face.

"Too late to dodge into the hedge," he suggested feebly. "I mean, we've been spotted by the dear girls, I sup-

pose. How shockingly frightful! And I'm looking just like a bally scarecrow!"

Alf grinned.

"My dear ass, you're as neat as a new pin," he said. "That suit of yours is glorious, your linen's spotless, your boots shiny, and everything's perfection. In fact, you're the glass of fashion, and the mould of form! But look at me! I'm a wreck, if you like!"

Archie, much relieved about his own appearance, gazed at Alf Brent with something akin to horror in his eyes.

"My word! You—you've got your old suit on, dash it!" he protested.

"Yes, I know—"

"My dear old lad, you look like a dashed tramp!"

"Can't be helped," grinned Alf, highly amused by Archie's horror. "If the girls cut me because I'm not dressed up smart, they won't be worth speaking to. So what does it matter?"

They continued their walk, and could see the girls in the distance. There were three of them—all belonging to the new Academy for Young Ladies further along the lane—past St. Frank's—the Moor View School.

The Remove fellows had had two or three encounters with these damsels before. At first, owing to the activities of Buster Boots, the girls had gained the impression that the Remove was composed of rotters. Then, in a recent gale, Handforth had saved the life of Miss Irene Manners—a fair-haired, blue-eyed maiden who was both dainty and pretty. Handforth, indeed, was quite smitten, and could frequently be seen mooning about the lane for no apparent purpose. Church and McClure, who knew all about it, discreetly winked and said nothing. They had been having quite an easy time of it lately.

As a matter of fact, Handforth and Co. were in the village even now. Edward Oswald had gone down for the express purpose—at least, so he stated—of purchasing half a dozen penny stamps at the post-office. But Church and McClure were convinced that he had other motives. No normal junior puts on a clean shirt and clean collar and a new tie to go and buy stamps!

But Handforth was sadly disappointed.

He had dragged out the walk to the village as long as possible, pausing every now and again to admire the scenery. He would stop, look up and down the lane, and then point out some very ordinary-looking object to his chums, and proceed to eulogise on it.

Considering that Handforth had never before expressed the slightest interest in scenery, this sudden change was significant. Church and McClure were quite certain that Handforth was looking for scenery of a very different kind.

Edward Oswald's luck was apparently out. For they had hardly turned the bend in the High Street when Miss Irene and her two companions emerged from a little drapery establishment. Thus, Handforth and Co.

missed the girls altogether. And it was no consolation to Handforth to come face to face with his younger brother. For Willy was horribly blunt, and the reverse of discreet.

"Any luck, old man?" he asked sympathetically.

"What?" snapped Handforth.

"Didn't you see her?"

"You—you—"

"Hard lines!" said Willy, adroitly dodging. "It's queer, too, because we spotted the girls down the High Street five minutes ago. Didn't we, Chubby?"

"Three of 'em!" said Chubby, nodding.

"Do you think I care anything about girls?" roared Handforth, as red as a beet-root. "You—you young rotters, I'll smash you up for this! Just you wait, Willy! When I catch hold of you—"

"Ah, when!" interrupted Willy sadly. "You might just as well say when the moon turns green! Don't give up, Ted! You never know your luck! Of course, it'll be an absolute miracle if those giddy flappers ever give you a second's encouragement! No wonder they scoot when you come into view!"

These insults were issued from a safe distance—and necessarily in a loud voice. And considering that numerous villagers were listening with rapt attention, poor old Handforth felt like sinking through the ground. As this was impracticable, he did the next best thing, and dashed into the first shop available.

This happened to be another drapers', and Handforth gulped as he gazed upon the array of laces, ribbons, and other dainty articles around him. Outside, Church and McClure and the fags looked on with interest.

"Going to buy her a present!" said Willy, nodding.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A new hat, I suppose!" went on Willy, in a loud voice.

Handforth, inside, with the door open, heard this remark distinctly, and he came to himself with a violent start. He realised how awful it looked to be in this particular shop! And yet he had come in quite by accident. He found a young lady assistant eyeing him politely. Something certainly had to be done. He grabbed at something on the counter.

"How much?" he roared.

"Those—those silk stockings, sir?" asked the assistant, startled.

Handforth went crimson, and shuddered with shock.

"Silk stockings?" he gulped. "No—no! I don't wear 'em! What's this? How much?"

He held a small packet in his hand.

"Hairpins, sir," said the assistant. "Two—three!"

"What do you mean—two—three?" demanded Handforth.

"We have a sale at present, sir," said the scared assistant. "The packet is usually



Irene came to a halt, and gave a little discreet cough.

"Oh! Hallo! I say, good-morning!" stammered Handforth.

threepence, but they have been reduced to two-three."

Handforth, being quite ignorant of the ways and habits of drapers, slapped down threepence on the counter, and fled. He clutched the packet of hairpins in his hand, resolving to throw them into the ditch at the first opportunity. But, somehow, Willy seemed to know all about it.

"Hairpins!" he said with a sniff. "There's a rotten present! Besides, she's got bobbed hair, and doesn't use 'em!"

And then Handforth minor thought it highly necessary to vanish. Handforth was charging at him like an enraged bull. Chubby Heath and Owen minor had already whizzed up the High Street. Willy, as fleet as a hare, forged ahead without any difficulty. Finally, he vanished round the bend.

Heath and Owen minor were still running. Willy caught them up, and just ahead of them they could see the three young ladies from the Moor View School. The girls were strolling quite leisurely.

"I'll tell you what!" panted Willy, his eyes gleaming.

His chums paused and listened. Willy told them "what," and it tickled his chums so

much that they yelled. Finally, the three suddenly disappeared into thin air. At least, this is what a chance-observer would have declared. One minute the chums of the Third were there, and the next minute they weren't.

And yet, very soon afterwards, they turned up close by the old stile which led into Bell-ton Wood. But now they were well in advance of the three schoolgirls, having made a detour. And, without wasting a second, they got busy.

"The crackers!" said Willy briskly. "The big jumping ones!"

Several jumping crackers were held ready, and a few seconds before the three girls were due to pass, Handforth minor struck a match. Being fags, Willy and Co. had utterly no scruples, and all girls, accordingly, were regarded in the light of "fair game."

"Now!" breathed Willy.

The fuses were lighted, and the next moment the crackers were sent whizzing into the centre of the lane—in fact, right amid the feet of the three young ladies who had just arrived at that spot.

And then, from Willy's point of view, the fun began.

Sizzzzz! Hisssss! Bang! Bang! Bang!

One cracker, being in a bit of a hurry, started operations at once. And Miss Irene gave a startled scream, and stood stock still. The cracker was dancing up and down like something alive, exploding every second in a most alarming manner.

And then the other crackers started in, and Archie and Alf, coming down the lane, were astonished to see the three girls from the Moor View School dancing about in terror, screaming loudly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Willy.

"Fireworks!" gasped Brent. "I'll bet some of those blessed Third Formers have done this! Come on! Let's investigate!"

"Absolutely!" exclaimed Archie, with warmth.

They dashed into the fray. And at the same moment Handforth and Co. appeared round a turn in the lane. They were on their way back to the school, Handforth determined to find Willy, and slaughter him. Edward Oswald was greatly embarrassed to see the three young ladies—although he was secretly delighted, too.

By the time Glenthorne and Brent arrived on the spot, Handforth and Co. were rushing up. And Miss Irene and her two companions crouched against the hedge, out of range of the jumping crackers. After their first fright, they were now inwardly amused—and not at all put out.

Another yell of laughter came from the wood. And Archie and Alf leapt over the stile in the most magnificent fashion. In fact, they were so quick on the job that Willy and Co. were almost too late.

They fled, yelling with merriment—confident of getting away.

But Fate stepped in—as Fate generally

does. Willy led the way, and Owen minor and Chubby Heath tore along at his heels. They were well in advance of their pursuers, with every prospect of liberty.

And then Willy tripped on a hidden root. He went flying, face downwards. Chubby Heath, just behind, having no time to swerve, blundered into him. The two fags rolled over. Owen minor paused, panting.

"Get up, you asses!" he gasped. "They're after us!"

He helped his leader to rise. Chubby Heath sat up a moment later, his face smothered with dead leaves. The unfortunate youngster had buried his head for a moment in a whole pile of rotting vegetation.

And long before they could continue their flight, Archie and Alf were upon them. It is doubtful if the two Remove fellows could have held the slippery fags—but Handforth and Co. arrived on the scene, and it was all up. The chums of the Third were held prisoners—gasping, protesting, but still grinning.

"Lucky bounder!" said Willy. "If it hadn't been for me tripping up—"

"You—you young beggar!" breathed Handforth. "I can't do much to you here—but wait! That's all! Wait!"

"I think we'd better take them back to the girls, and make the young rotters apologise," exclaimed Alf severely.

"Hear, hear!"

All the others except Handforth agreed. Handy wanted to give the fags something to be going on with, but he wasn't allowed to. And so, five minutes later, Willy and his chums found themselves arraigned in front of the three young ladies for sentence.

"Say the word, Miss Irene, and we'll punish them as they deserve!" said Handy.

"Oh, it doesn't matter!" laughed Irene. "We were a bit startled at first, but it's not far from the Fifth of November, is it? Let them go!"

"What?" said Handforth faintly.

His grip relaxed upon Willy's shoulder—out of sheer surprise. The other fags were released, and a second later they were shooting up the lane, highly delighted at their narrow escape.

Handforth & Co. and Alf and Archie stood there, rather awkward. As a rule, such things as hands and feet never bothered them. But just now they didn't know what to do with their hands at all, and they kept shifting from one foot to another, very self-conscious under the gaze of Irene and her two friends.

For these three girls were indeed charming. Irene herself was known to the juniors, but they had only just glimpsed the other two girls on former occasions. At close quarters, it was seen that they were every bit as pretty and dainty as Irene herself—but of a totally different type.

Very sweetly, Irene introduced Marjorie Temple and Doris Berkeley. Marjorie was

quite small, slim, with dark hair and deep brown eyes. She had two dimples that captured Archie at once. Hitherto, Archie had rather fancied that he liked Irene—but after seeing Marjorie he changed his opinion. Doris was blessed with auburn curls, fair skin, and there was a roguish twinkle in her dark eyes that hinted that she was not always so demure-looking as she was at the present moment. As a matter of fact, Doris was the dare-devil of the three chums. She was always up to mischief of some kind.

Church and McClure were rather amused by their great leader. The aggressive Handforth hardly had a word to say. It was customary for him to take charge of any conversation, and to do most of the talking. But just now his tongue seemed to be very sluggish, and judging by the expression on his face, he was in pain of some kind.

As a matter of fact, Handforth was merely self-conscious. In the presence of Irene he was as harmless as a kitten.

They all walked towards the school together, for it was necessary for them to all take the same direction.

"By the way, are you having any special fireworks for the Fifth up at the Moor View?" asked Alf, after a while.

"I don't think so," replied Irene. "At least, we haven't heard anything about it. I suppose you'll have some wonderful displays at St. Frank's?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "By gad! I'll tell you what! Why don't you all come along and join the throng? I mean to say, dash about with the rest of the chaps, and enjoy yourselves, what? Bring your friends, and all that sort of thing! Is that a good idea? Or don't you think so?"

Archie was very anxious to hear the girls' opinion.

"It's ever so nice of you to invite us," said Marjorie, giving Archie a look that made him go hot all over. "Oh, Irene, wouldn't it be lovely if we could manage it? And why not?"

"Of course, it all depends upon Miss Bond," said Irene slowly. "She's our Headmistress, you know," she added. "But do you really mean this? Would your masters allow any of the Moor View girls to—"

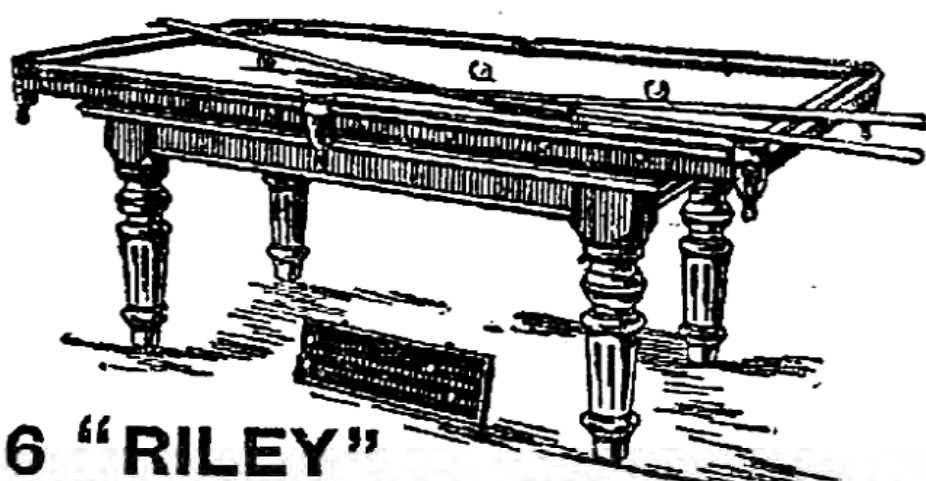
"Why, of course!" interrupted Handforth enthusiastically. "Anybody's welcome! When there's a display like that, it's open to everybody! The Head wouldn't mind a bit—in fact, he'd be jolly proud! So should we!" he added stoutly.

"Then we'll ask Miss Bond, and try to get permission," smiled Irene.

Doris gave her curls a toss, and winked.

"There'll be no trying about it—we'll jolly well get it!" she said calmly. "When we start on anything, we finish it! And you can be dead certain that we'll see those merry old fireworks!"

"Doris!" protested Irene, frowning.



**6 "RILEY"
BILLIARDS TABLES—GIVEN AS PRIZES**

"I hope she's right!" went on Irene, turning to the juniors as they arrived opposite the St. Frank's gates. "Anyhow, we'll let you know later—some time tomorrow, I expect."

"Oh, good!" said Handforth happily. "Shall—shall I come up— I—I mean, shall we— That is—"

"Oh, we'll let you know somehow," interrupted Irene, laughing. "Good-night!"

And the three girls walked on, with a wave of their hands. And the five juniors stood there, looking after them.

"Priceless!" murmured Archie. "I mean to say, it's up to us, dash it, to do something special, what? Leave it to me, laddies! I'll whizz into Bannington, and make all sorts of topping arrangements."

The juniors entered the Triangle in high spirits. It would certainly be a greatly added pleasure on the Fifth if the girls of the Moor View School were in the audience as spectators.

CHAPTER IV.

KENMORE ON THE PROWL!



JOHAN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS smiled complacently.

"Well, my sons, we haven't lost any supporters yet," he said.

"Twenty-four hours have passed since that meeting, and Nipper's gang remains at twelve. He'll be lucky if he gets any more members."

"Rather!" grinned Percy Bray. "The chaps are too keen on the Recreation Club to bother about Nipper and his silly Die-Hards. By the way, it's about time we went down and opened the doors, isn't it?"

Buster glanced at the clock.

"Yes—we'll go practically at once," he said. "I mean to introduce something fresh in a day or two—I've got in touch with a thoroughly reliable bookmaker at Bannington—"

"A—a bookmaker?" interrupted Crowe, startled.

"Why not?"

"But, I say!" protested Crowe. "Going pretty strong, aren't you?"

John Busterfield Boots looked at the Faithful Five blandly.

"My dear chaps, it's perfectly safe—you needn't worry," he said. "All the actual business will be transacted in the club-room, and, as you know, we're perfectly private there. No risk of any sort. I'll act as bookie for any of the chaps who want to have a few bets on the gee-gees—and I'm going to appoint Fullwood as my secretary. He's keen on that sort of thing, and knows all the ins and outs!"

"It seems like asking for trouble," remarked Denny, shaking his head.

"My dear ass, we've got to do something to keep the interest alive," said Buster. "I realise, of course, that it'll mean extra work for me, but I'll push most of it on to Fullwood. Three parts of the chaps will be only too pleased to have a few bets on, and it'll be something to look forward to every evening. We'll get the late edition of the evening paper, and announce the winners in the club-room every night."

The Faithful Five were more startled by the daring of the thing than anything else. When they got used to the idea they became quite enthusiastic. After all, how could there be any real danger?

And they laughed to themselves as they thought of the unfortunate Die-Hard party, and its limited number of members. Still amused, they went with Buster outside into the Triangle. Darkness had fallen, and the crispness of the evening had changed. A damp, murky mist had come over from the sea, and the Triangle was thick and unpleasant.

The six juniors went unostentatiously across to the big archway which led into the cloisters. And as they vanished in a clump, Simon Kenmore of the Sixth paused on his way from the gymnasium to the Ancient House, and looked in that direction.

"That infernal club!" murmured Kenmore. "Something fishy about that, in my opinion. These kids wouldn't be so confoundedly interested if they were just going there to play draughts or ludo, or some kids' game like that!"

Kenmore was suspicious. He knew well enough that Mr. Stockdale had given the Recreation Club the seal of his approval. But Kenmore wasn't satisfied with that. He had a pretty shrewd idea that something else was going on.

There was nothing secretive about the club, of course. It went on under the eyes of masters and prefects, without any attempt at underhand work. It was well

known that Mr. Stockdale had walked in once or twice unexpectedly, and had found everything to his satisfaction. Morrow of the Sixth had also reported that the club was perfectly innocuous.

But, in spite of all this, Kenmore wasn't satisfied.

Perhaps this was because there is a great deal of truth in the old adage, "Evil minds have evil thoughts," or something to that effect. Kenmore himself was a senior who had a fairly guilty record. He was a bully, and betting on horses, and gambling generally, came as second nature to him. He was also acquainted with Fullwood's little ways. And it struck him as exceedingly significant that Fullwood should spend practically every minute of his leisure time in this club-room.

Kenmore decided to probe into the matter.

He took up a position under one of the old elm trees, and waited. And sure enough a steady stream of juniors came from both the College House and Ancient House—all bound for the peaceful cloisters.

"Yes, by Jove, there's something queer about this!" Kenmore decided.

In the meantime, play was commencing within the club. It was a big, lofty room—having formerly been the laboratory annex. All the windows were decorated with coloured opaque paper—that stuff which is stuck to the glass in order to make the windows look like the genuine stained article. There was a skylight also, and this was treated in the same way. When Buster Boots had prepared this place he had made certain that nobody could spy into it from the outside.

And small wonder!

For, instead of being what it ostensibly was, the club was a mild gambling-den—a place where the juniors actually played roulette, and poker, and other card games. Most of the money was quite small, but this made no difference whatever to the principle of the thing. It was pernicious.

The roulette-table was quite an elaborate affair in its own small way. Fullwood was the "banker" for this evening, having drawn this position some time earlier. Only fellows with a pound or over were allowed to hold the "bank." And as this was the most profitable game, it was eagerly sought after.

A throng of tense, excited fellows surrounded the table, placing their sixpences and shillings on the numbers, or the red or the black. At the little side table other fellows were busy at poker, and there was also a game going on which was referred to as "ponton."

Buster had persuaded the majority of the fellows that there was no harm at all in this kind of thing. He assured them that it was a mild sport, and it was only because of old-fashioned shortsightedness that the Head wouldn't recognise it openly.

(Continued on page 15.)

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(Now read on.)

"VICTORY! VICTORY ALL ALONG THE LINE!"

WHEN Mark Rymer took to his heels in the manner described, his one idea was to put as great a distance as possible between himself and his pursuer. With this end in view, he made no attempt to make for any definite destination, but simply bolted straight ahead across the plain and down the rugged mountain-side as fast as his legs would carry him.

When he found that he had succeeded in shaking Dick off, he threw himself down at the foot of a verdure-clad bank and refreshed himself with a pull at his brandy-flask. After resting sufficiently long to recover his wind, he rose to his feet, lit a cigar, and struck out—as he thought—in the direction of Kalapana.

Presently, however, he discovered that he had taken the wrong direction, and was walking away from Kalapana instead of towards it. He decided, therefore, to retrace his steps, but, in attempting to do so, he

completely lost his bearings in the darkness, and had not the remotest notion where he was, or in which direction Kalapana lay.

For the whole of the long, dark night he wandered about the desolate mountain side, seeking in vain for the narrow, winding bridle-path by which he had ascended. With the advent of sunrise, of course, his difficulties vanished; and by four o'clock in the morning he was back at the Stars and Stripes, where he quietly crept into the hotel through an unfastened window, and as quietly went to bed.

It was noon when he awoke, and the first man he met, on emerging from his bedroom, was the genial Irish landlord.

"The top av the mornin' to ye, sorr!" said he. "That was a moighty long stroll ye tuk last night!"

"It was," agreed the professor, with a careless laugh. "I intended, as I told you, to return at nine o'clock, but I lost my way and didn't get back until after midnight."

"After midnight, did ye say?" retorted the landlord. "Faix, it was two o'clock whin I went to bed meself, and ye hadn't come back thin!"

"Really!" said Mark Rymer, with an expression of feigned surprise on his parchment-like face. "Was I really so late as that? I thought it was only about half-past twelve when I returned; but the fact of the matter is I was so dog-tired that I didn't take any particular note of the time. The only thing that worried me was the fear that I should have to knock you up; but, as luck would have it, the coffee-room window had been left unfastened, so I just slipped in and crept upstairs to bed without disturbing anyone. What can you give me for breakfast?"

The landlord rattled off the bill of fare, and the professor gave his order. At the conclusion of the meal he sauntered out on to the verandah, where the landlord was leaning over the rail and gazing with a somewhat melancholy air at the distant roof of Dick Seymour's bungalow.

"A penny for your thoughts!" said Mark Rymer pleasantly.

The landlord heaved a sigh.

"I was thinking, sorr," he said, "that there's more beside meself in Kalapana that'll miss the sight av his handsome face, and the ring av his cheery laugh, and the grip av his honest fist!"

"Whose face, whose laugh, whose fist?" asked the professor, as he dropped into the nearest seat.

"Young Dick Seymour," said the landlord. "We were talking about him last night, yo'll recollect."

"Were we?" said the professor, biting off the end of a cigar. "Oh, yes! I remember now. Dick Seymour—the manager of Mr. Pryde's estate. Has anything happened to him?"

"He's gone, sorr," said the landlord, in a lugubrious voice.

"Dead?" said Mark Rymer, arching his bushy eyebrows.

"No, sorr. The saints be praised, it's not so bad as that!" replied the landlord. "But he's gone away—left Kalapana for good."

"Oh, is that all?" said the professor, lighting his cigar and blowing out a cloud of filmy smoke.

"All!" said the landlord indignantly. "'Tis enough. I'm thinking! There's not a man, woman, or child—black or white—in Kalapana to-day whose heart is as heavy as lead at the thought that we have lost him. Ay, and 'tis meself that's thinking that the heaviest heart of all will be the heart av the sweet-faced girl in the big house on the hill!"

"Miss Pryde?"

"Yes, sorr."

"But if Seymour was so popular as all this, why has he left, and where has he gone?"

"As to why he's left, that's more than I can tell ye, sorr. They do be saying, down in the town, that Mr. Pryde has given him the sack, but 'tis meself that's thinking that the ould gentleman has too much sinse to sack the best and most loyal manager that a master ever had. As to where he's gone, that's easy to answer. He's gone to Hilo."

"When?"

"This morning, sorr. He drove up here about six o'clock to wish me good-bye. He had all his baggage with him, and he tould me he was going to Hilo, and from Hilo to Honolulu, and from Honolulu to San Francisco."

"Going to settle in the United States—eh?"

"Yes, sorr. That's what he said."

"And when will he leave Hilo?"

"To-day sorr. The steamer sails for Honolulu at five o'clock this afternoon."

"This afternoon!"

Mark Rymer leaped to his feet as though he had been shot. He whipped out his watch and glanced at the dial. It was five minutes to one. Hilo was nearly forty miles away, and the steamer sailed at five o'clock.

He thrust the watch back into his pocket, and paced the verandah with rapid, agitated strides. After many months of patient search and perilous adventure, he had at last succeeded in finding the missing heir. And now it appeared that he was going to lose him again.

The bare idea was maddening. Yet what could be done? Hilo was forty miles away; it was now one o'clock, and the steamer sailed at five. Forty miles in four hours! It was impossible; nevertheless, the professor decided to make the attempt.

"Make out your bill, and tell your man to saddle my horse at once!" he said to the landlord. "By hook or crook I must get to Hilo before that steamer sails!"

The landlord stared at him in bewilderment.

"But—but—I thought ye said ye didn't know Dick Seymour?" he exclaimed.

"No more I do!" retorted the professor. "It isn't of Dick Seymour that I'm thinking. But I had forgotten until you mentioned it just now that the steamer sails this afternoon, and I have a most important engagement in Honolulu on Monday, which I cannot possibly fulfil unless I catch this afternoon's boat."

"Which ye never will!" said the landlord.

"I'll try, at any rate," replied the professor. "But we are wasting time. Make out my bill, and order my horse at once."

The landlord obeyed, and a quarter of an hour later Mark Rymer was on his way to Hilo. Whether he would have succeeded in making the journey within the stipulated time, if all had gone well, is a question which cannot be answered; but fifteen miles from Hilo his horse fell lame, and when he rode into the little seaport town, the clocks were pointing to a quarter past seven, and the Honolulu steamer, with Dick Seymour aboard, had sailed a couple of hours ago.

Outwardly calm, but inwardly fuming, Mark Rymer rode to the American hotel where he had stayed two nights before, and handed over his horse to the care of a native ostler. He then strolled into the hotel, and sought an interview with the proprietor.

"Hello! Yew've got back, I see," said the latter, who was seated on the office-stool, with his feet on the stove, and the inevitable corn-cob between his lips. "Had a bully time in Kalapana?"

The professor shook his head.

"I went to Kalapana for the express purpose of seeing a very dear friend of mine," he said, lying with his customary fluency. "When I got there, I found that he had come to Hilo a couple of days ago. I followed him here to-day, and now I learn that he sailed this afternoon for Honolulu, with the object of proceeding to San Francisco."

"That's rough on yew," said the Yankee, with a sympathetic wag of his head. "What'll yew do?"

"I shall follow him, of course!" declared the professor almost fiercely. "I suppose there isn't another steamer from here to Honolulu until next Friday?"

"Nary one!" said the Yankee. "Yew'll have to cool your heels in Hilo for another week at least. I calculate you're feeling purty riled. But yew needn't be. If yew want to see your pal before he sails for 'Frisco yew can do it just as well, I reckon, by leaving here next Friday as by leaving to-day."

"How do you make that out?" asked Mark Rymer eagerly.

"Waal, it's like this," said the Yankee. "We are now at the nineteenth of April. Your pal will be landed in Honolulu to-

morrow, the twentieth of April. The first boat he can catch, from Honolulu to 'Frisco, is the Ventura, which calls at Honolulu on the seventh of May, and leaves for 'Frisco the same day."

Mark Rymer's eyes began to glisten with dawning hope.

"Do you mean," he asked, "that if my friend arrives in Honolulu to-morrow, he will have to wait there seventeen days before he can go on to San Francisco?"

"Jest that," said the Yankee, nodding his head. "He can't leave Honolulu till the seventh of May, and if yew leave here next Friday, yew'll arrive in Honolulu on the twenty-seventh of April—ten days before your pal can possibly leave."

The professor rubbed his skinny hands with delight. Ten days in which to find Dick Seymour, in a little place like Honolulu! Why, the thing was as simple as A B C. He had been looking forward to the arduous task of hunting for Dick among the teeming millions of New York, and now he learned that all he had to do was to search for him in a town of less than twenty thousand inhabitants. Small wonder that he felt relieved and confident of success.

This feeling of confidence lasted all the week that he remained in Hilo, and throughout the voyage from Hilo to Honolulu.

Upon landing at the latter place, however, he was once more thrown into a state of despair by the news that an "intermediate steamer" had left Honolulu for San Francisco on the very day before his arrival.

Half crazy with suspense, he rushed off to the steamship office, and asked to be allowed to see a list of the steamer's passengers.

After some demur, his request was granted, and in two minutes' time he was as cheerful and confident as ever.

Amongst the names on the list there was no such name as Seymour. The man he sought was still in Honolulu.

Having taken up his quarters at the Diamond Hotel, the professor proceeded to open his campaign.

Day after day he sauntered through the principal streets of the town, and loitered in the neighbourhood of the wharf.

He spent one whole day in the lovely Nuuanu Valley, where are situated some of the finest private residences in Honolulu; and the greater part of another at Pearl Harbour.

Every morning he paid a visit to the suburb of Waikiki, which is the fashionable bathing resort; and everywhere he went, morning, noon, and night, he made cautious inquiries of shopkeepers, hotel proprietors, cab-drivers, and the like.

But it was labour in vain. Day succeeded day, and night followed night, and neither in the town nor in the suburbs could he see or hear the faintest trace of the man who stood between himself and the Easington title and estates.

"My luck has deserted me," he mused one evening, as he was strolling past the grounds of Oahu College. "He must have booked his passage under an assumed name, and left for San Francisco by that intermediate steamer ten days ago. If he didn't, he'll be leaving by the Ventura, which is due to call here to-morrow morning."

"In either case, there doesn't appear to be any use in looking for him here, so I'll just walk round to the steamship office, and book a berth in the Ventura for myself, and then I'll—"

He checked himself with a gasp of triumphant amazement, for at that moment Dick Seymour emerged through the gates of the college grounds in company with a handsome young American!

Apparently the two men had been playing cricket, or some other outdoor game, for Dick was clad in white flannel trousers and a conspicuous red-and-black striped "blazer," whilst his companion wore trousers of similar hue and material, with a dark-blue "blazer" edged with white.

Upon emerging from the college grounds, they sauntered off in the direction of Waikiki.

The way to this popular suburb is lined with beautiful tropical villas, built of rock coral, with deep verandahs, covered with creepers, in the midst of delightful gardens and shrubberies.

Most of the gardens run down to the beach, and at the bottom of each is a wooden erection which serves the double purpose of a boathouse and a bathing-hut.

It was into one of these houses that Dick and his companion turned. The professor, who had shadowed them from the college, saw them enter the house through the front door, and a moment or two later he saw them come out at the back, walk down the garden, and vanish into the boathouse. Ten minutes later they had launched a neat outrigger, and were paddling out into the bay.

"I was wrong. My luck holds good, after all!" chuckled the professor. "They have evidently gone for a row in the bay, and will probably not return until it is dusk. There's plenty of cover at the lower end of the garden near the boathouse, so that if I can only manage to get there without attracting observation, I have only to lie in wait until they return."

He sauntered as far as the adjoining house, and discovered, to his delight, that it was unoccupied. Without a moment's hesitation, he boldly entered the garden gate, glided round to the back of the house, crept down to the bottom of the garden under cover of the hedge, and ultimately stationed himself in such a position that, without being visible himself, he had an uninterrupted view of that portion of the beach in front of the boathouse to which Dick and his companion would return. Then he took out his revolver, and settled down to wait.

A couple of hours passed. The sun sank to his rest, and the shadows of approaching night began to creep across the sky. Dimmer and dimmer grew the light, until it was nearly dark. Then the murmur of voices was heard, mingled with the splash of dipping oars.

Mark Rymer glanced over the top of the hedge behind which he was hiding. The boat was cresting the creamy surf, and a moment later its pointed prow was resting on the silvery sand.

The two young men sprang out. It was too dark to see their faces, but the broad, conspicuous stripes of Dick Seymour's "blazer" were more than sufficient to distinguish him from his companion.

The professor cocked his revolver, and squinted along the gleaming barrel. The two men were then in the act of dragging their boat out of the water.

"Heave, ho! Out she comes!"

Dick's musical voice came floating through the deepening dusk, and nerved Mark Rymer to action. He took careful aim, and fired.

Crack!

There was a vicious spit of flame, accompanied by a sharp report, and then the man in the black-and-red blazer threw up his arms, and sank lifeless on the beach, with a bullet in his brain.

Two minutes later Mark Rymer was hurrying along the road, in the direction of Honolulu, and as he walked, he was muttering softly to himself:

"Victory—victory all along the line! Dick Seymour is dead, and the title and estates are mine!"

THE WRONG MAN!

WHEN Mark Rymer lay down to rest that night at the Diamond Head Hotel, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that he was the most contented man in the whole of the western hemisphere. It was true that the brand of Cain was on his brow, that he had been guilty of the hideous crime of murdering a fellow-creature in cold blood. But this troubled him not at all. His conscience was as dead as the man he had slain, and the only thought for which his callous brain had room—the thought with which he went to sleep, the thought with which he awoke—was that he had beaten Nelson Lee, and that he had secured the Easington title and estates for himself beyond all possibility of dispute.

After breakfasting in bed, he went down into the office and interviewed the clerk in charge.

"I am anxious to return to England with as little delay as possible," he said. "Which is my best and quickest route?"

"Steamer from here to San Francisco," replied the clerk; "train from San Francisco to New York; steamer from New York to Liverpool, Southampton, or Plymouth."

"That's what I thought. Do you know the Ventura?"

"Yes."

"She calls here, I believe?"

"She does."

"And is due to arrive here to-day?"

"She's here now."

"The deuce she is! When did she arrive?"

"About five o'clock this morning."

"How long does she generally stay here?"

"About twelve hours."

my passage. In the meantime, I shall be glad if you'll make out my bill and send it up to the smoke-room."

The clerk promised to do so, and Mark Rymer strolled into the smoke-room, where he ordered a cocktail, and asked for a copy of the "Polynesian," which is the principal daily paper published on the island.

Then it was that his joy was turned to mourning, for the first item of news which caught his eye was the following:

"KING OF THE ISLAND"

A Stirring Adventure Yarn

— by —

DAVID GOODWIN

(The Finest Boys' Writer Who Ever Lived)

Starts This Week

— in —

YOUNG BRITAIN

PRICE—2d.

OUT ON THURSDAY!

(Which also carries with it a second chance to enter the great "Footballers' Names" Contest.)

"Then she will leave for San Francisco about five o'clock this evening?"

"Yes."

"There will be no difficulty about my securing a berth?"

"None whatever."

"Who are the local agents of the line?"

"Hackfield & Co. Anybody will show you their office. It isn't two minutes' walk from the wharf."

"Thanks! I'll go there presently and book

**"SENSATIONAL AFFAIR IN WAIKIKI.
MURDER OF PROFESSOR COLLING-
WOOD'S SON.**

SHOT BY AN UNKNOWN HAND.

"It is with feelings of mingled horror and indignation that we have to announce that Mr. Henry Collingwood, only son of the popular vice-principal of Oahu College, was murdered last night under circumstances of considerable mystery. Immediately on receipt of the sad intelligence, in the early

hours of this morning, we despatched a reporter in quest of detailed information. Though our representative was unable to see Professor Collingwood, who is prostrated with grief, he nevertheless succeeded in securing an interview with Mr. Richard Seymour, who was an intimate friend of the murdered man, and an eye-witness of the crime. We cannot do better than subjoin Mr. Seymour's statement exactly as it was given to our reporter:

"My name is Richard Seymour," he said. "I was formerly in the employ of Messrs. Pryde & Co., of Kalapana, in the island of Hawaii. I left their employment a little over a fortnight ago, and came to Honolulu, my intention being to stay here until to-day, and then to proceed to San Francisco by the steamship Ventura."

"I had previously met Harry Collingwood, and had struck up an intimate friendship with him. When I came to Honolulu, therefore, he invited me to stay at his father's house until the Ventura arrived. I accepted his invitation, and have been staying at Waikiki ever since."

"Yesterday afternoon Harry Collingwood and I went to Oahu College, where we had three or four hours' bat practice at the nets. Harry wore his college blazer, which was Navy blue, edged with white. I wore a scarlet blazer, striped with black, which are the colours of a cricket club in Napier, where I used to live. I mention these details because they seem to me to have an important bearing on the tragedy which followed."

"Upon leaving the college we returned to Professor Collingwood's house at Waikiki, where we launched an outrigger and went for a row in the bay. When we had been rowing some little time, I complained that my blazer was too small, and fettered the movements of my arms. Harry laughingly suggested that we should change blazers, and to this I agreed. For the rest of the row, therefore, Harry wore my blazer and I wore his."

"It was dusk when we returned. We ran the boat ashore, just opposite the boat-house, and were in the act of dragging her up the beach, when all at once I was startled by the crack of a revolver. The next instant, to my horror and dismay, Harry threw up his arms and fell lifeless at my feet."

"As soon as I had recovered from my stupefaction, I ran to the spot from which the flash had proceeded, but by that time the murderer had made his escape, and nothing has since been seen or heard of him."

"You spoke just now of the difference between your blazer and that of Mr. Collingwood, and you said that you believed it had an important bearing on the tragedy. Would you mind explaining what you meant?" asked our reporter.

"Not at all. I believe, from the bottom of my heart, that Harry Collingwood would

have been living now if we had not exchanged blazers in the boat."

"That is a startling assertion to make. Have you any proof in support of it?"

"No. Nevertheless, I am convinced that it is true. On the night before I left Hawaii a dastardly attempt was made upon my life. Who my assailant was I cannot even surmise; but it seems to me to be morally certain that my unknown enemy followed me to Honolulu, saw me go out in the boat with Harry, noted the colour and the pattern of my blazer, waited until we returned, and then shot poor Harry, under the impression that he was shooting me."

"It was dusk when you returned, so that such a mistake would be an easy one to make."

"Quite so."

"What steps do you propose to take to put your theory to the test?"

"None. What steps can I take? I have no clue, either to the identity of my unknown foe, or the motives which inspire his enmity."

"Then you will simply leave the matter in the hands of the local police?"

"There is nothing else for me to do. Besides, I have already booked my passage in the Ventura, which is due to arrive at Honolulu this morning, and will sail for San Francisco this evening. Of course, if there was anything I could do to help to clear up the mystery, I should only be too glad to postpone my departure. But there isn't; so I shall sail in the Ventura this evening, and shall leave the matter, as you have said, in the hands of the local police."

There were further details of the crime, for the most part evolved from the reporter's imagination. There was also a biographical sketch of the victim, and a description of the scene of the tragedy. But these Mark Rymer did not trouble to read. As soon as he realised that he had shot the wrong man by mistake—that his cousin's heir was still in the land of the living, he crushed the paper into a shapeless mass, and sank back in his seat, quivering with mortification, rage, and chagrin.

It was a bitter pill to swallow. At one fell swoop, in the very moment of his fancied triumph, his house of cards had been ruthlessly felled to the ground. The task he had thought accomplished was still to be performed. The weary, heart-breaking work was all to be done over again. Seymour was alive, and was leaving for the United States.

"I must go with him, that's all!" he hissed between his clenched teeth. "I shall surely get the chance I want during the voyage!"

He paid his bill, which the clerk had sent up, and then made his way to the steamship company's office.

"When does the Ventura leave?" he asked a clerk.

"At five o'clock this evening, sir," was the reply.

"Can I book a first-class berth to San Francisco?"

"Certainly, sir. Here is a plan of the accommodation, so perhaps you will select the berth you would prefer."

Mark Rymer studied the plan, made his selection, paid his passage, and received his voucher. Then he turned to leave the office.

But even as he gripped the handle of the door, a voice outside reached his ears, and drove all the colour from his cheeks.

"Is this the office?" the voice asked.

It was the voice of Nelson Lee!

For one brief moment the professor stood as if half-paralysed; then he spun round on his heel, crossed the room, and, standing with his back towards the door, pretended to be closely studying a large-scale map of the United States, which hung on the wall.

And scarcely had he taken up that position, when the office-door swung open, and Nelson Lee walked in!

— — —
"SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR."

WHEN last we parted from Nelson Lee he was lying unconscious in the road on the outskirts of the town of Napier, in New Zealand.

As the reader will doubtless remember, Mary Rymer had waylaid him, and overpowered him with the assistance of Bush Billy, who had stunned the detective with a loaded cane. Before they had time to complete their dastardly work a dogcart had driven up, whereupon they had taken to their heels, and had made their escape in the dark.

There were two men in the dogcart, and as soon as they had satisfied themselves that Nelson Lee was still alive, they placed him in their trap and drove him to Dr. Irving's house.

A week elapsed ere he recovered consciousness and revealed his assailant's name. By that time, however, the Sonoma had sailed from Auckland, and Mark Rymer was on his way to Honolulu.

For another fortnight the detective remained at Dr. Irving's house, slowly but surely regaining his shattered health. At the end of that time, against the doctor's earnest advice, he insisted upon resuming work, and on Monday, May 22nd, he took his seat in the Rotorua coach.

Rotorua was reached on the following Wednesday night, and Auckland on the Thursday. On Saturday, the 27th, he embarked on board the Ventura, and at five o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, June 7th, he was awakened by the steward with the news that the steamer had crossed the bar of Honolulu Bay, and had taken up her berth alongside the wharf.

Now, it is necessary here to remind the reader of two important facts. Dr. Irving

had told Nelson Lee, in the smoke-room of the Clarendon Hotel at Napier, that Dick Seymour had left New Zealand, and was living at Kalapana, in the island of Hawaii. Mark Rymer had overheard this conversation, and had promptly made his way to Kalapana in the manner already described. But Nelson Lee, of course, was profoundly ignorant of this. He thought the professor was still in New Zealand, hunting for the missing heir. Never for a moment did he suspect that Mark Rymer had gone to the Sandwich Islands, and was at that very moment in Honolulu.

In the second place, Nelson Lee was also unaware that Dick had thrown up his situation at Kalapana, and had come to Honolulu with the intention of proceeding to America.

Bearing these two facts in mind, the reader will readily perceive that the march of events had resulted in a very interesting situation. Mark Rymer and Dick Seymour were both in Honolulu when the Ventura arrived. Practically they were both within rifle-shot of the steamer's deck, yet Nelson Lee was under the impression that Mark Rymer was in New Zealand, four thousand miles away, and that Dick Seymour was at Kalapana, two hundred miles south.

Nor was this all. Both Mark Rymer and Dick Seymour had booked their passages in the Ventura, and were due to sail for San Francisco at five o'clock that evening. Yet the first thing the detective did, after breakfasting on board the Ventura, was to seek out the purser, and make arrangements for leaving Honolulu at the earliest possible moment.

"I want to go to Kalapana, in the Island of Hawaii," he said. "I am told that a steamer leaves Honolulu for Hawaii every Tuesday evening. Is that correct?"

"Perfectly!" said the purser, pointing to a small screw-steamer which was moored to the wharf some distance nearer the harbour mouth. "That's the boat."

"Do you know what time she sails?"

"Half-past five."

"Where must I apply for a berth?"

"At Hackfield & Co.'s; they are the agents."

"Where is their office?"

"About two minutes walk from the wharf. You can't miss it; anybody will show it to you."

"Thanks! I think I'll go there now and secure a berth, and then I'll come back and make arrangements for transhipping my baggage."

He went ashore, and a few minutes later was standing outside the agents' office, little dreaming that Mark Rymer was inside.

"Is this the office?" he asked a dusky-hued native who had volunteered to act as his guide.

"Yes, sah," said the native.

And then the detective had opened the

door, and walked into the dimly lighted office.

It would scarcely be true to say that he did not see Mark Rymer, who was standing with his back towards him on the opposite side of the office; but he certainly did not recognise him.

If he had known that the professor was in the neighbourhood, his senses would have been more on the alert. But Mark Rymer was the last man in the world of whom he was thinking at that moment, and without so much as a second glance at the figure at the other side of the office, he had walked up to the agent's desk, stated his wants, paid his money, received his ticket, and taken his departure.

From the agents' office he returned to the Ventura; and superintended the transhipment of his baggage.

Having nothing better to do with his time, he then set out on a six-mile walk to the famous precipice of the Pali, which is one of the "show places" of the island.

At five o'clock he returned to Honolulu, purchased a copy of the "Polynesian," and a fresh supply of tobacco, and went aboard the steamer which was to convey him to Hawaii.

Having secured a comfortable seat on the upper deck, he lit his pipe and unfolded his paper. Scarcely had he done so ere the Ventura slipped her moorings, and steamed away towards the harbour mouth. As the liner glided past, the detective rose to his feet and waved his hat, as a token of farewell to the many friends he had made on the voyage from Auckland to Honolulu.

"Aloha Oe!" he shouted, using the Hawaiian formula of adieu. "Aloha Nui!"

The words died away in a gasp of stupefaction, and his arm dropped limply to his side.

Amongst the faces of those on the Ventura's deck he had seen the face of Mark Rymer. It was only for an instant—it vanished as soon as he caught sight of it—but the vision of two deep-set eyes, glittering with malignant triumph, was branded on his brain with photographic intensity.

"Mark Rymer on board the Ventura!" Lee gasped. "What does it mean?"

He stared after the departing steamer in half-dazed stupefaction. It was not until she had crossed the bar and was heading out to sea that he woke from his gloomy reverie. Then, scarcely knowing what he was doing, he sank back into his deck-chair, and allowed his eyes to rest upon the open page of the "Polynesian." He was not reading—was not even attempting to read—yet, in spite of himself, as it were, he perceived the words, "My name is Richard Seymour. I was formerly in the employ of Messrs. Pryde & Co., of Kalapana, in the Island of Hawaii."

With a start of surprise, not unmixed with agitation, he pulled himself together,

and eagerly devoured the rest of the newspaper account of the murder at Waikiki.

By the time he had finished, the whole affair was clear to him.

Mark Rymer had been to Kalapana, had found Dick Seymour, and had tried, but failed to murder him. For some reason or other, Dick Seymour had left Kalapana, and had come to Honolulu. Mark Rymer had followed him, and had again made an unsuccessful attempt upon his life.

And now—this was the bitterest news of all—Mark Rymer and Dick Seymour were on their way to San Francisco, and Nelson Lee was stranded in Honolulu!

"I must follow them at the earliest possible moment!" he exclaimed, leaping to his feet. "In the meantime, thank Heaven, there's a cable between this place and San Francisco, so that it won't be difficult to communicate with Dick and warn him of his danger. Unluckily, Mark Rymer's crimes have all been committed outside the jurisdiction of the United States, so that, even if I were an official detective instead of a private one, I couldn't order him to be arrested when he lands in San Francisco. But Mark Rymer can wait; I can settle accounts with him at my leisure. I must first put Dick Seymour on his guard, and instruct him to remain in San Francisco until I can join him."

Ten minutes later he was standing on the wharf, with his baggage piled in disorder at his feet. Five minutes later he was back at the office of Hackfield & Co.

What happened there we will not pause to relate. Suffice to say that at seven o'clock that evening the following cablegram was handed in to the general manager of the Occidental & Oriental Steamship Co. at San Francisco:

"Stubbs, 421, Market Street, San Francisco.—Board Ventura on arrival, June 13th. Ask for saloon passenger named Seymour. Inform him Nelson Lee following with urgent and important news. Instruct him to put up at Palace Hotel, and on no account to leave San Francisco until Lee arrives. Lee leaves here per s.s. Doris June 11th, and arrives San Francisco 18th. Meanwhile, Seymour to be strictly on his guard, as attempts on life will probably be renewed. Lee advises keep indoors all day, and avoid making friends with strangers. All expenses defrayed by Lee on arrival.—HACKFIELD, Honolulu."

THE PROFESSOR AT BAY.

SIX days elapsed. It was daybreak on the morning of Monday, June 13th. The Ventura was passing into the Bay of San Francisco through the far-famed Golden Gate. For an hour she steamed through this most beautiful of natural harbours; then she brought up alongside the O. & O. Co.'s wharf, and the voyage from Honolulu to San Francisco was at an end.

For the whole of those six days Mark Rymer had watched Dick Seymour like a cat watching a mouse. But the luck had been against him, and the opportunity for which he sought—the opportunity for a stealthy stab in the back, or a swift and sudden hurling overboard had not yet presented itself.

But the professor did not despair. He had overheard Dick say that he was not going to stay in San Francisco, but was going straight on to New York with as little delay as possible.

As soon as the steamer had been made fast to the wharf, the Custom House officials came aboard to examine the passengers' baggage. With them came a weedy-looking, sandy-haired youth, with a half-smoked cigarette between his lips. He was one of the clerks from the office of the Occidental and Oriental Steamship Co. Mr. Stubbs, the general manager, had been unexpectedly called up-country on important business, and he had given Hackfield's cablegram to one of his clerks, with instructions to board the Ventura on her arrival, and deliver the message into Dick Seymour's hands.

As luck would have it, the first man the clerk encountered when he stepped aboard was Mark Rymer.

"Morning!" said the clerk, without removing the cigarette from between his lips. "Would yew be so very obliging as to show me which is Mr. Seymour?"

In an instant the professor's suspicions were aroused.

"Mr. Seymour stands before you," he replied, without a moment's hesitation.

"Yew don't say," exclaimed the clerk, "yew are Mr. Seymour?"

"I am," said the professor, with an oily smile.

The clerk regarded him with some amount of misgiving. Even to his unimaginative brain—and he was a very dull-witted youth—the coincidence appeared peculiar.

"I should like some proof of your identity," he drawled. "I have an important message to deliver to Mr. Seymour, and it would be mighty awkward, I guess, if I gave it to the wrong man. On second thoughts, I calculate I'd better ask the purser."

Quick as thought, the professor shot out his arm, and laid a compelling hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Look at me!" he hissed, in a low-toned but commanding voice.

With a shiver of fear, the clerk obeyed. For half a dozen breathless seconds the professor stared him full in the face, his eyes alternately dilating and contracting, and glowing with a strange, weird, phosphorescent light, that came and went like the flashes of a will-o'-the-wisp. Then a grim smile of sardonic triumph fitted across his sallow face. He had hypnotised the clerk as effectually as he had formerly

hypnotised the fisherman at Penzance and the innkeeper at San Roque.

"Now give me your message!" he commanded.

Like a man in a dream, the clerk produced the warning cablegram, and placed it in Mark Rymer's hands. The professor read it carefully through, then calmly thrust it into his pocket.

"Now, listen to me," he said, once more laying his hand on the clerk's shoulder. "You will now return to Mr. Stubbs, and you will tell him that you have given the cablegram to Mr. Richard Seymour, a tall, handsome, broad-shouldered young fellow, with dark-brown hair and moustache. You will say that Mr. Seymour thanks him for his courtesy, and will stay at the Palace Hotel until Mr. Lee arrives. You asked the purser to introduce you to Mr. Seymour, and you did not speak to anybody else on board the steamer except Mr. Seymour and the purser. You have forgotten that you ever saw or spoke to me. Do you understand?"

"I understand," said the clerk, in a dull, mechanical voice.

"Then go!"

He passed his hand across the clerk's forehead. In the twinkling of an eye the clerk was himself again, and a moment later he had crossed the gangway and had vanished in the crowd on the wharf.

It was then about eight o'clock. At a quarter to ten Dick Seymour and the professor, together with a goodly number of the Ventura's passengers, took their seats in the "Overland Limited Mail."

There is no need to describe in detail the first three days of the journey. Ogden was reached at nine o'clock on Tuesday morning, and Omaha at eight o'clock on Wednesday night. For the whole of these three days Mark Rymer haunted Dick as though he had been his shadow. He dined at the same table with him in the dining-car, he entered into conversation with him in the cafe, and he occupied a neighbouring berth in the sleeping-car. But it was all in vain.

About midnight on Wednesday night, however, the longed-for chance at last arrived. The train was then rushing swiftly through the darkness between Omaha and Kansas City. All the occupants of the sleeping-car except Mark Rymer were fast asleep. One solitary, deeply-shaded electric light was the only illumination. The car-attendant, for the first time since the train had started, had left the car, and was chatting with a fellow-attendant on the platform outside.

Scarcely daring to breathe, and quivering with suppressed eagerness, Mark Rymer slipped his hand beneath his pillow, and drew forth a tiny glass ball and an ivory-handled weapon, half dagger and half stiletto.

(To be continued)

"FOOTBALLERS' NAMES" COMPETITION.



First Prize £100

Second Prize £50

30 Splendid "JAMES" MOTOR-CYCLES.

(Complete with Lamp, Horn and Licence-holder, Value £50.)

10 Two-valve WIRELESS SETS

(Value £20 each.)

100 "JAMES" Comet Cycles

Complete with lamp, bell, etc. Value £7 15s.

20 GRAMOPHONES

50 Pairs of BOXING GLOVES.

100 MATCH FOOTBALLS.

100 FISHING-RODS.

6 "Riley" BILLIARDS TABLES.

20 Model Steam LOCOMOTIVES (with rails).

40 FOOTBALL OUTFITS

(Boots, Stockings, Shorts, and Shirt.)

100 Pairs of ROLLER SKATES.

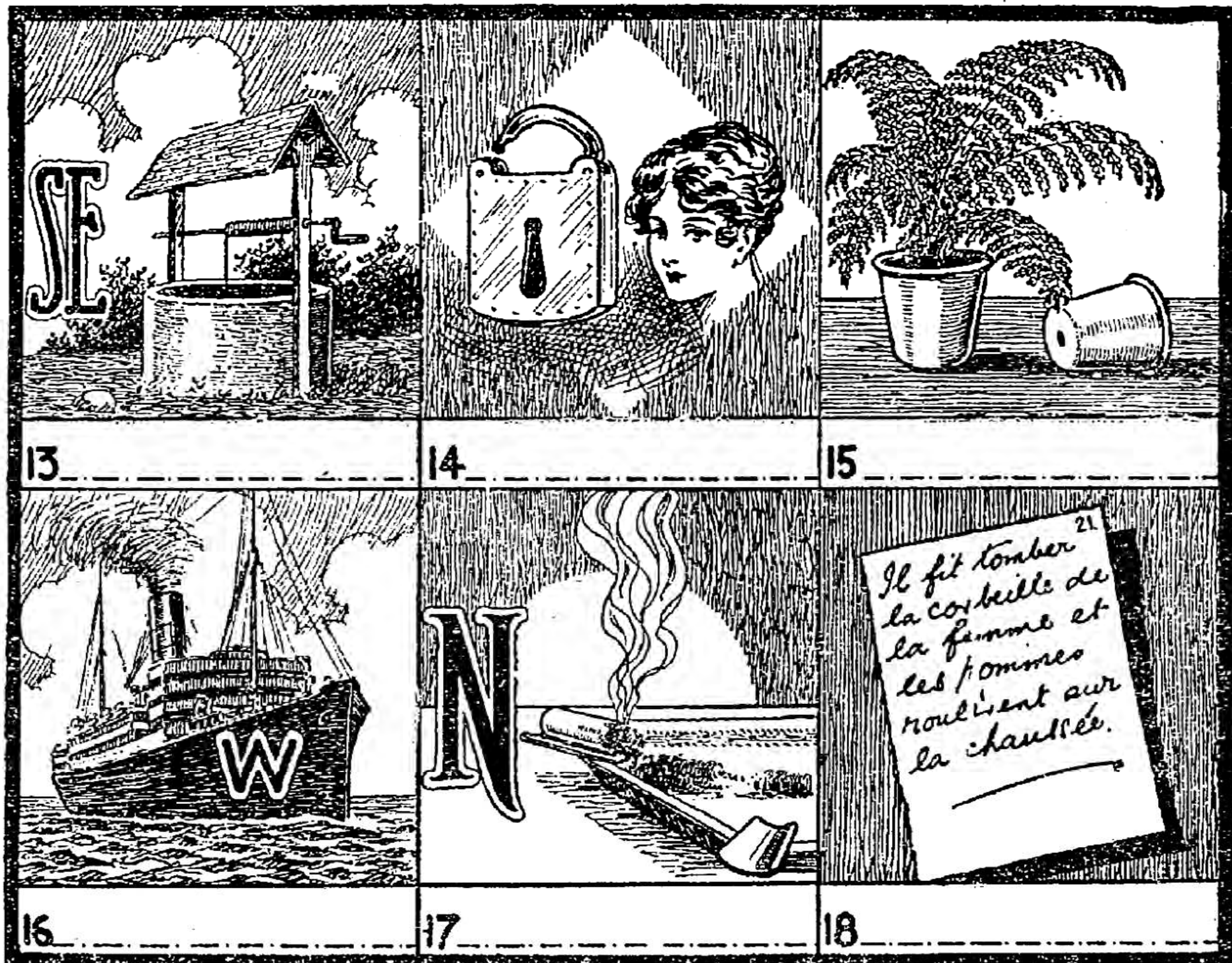
250 BOOKS AND OTHER CONSOLATION PRIZES.

MUST BE WON!

All these Magnificent Prizes of Big Sums in Cash, MOTOR-CYCLES, WIRELESS SETS, GRAMOPHONES, etc., are open to YOU and YOUR FRIENDS—and the way to be a winner yourself is simple! It is THE OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME!

THIRD SET!

THIRD WEEK!



Competition Rules and Conditions

Which must be strictly adhered to.

1. The First Prize of £100 will be awarded to the competitor who sends in the correct, or nearest correct solution of all eight sets of the pictures, according to the Editor's official solution.
2. The Second Prize of £50, and the others in the splendid variety of prizes, will be awarded in order of merit.
3. All the prizes will be awarded. If two or more competitors tie, however, the prize or prizes, or their value will be divided, and the Editor reserves full rights in this respect.
4. No solutions may be sent in until all the sets of the pictures and the necessary coupon have been published. Full directions will then be given.
5. The names under the pictures must be written **IN INK**.
6. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.
7. Entry to this competition is on the full understanding that the Editor's decision is final and legally binding throughout.

Readers of the "The Champion," "Boys' Friend," "Union Jack," "Boys' Realm," "Pluck," "Magnet," "Young Britain," "Gem," "The Popular," "The Rocket," and "Boys' Cinema," are also taking part in this Contest, so that additional attempts may be made with the pictures from these allied journals.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO

is to write **IN INK** in the allotted space under each of these puzzle - pictures the name of the Footballer which you think the picture represents. Herewith you have the full list of names used throughout the competition, so that you have only to fit the right name to the right picture. In all, there will be **EIGHT SETS OF PICTURES**, so keep your solutions until the other sets appear.

**DO NOT SEND YOUR
ENTRIES YET.**

THEIR NAMES ARE ALL HERE!

The following list of names will aid you in making your solutions.

Ashurst, Anderson, Armstrong, Aitken, Adams, Amos, Alderson, Allen, Armitage, Archibald, Ashmore.

Brett, Broadhead, Blyth, Boreham, Blackburn, Bradford, Bassnett, Brittain, Blair, Ball, Barkas, Birrell, Bradley, Barnes, Bulling, Burton, Branston, Buchan, Blake, Bowser, Bishop, Barras, Braithwaite, Bullock, Bliss, Bateman, Best, Bagge, Barson, Broadhurst, Broad, Bolam, Brelsford, Blenkinsopp, Beedie, Birch, Bellamy, Bainbridge, Bowen, Burnham, Boyle, Blackwell, Bennie, Ballantyre, Buchanan, Bamber, Byers, Banks, Brooks, Blood, Baker, Bird, Bromilow.

Cockle, Crosbie, Cross, Clennel, Cameron, Chedgzoj, Cock, Chadwick, Clough, Curry, Cookson, Cope, Cook, Crilly, Chaplin, Collier, Crockford, Campbell, Crown, Chance, Chipperfield, Crompton, Charlton, Conner, Craig, Cosgrove, Cherrett, Crossley, Carter, Clarke, Cotton, Cunningham, Cairns, Clunas, Connolly, Cassidy, Carr, Cowan, Chapman, Chambers, Clay, Cresswell.

Dunn, Dickson, Dorrell, Dawson, Davies, Donaldson, Dinsdale, Dimmock, Duckett, Duncan, Dominy, Davison, Duckworth, Dockray, Danskin, Dreyer, Denoon, Denyer, Duffus, Dunlop, Dixon, Doyle, Doran, Dale.

Emerson, Evans, Ellerington, England, Ellis, Edelston, Edgley, Eggo, Elliot, Edge, Edwards, Emmett, Ewart.

French, Ferguson, Ford, Forshaw, Flood, Fletcher, Flint, Feebury, Fleming, Fleetwood, Flynn, Fox, Foxall, Fort, Forbes, Fowler, Fazackerley, Findlay, Featherstone, Forsythe, Frame, Fyfe, Finney, Forster, Fitton, Fairclough, Fern.

Grimshaw, Gill, Gilchrist, Gough, Gillespie, Grimsdell, Gittins, Gibson, Graham, Goldthorpe, Grundy, Gallegley, Gibbon, Gomm, Gregory, George, Getwood, Groves, Greig, Gardner, Gallagher, Glancy, Greenshields, Gourlay, Goodchild.

Howarth, Haworth, Hampton, Harrow, Harland, Hopkin, Hudspeth, Harris, Hamill, Hill, Hardy, Hamilton, Hawes, Handley, Hufton, Hine, Hughes, Heap, Higginbotham, Hoddinott, Hebden, Hilditch, Howson, Hunter, Hayes, Hutchins, Hannaford, Harrold, Howie, Henshall, Hodges, Halstead, Hugall, Hogg, Henderson, Harper, Hulton, Hillhouse, Hair, Hart Haines, Hole.

Irvine, Islip, Iremonger, Irwin.

Jennings, Jack, Jackson, Johnson.

Kirton, Kelly, Kneeshaw, Keenor, Kay, Knowles, Kane, Keenlyside, Kidd, Kilpatrick, Kean.

Linfoot, Longworth, Low, Lindsay, Little, Lonsdale, Lockhead, Longmuir, Lea, Lievesley, Lane Lockett, Legge, Lofthouse, Lenny, Lyner, Lawson, Lambie, Lacey.

Moss, Mort, Moscrop, Meehan, Maitland, Mitchell, Murphy, Morgan, Milton, Mercer, Marshall, Magee, Moore, Martin, Mills, Mason, Mew, Matthews, Moule, Myers, Marsden, Middleton, Maidment, Mehaffy, Mee, Moody, Musgrove, Malcolm, Morton, Manderson, Meiklejohn, Muirhead, Moffat, Mutch, Meredith, Marriott, Mackie, Menlove, Mitton, Marks, Marsh, M'Intyre, M'Neil, M'Kinlay, M'Nabb, M'Intosh, M'Donald, M'Call, M'Grory, M'Cluggage, M'Candless, M'Coll, M'Lacklan, M'Stey, M'Lean, M'Alpine, M'Kenna, M'Inally, M'Nair, M'Minn, McBain, McCracken.

Nuttall, Neesham, Neil, Needham, Nash, Nisbet, Nelson.

Osborne, Ormston, Orr, O'Hare.

Pym, Pringle, Price, Parker, Poole, Paterson, Pearson, Penn, Plum, Page, Preston, Probert, Pagnam, Peel, Potts, Palmer, Prouse, Puddefoot, Pender, Pape, Peacock, Pantling, Partridge, Peers.

Quantrill, Quinn.

Robson, Rollo, Raitt, Richardson, Rawlings, Ruffell, Robbie, Rigg, Radford, Ridley, Reay, Ramsey, Robb, Ritchie, Ranskin, Reed, Rooke, Roe.

Spiers, Smart, Stephenson, Seddon, Sewell, Smelt, Smith, Scott, Slade, Spencer, Seymour, Spavin, Sampy, Seed, Storer, Stage, Shea, Steele, Simms, Smailes, Symes, Sturgess, Sayles, Spottiswood, Scattergood, Sinclair, Stuart, Sayer, Sutcliffe, Salt, Summerfield, Shaw, Sillito, Sneddon, Sommerville, Shone, Streets, Sampey, Stannard, Skinner, Sage.

Townrow, Turnbull, Tremelling, Thain, Troup, Tunstall, Tresadern, Tonner, Thoms, Torrance, Tompkin, Titmuss, Tempest, Timmins, Thorpe, Templeton, Townsley, Toner.

Urwin.

Voysey, Vizard, Vallis, Voisey, Vigrass.

Womack, Walsh, Weaver, Wilding, Whitton, Wadsworth, Woosnam, Woodhouse, Walters, Walden, Watson, Wainscoat, Wood, Williams, Winship, Wolfe, Whitehouse, Whalley, Whipp, Wolstenholme, Waterall, Worrall, Williamson, Weston, Wigglesworth, Ward, Webster, Whitehurst, Waddeil, Wright, Wilson, Wren, Widdowson, Wylie, White, Welsh, Walker.

York.

NEW READERS!

For those who were unfortunate enough to miss the first weeks of this great Competition there will be a special opportunity in next week's "Nelson Lee." We shall then give again the first three sets of pictures so that new Competitor's can start right away—there will be no excuse then for them letting such an opportunity go by.

TELL YOUR FRIENDS!

CRICKET COMPETITION.

Owing to pressure of space in our last issue we have been obliged to hold over until this week the correct order of finishing of the various counties in the Cricket Championship. Accordingly, we give here the position of the counties in the recent championship:

1. Yorkshire.
2. Nottingham.
3. Lancashire.
4. Surrey.
5. Kent.
6. Sussex.
7. Hampshire.
8. Middlesex.
9. Somerset.
10. Derbyshire.
11. Gloucestershire.
12. Warwickshire.
13. Essex.
14. Leicestershire.
15. Worcestershire.
16. Glamorgan.
17. Northamptonshire.

(Continued from page 14.)

And because the games were exciting and thrilling the juniors were only too ready to agree—although many of them, in their hearts, knew that they were doing wrong. But the absolute security of their position kept them going. Those who had lost went on with the wretched business, hoping to win back their money; and those who had gained had the fever for more.

Small wonder, therefore, that the Die-Hard party had received no further support! For if they went over to the Opposition it would be no longer possible to come to this club. It would mean that losses would have to be cut, and all further prospect of gain abandoned.

Ting-ting-ting!

A small electric bell suddenly rang clearly. The crowd round the table started back, startled. The card players jumped up. But John Busterfield Boots was ready. He waved his hand for silence, and the murmurs of alarm ceased.

"Don't get excited!" said Buster coolly. "You know what to do—plenty of time if we keep our heads—get busy!"

The panic was only momentary. Buster grasped the edge of the roulette table, after the money had been picked off the green cloth, and with one swing he turned the top completely round, so that the reverse side showed.

In an instant the table was changed. Across it was stretched a ping-pong net. Several juniors grasped the small racquets, celluloid balls were produced, and the next moment a game was in progress.

It was the same at the small tables.

The cards were whisked away, and chess, draughts, etc., produced from handy spots. Thus, in the space of twenty seconds, the big room was changed from a gambling-den into a harmless recreation club. Two or three fellows got out books, and were reading.

In the meantime Kenmore had decided to act. He was the cause, in fact, of all this swift alteration. It was Kenmore's idea to creep into the club-room quietly. But this was quite impossible, as he soon found out.

It was still misty and gloomy outside. Kenmore prowled around the windows for a time, but discovered nothing. So he went to the door and tried the handle. It opened—but only a few inches. There was a chain on the door.

A face appeared in the crack—the face of Crowe, of the Remove.

"What the deuce is the meaning of this?" demanded Kenmore harshly. "Open this confounded door!"

"Certainly!" said Crowe. "Don't get excited."

As he fumbled with the chain he pressed an almost invisible bell-push behind the door. That gave the warning to those within the club-room. And Crowe proceeded to fumble even more with the chain. But at

last he got the door open, and found Kenmore glaring at him.

"This is going to be reported to your Housemaster!" said the Sixth-Former harshly. "What do you mean by chaining that door?"

"Oh, go easy, Kenmore!" protested Crowe. "You know jolly well that some of the chaps are liable to start some funny business. We guaranteed that there wouldn't be any noise in this club-room, and we've got to keep our word."

"Oh!" said Kenmore. "Well, I'm going inside!"

"You're welcome, I'm sure!" said Crowe. "Always pleased to have visitors."

He walked leisurely down the short passage. He chatted amiably with Kenmore, drawing attention to the fact that complete quietness reigned. He did everything possible to delay Kenmore's progress. But the door was reached at length, and Crowe tapped upon it.

Instantly it was opened, and Kenmore strode in. There was a gleaming, gloating expression in his eyes, which indicated that he was firm in the belief that he would make some discoveries.

But Kenmore was very disappointed when he found that everything was extremely harmless. He glared at every table, and received nothing but mild expressions of surprise.

"Anything wrong, old man?" asked Buster.

"You can't fool me!" said the Sixth-Former harshly. "It looks all right; but I've got my suspicions!"

He sniffed the air, and was greatly disappointed to find that there were no tobacco-fumes. Kenmore was secretly disgusted with the whole affair. All his trouble for nothing! He turned away, and strode to the door.

"You needn't think I'm satisfied!" he snapped. "You look too jolly innocent to be genuine!"

He strode out, slammed the door, and a moment later the "all clear" signal came from Crowe at the door. The juniors breathed many sighs of relief. Buster Boots laughed.

"Look here, Buster, it's getting a bit dangerous!" exclaimed Bell nervously.

"Rot!" smiled Boots. "And who's afraid of Kenmore, anyway? You needn't worry, my sons. We're perfectly safe. Nobody can get in here without the warning being sounded. And we've always got time to prepare."

After waiting a full ten minutes, the assurance of the juniors began to return. Percy Bray went outside to do a little scouting. He returned and reported that the Triangle and the cloisters were quite clear.

So once again the trick table was turned, cards were produced, and everything went on as before. Fullwood, at the roulette wheel, was doing quite well. Already he had

won back his complete losses of the previous day, and was now adding to his capital.

At the side tables the card games were in progress. Teddy Long was wildly excited at his own luck. He was one of the juniors indulging in the game of pontoon. Strictly speaking, it isn't a game at all, but a mere gamble—it rests, not upon skill, but upon chance.

Teddy Long was winning, and winning quickly. But then, as is the fashion of cards, his luck suddenly changed. Every bet he made "went down." He lost time after time, until, indeed, his last shilling was on the table.

And now he was feverish with anxiety. He held four cards, numerically totalling up to nineteen. And the banker, who was Buster himself, turned up his own cards and announced that he would pay everything beyond twenty. Considering that no player in this game is allowed to go beyond twenty-one, Buster's smile of contentment was obvious.

Teddy Long gave a kind of gulp. Among his four cards were an ace and a ten—counting twenty-one in this gambling game. But as they were held in conjunction with two others they lost this particular value—the ace being merely a one, instead of counting as eleven.

Teddy, acting on a sudden impulse, let two of his cards slip into his lap. They went to the floor. And Long put the other cards face downwards.

"Pontoon!" he said triumphantly. "Pay up!"

Buster gave him a sharp look.

"What's the idea?" he asked. "You had four cards just now."

"I didn't!" stammered Teddy with a gasp.

If he had paused to consider a moment he would never have attempted to cheat in such a foolish, clumsy way. Buster glanced on the floor and saw the two cards. He picked up Long's shilling and put it on his own pile.

"Wait a minute, you fellows," said Buster grimly. "If there's one thing I absolutely bar, it's cheating! I shan't be long!"

He sprang up, seized Teddy Long by the scruff of the neck, and yanked him out.

Biff! Crash! Biff!

Teddy Long was soundly thrashed by the enraged Boots. His howls were in vain, and finally he was rushed to the door, down the passage, and then to the outer exit.

"And if you come back again you'll be treated worse!" declared Buster curtly. "You'll never be admitted into this club again, you little worm! Clear off, and stay away from this spot!"

The sneak of the Remove was too sore and exhausted to howl. He crawled away into the gloom of the cloisters, blubbing pitifully. Buster knew well enough that Long was a sneak, but Buster never

dreamed that there was any risk in acting as he had done.

But J.B.B. didn't know Teddy Long.

In the latter's present vindictive mood he was reckless enough for anything. His mind was so inflamed with petty hatred that he didn't even consider the possibility of running into danger himself. His one idea was to sneak—to tell a prefect, or a master, so that Buster would suffer.

And Teddy Long was just staggering out of the cloisters when he ran face to face into Simon Kenmore. The Sixth Former was still lurking about, for he had a shrewd idea that he had been fooled.

"Hold on!" said Kenmore. "What's the matter, kid?"

"Oh!" breathed Long, grasping at Kenmore's sleeve. "They—they kicked me out! Buster half killed me!"

"Well, I dare say you deserved it!" said Kenmore. "Clear off!"

As a matter of fact, the Sixth-Former had been giving Teddy many a good hiding, for he wasn't at all impressed with this particular junior. But Long was utterly unable to contain the cyclone of hatred that surged within him.

Almost without knowing it, he blurted out the whole truth.

He told Kenmore about the reversible table; about the roulette-table, and the card-tables, and the hidden bell that gave a warning. At first, Simon Kenmore listened impatiently. But then, as he heard the whole lurid truth, his eyes began to gleam with intense satisfaction.

"Go on!" he muttered, as Teddy Long paused.

"That—that's all!" sobbed the junior. "Buster said I was cheating, and I wasn't. The bullying cad! My cards were as good as his. And he took all my money, too. I—I lost six shillings of my own, and at one time I'd won over a quid. They're a rotten lot of cheats!"

Kenmore's eyes glittered even more than before.

"Oh!" he said grimly. "I'll make that Boots suffer for this! It'll mean the sack for him, sure enough—he's the ringleader! And all the others will be publicly flogged. They might even be sacked, too. There'll be such a scandal over this affair that the whole country will ring with it!"

Kenmore's tones calmed Teddy down somewhat.

"I—I say," he bleated. "I—I'm not in this, you know. I didn't play, Kenmore! Don't give my name, will you? I've never had anything to do with the rotten club. I told Buster I wouldn't even go near the place!"

"You lying little shrimp!" said Kenmore contemptuously. "Didn't you just tell me that you'd lost all your money playing cards?"

"I—I didn't mean that!" gasped Long. "I wasn't in the place, really——"

"That's enough!" interjected Kenmore. "Get away while you're safe. Considering that you told me the truth about this, I won't mention your name. Better make yourself scarce!"

Teddy Long gasped with relief and fled. And Simon Kenmore, filled with intense delight, made for the door of the recreation club. There was nothing he liked better than finding himself in a position of power, where he could hold the juniors in his grasp.

He hammered a brisk tattoo upon the club door, and it was opened in the same way as before, but by another junior—Crowe had been relieved. Kenmore curtly ordered the Removite to let him in.

The signal was given without Kenmore knowing. But the Sixth-Former, having been let into the secret by Long, knew that a bell had been rung. He went along the passage to the clubroom, and was admitted.

Again the juniors were harmlessly engaged in simple games.

Kenmore stood looking on, and there was a smile of superior satisfaction on his face. Buster Boots couldn't quite make that smile out, but he had an uneasy idea that something had happened.

"Very nice!" said Kenmore sneeringly. "Very pretty! I congratulate you, Boots! Practically as good as one of those Society clubs you read about in the West End! But you haven't fooled me this time!"

All the games stopped, and the juniors stared at Kenmore in something that was very near to alarm. There was something in the Sixth-Former's very tone that gave a warning.

And Simon Kenmore was a prefect—possessed of authority. During the previous term he had been deprived of his prefectship, but by consistent good behaviour and by throwing dust into the eyes of the masters, he had regained his lost laurels. And Kenmore had been very careful. He had toned down his former bullying propensities, and had, indeed, become quite mild.

But a leopard cannot change his spots; and Kenmore was always liable to break out afresh. Just at present he was showing every sign of becoming the old Kenmore.

"What's the idea?" asked Buster calmly. "Weren't you satisfied when you looked us over an hour ago? I don't want to bother you, Kenmore, but this is a junior club, and we'd rather have your room than your company!"

"You cheeky young rat!" said Kenmore sharply.

"Oh, don't misunderstand me!" went on Boots. "But if you've got any suspicions about this place you'd better let them drop. Mr. Stockdale's been here two or three times—so has Mr. Crowell. If they're satisfied, why shouldn't you be?"

"Perhaps it was pretty easy to fool the masters, and you nearly caught me napping,

too," replied Kenmore, delaying the great moment deliberately, as a cat will play with a mouse; "but I'm not quite so dense, Boots. Every junior here will turn his pockets out before my eyes!"

There was a stir at once, and Buster bit his lip. For many of the fellows had slipped playing-cards into their pockets, to say nothing of counters. It would never do to submit to a general search.

"Look here, Kenmore——"

"But before we begin that, I'll just have a look at this central table," went on Kenmore easily. "Ping-pong, eh? Quite amusing, and so harmless! But I'm an old hand at this kind of thing!"

With one movement, Kenmore jerked himself to the table, and then swung the reversible top completely over, following the exact instructions that Teddy Long had given him. Buster made a swift attempt to stop the thing, but he was too late. He had never dreamed that Kenmore would know the secret.

All the juniors stood transfixed—scared and horrified.

"Oh!" said Kenmore silkily. "Roulette, eh? Wonderful! Yes, this is certainly a clever scheme. So this club isn't quite so harmless and innocent as it appears to be on the surface?"

Several juniors were edging towards the door, and Kenmore waved his hand.

"All right, you can go!" he said coolly. "Don't mind me! But I know you all, and it'll make no difference. The Head ought to be highly delighted when he hears about this. Card playing, too, of course!"

"By jimmy!" breathed Buster thickly. "Long! I'll bet he sneaked!"

"Long?" repeated Kenmore. "Not at all; I haven't seen him! I just discovered this through sheer concentration. I knew all along that you youngsters were up to something fishy. Of course, you know it'll mean expulsion, Boots?"

"Really?" asked Boots, calming himself. "How alluring!"

"Yes, the sack!" went on Kenmore vindictively. "And you won't be the only one, either! As for the rest, they'll all be flogged and gated!"

Moment by moment the juniors were beginning to realise the full horror of the situation. But it had all been done so quietly that at first they couldn't quite grasp the truth.

"Look here, Kenmore," said Boots, "you've got nothing against us personally! There's no harm in this club——"

"No harm!" jeered Kenmore. "Wait until the Head hears of it!"

"Oh, I know the Head'll look upon it as the last thing in wickedness," went on Boots. "But you're not so narrow-minded as he is. It's just a simple form of amusement, and although we do play roulette and a few card games, we only bet in sixpences and shillings. I'll tell you what, just look

on while we play roulette; you'll be interested."

The juniors were staggered at Buster's show of complete coolness. There was something rather startling in it. And even Kenmore himself listened. When Buster chose, he could easily command, without appearing to do so.

And he saw Kenmore's hesitation. John Busterfield Boots knew this prefect's record, and even now Buster wasn't devoid of all hope. He was alarmed, certainly, but he has a vague idea that he might be able to save the situation.

And while Kenmore hesitated Buster acted. Rapping out some orders, he told the juniors to start playing. Fullwood, at the wheel, spun it with all his usual coolness. And Kenmore, in spite of himself, was very soon looking on at these self-possessed juniors as they gambled before his very eyes.

And Simon Kenmore was a gambler himself.

It was his favourite method of amusement—to get together with some other sporty seniors and to indulge in a little game. But Kenmore had never tasted the joys of roulette, although he had often longed to do so.

Buster knew his man, and acted accordingly. And Buster hoped.

For a while Kenmore looked on with a sneering expression of contempt, not un-mixed with anger. He started protesting, ordering the juniors to cease at once. But they took no notice of him, and the game went on.

And Simon Kenmore, the prefect, fell!

Making an excuse, he placed a shilling on the table, saying that he was doing it just to prove what a fool's game the affair was. Kenmore was astonishingly lucky. He had placed his shilling on a winning number and received thirty-two times the amount of his stake.

Fullwood calmly pushed over the winnings with his little croupier's rake.

"What's this?" asked Kenmore sharply.

"Your winnings," put in Buster. "Aren't you playing?"

"By gad!" exclaimed Kenmore, his eyes glittering.

He succumbed! The first germ of the fever had found a fertile field for development. And in less than ten minutes Kenmore was playing in real earnest. By the end of half an hour he had won no less than three pounds and seven shillings. And then the game was declared closed, as it was time to shut the club up.

"Well?" asked Buster Boots coolly.

Kenmore looked the junior straight in the eye.

"All right, I'll keep the secret," he replied with a laugh. "Don't forget; I'm doing you youngsters a big favour. I've got you all in my power. One word from

me will be enough to start an earthquake. So you'd better mind your p's and q's!"

And without saying any more Kenmore took his departure. He had come to the conclusion that it would be more profitable for him to join the club instead of exposing it. As a prefect, Kenmore was certainly wanting in principle.

"Good!" smiled Buster, after he had gone. "He's got us in his power. But we've got him in ours! As the Yanks say—it's fifty-fifty. We're safe!"

CHAPTER V.

THE GLORIOUS FIFTH.



"MISS BOND'S a brick, bless her heart!" said Irene Manners brightly.

She was in her little study at the Moor View School, and Marjorie Temple and Doris Berkeley had just tripped in, attired in gym. clothes. They looked very neat and trim in the close-fitting costumes.

These three girls shared the same study, and were staunch chums.

"What's the old girl done to invoke your angelic blessing?" asked Doris, as she seated herself on the corner of the table.

"Doris! I've told you before not to call her 'old girl'; it sounds awfully horrid!" said Irene severely. "She's a sweet thing——"

"You're calling her a thing now," interrupted Doris with a chuckle. "I didn't go to that length, did I? But what's the idea? What's the conundrum? Why is Miss Charlotte Bond like a brick? Because she's liable to drop on you at any minute!"

"I expect you saw that in a book," smiled Marjorie.

"Oh, you cat! I didn't!"

"Doris! Marjorie! Are you going to quarrel now?" demanded Irene, frowning at them. "Don't be so silly! I was speaking to Miss Bond five minutes ago, and she says that we can go to the big firework display at St. Frank's to-night if we like."

"Oh, how ripping!" said Marjorie brightly.

"Among all the boys?" asked Doris, putting a finger on her chin and looking innocent and demure. "Oh, Irene, I'm so shy! And they'll all think I'm blushing when they let off the red fire!"

Irene stamped her foot.

"You're getting worse and worse every day," she declared. "How can you, Doris?"

"Blessed if I know," giggled Doris. "Ask me something easy. In every way and every day I'm getting worser and worser! I say! I saw one of the St. Frank's chaps yesterday and I winked at him. He nearly chased me!"

The other two girls laughed. Doris was quite incorrigible. She was the tomboy of

the trio—but a sweet, delightful girl for all that.

"Yes, we can all go if we want to," went on Irene. "I expect half the school will show up. There's going to be a wonderful display, I believe. And it looks like being fine, too!" she added, glancing out of the window.

It was the fifth of November, and the morning was perfect. It was just the kind of weather that everybody had been hoping for. There was a slight touch of frost; the air was clear, and the sky a transparent blue.

Irene glanced at the little clock on the mantelpiece, and nodded.

"I've just got time to run to St. Frank's," she said briskly. "You know, we promised to let Handforth and Archie Glenthorne know, and they'll be wondering why we haven't told them. Too bad of Miss Bond waiting until this morning."

Doris winked roguishly at Marjorie.

"Any excuse is better than none, isn't it?" she asked casually. "But it beats me. Just fancy Irene being smitten with a fellow like Hand—"

"Oh, Doris!" protested Irene, blushing. "I think you're horrid!"

"Yes, but the boys don't!" said Doris calmly. "That's one consolation!"

Irene tossed her head and fled from the neat little study. She hurried out, and was certainly rather disconcerted to find Edward Oswald Handforth carelessly strolling past the front wall. The leader of Study D was apparently interested in the trees on the other side of the road.

Irene came to a halt, and gave a little discreet cough.

"Oh! Hallo! I say, good morning!" stammered Handforth, looking round.

In vain he tried to look surprised. Irene knew well enough that he had seen her long before she came out into the road. Handforth's rugged face was redder than necessary, for he had been indulging in no violent exertion.

"Good morning," she said easily. "I was just coming to St. Frank's to see Archie Glenthorne, but you've saved me the trouble. You'll do just as well."

For an instant Handforth frowned with terrible jealousy. She had been going to St. Frank's to see Archie! But her additional remark that he would do just as well was rather encouraging.

"That's—that's ripping," he said, screwing his cap in his hand. "You—you see, I just came out for a bit of a stroll before lessons. I just happened to come this way. Thought I might find a few mushrooms, or something."

"Mushrooms!" echoed Irene, in surprise.

"Rather! Ripping for tea, you know," said Handforth enthusiastically. "They grow all over the place—in meadows and all that. How are you, Miss Irene? You look fine this morning! I—I mean—"



In spite of his threats and protests, Kenmore was hurled out, landing on the hard, flagged path with a crash that shook every bone in his body.

"You'll have to hurry, or you won't be back in time for lessons," interrupted the girl hastily. "I wanted to see either you or Archie so that I could tell you about to-night. We're coming over for the fireworks!"

Handforth's eyes gleamed with pleasure.

"That's great!" he said heartily. "How many of you?"

"Oh, I don't know—quite a number, I expect."

"The more the merrier," said Handy. "We shall all enjoy ourselves ten times as much if you're there! Not much fun in fireworks unless there's a crowd! Looks like being fine, too."

Handforth was more delighted than he could express. He hesitated, pulled out his watch, consulted the back of it, and then hastily reversed it.

"Plenty of time yet," he said awkwardly. "I—I thought perhaps—perhaps you might care for a little exercise. I—I mean, why not walk back along the lane a little way?"

"Why, certainly," said Irene, smiling. "I want to talk to you about football, and this will be a good opportunity, too, for you to explain how things are fixed in the Remove. We don't quite know the truth yet."

There was nothing shy or self-conscious about Irene. She was just natural, and spoke to Handforth as though he might have been her own brother. And as they strolled down the lane, Handy recovered his own equilibrium. Walking side by side with Miss Irene was quite all right. It was only when he looked straight into her eyes that he went all limp.

He told her everything that was to be told concerning the Remove—going into

details about John Busterfield Boots, the Die-Hards, and all the rest of it. But Handy generously painted Buster in mild colours. He told Irene nothing about the new skipper's infamous recreation club.

And while they were strolling and chatting like this, Church and McClure gazed upon them from a grassy bank near by. Church and McClure had come out to find Handforth. For these three chums to be separated was almost unheard of, and Church and McClure were feeling lonely.

They had known where to look—but it was certainly a bit of a shock for them to find Miss Irene with their great leader. They viewed the situation with grim faces and gloomy words.

"Just fancy!" growled Church. "The silly ass! Falling in love like this! It's going to mean all sorts of trouble for us! Irene's a nice girl, but I must say she's got pretty queer taste!"

This was rather unfair to Irene, who had scarcely been able to avoid the walk. Besides, she was no more struck by Handforth than any of the others. There was no silliness about this blue-eyed maiden.

At last, Church and McClure dropped into the lane, and with loud coughs they approached. Handforth gave them a fierce and awful glare, fondly believing that Irene didn't see it. But she did, and realised that it would be an act of discretion to depart.

So, with a wave of her hand, she tripped away back to the Moor View School. And Handforth turned upon his chums, and slowly pushed up his sleeves.

"Who told you to interfere?" he demanded fiercely.

"Oh, come off it!" growled Church. "It's nearly time for lessons! We had to remind you, or you'd have gone mooning on for hours!"

"Mooning!" thundered Handforth.

Biff!

Church staggered back, gasping. And it was only by methods of great tact that Handy's chums succeeded in getting him back to St. Frank's. They were just in time for lessons. And although Church and McClure were fairly dying to chip their leader, they realised that it would be healthy to refrain.

The news concerning the girls was received with enthusiasm by most of the juniors. Archie Glenthorne chirruped gladly, and made a flying visit to Phipps—giving the valet some precise instructions, to say nothing of a number of crisp bank-notes.

And Phipps hurried off to Bannington with orders to buy a huge lot of extra fireworks. Since the girls were coming, the firework display would have to be much better than the fellows had originally planned. That was Archie's view of the situation.

After morning lessons Handforth instinctively sallied out into the Triangle,

and he gazed speculatively towards the gates. And while he was doing this, Willy appeared. Handforth's younger brother grinned.

"Cheer up, old man—you'll see her to-night!" he said brightly.

Handforth started.

"What!" he snapped. "Look here, you young rotter—"

"Oh, don't start!" interrupted Willy. "And let me tell you something! I'm going to show up all your silly fireworks to-night! I'm making a rocket that will hit the giddy clouds!"

"You're making a rocket?" repeated Handforth, in alarm.

"You bet!" said Willy coolly. "A tremendous great thing, with tons of gunpowder and red fire and all sorts of stuff! It'll make such a roar that you'll think there's an air raid!"

"Look here, you drop it!" exclaimed Edward Oswald curtly.

"It might explode if I did!" said Willy.

"You—you young ass!" snapped Handforth. "Do you think I want you blown to pieces? If you get monkeying about with gunpowder and red fire you'll kill yourself! Hi! Come here! Don't walk off when I'm speaking to you!"

But Willy did walk off, and although Handforth attempted to locate the home-made rocket, he was unable to do so. Willy mysteriously vanished. And Edward Oswald was on the jump all the time! He half expected to hear some fearful explosion any minute, and to see bits of Willy showering down into the Triangle.

But this tragic happening did not occur, fortunately.

CHAPTER VI.

KENMORE LOSES A LITTLE MONEY AND A LOT OF TEMPER!



SIMON KENMORE, of the Sixth, came across the Supreme Six as the latter were about to enter the cloisters. Tea had been over for some time, and the hour, to be exact, was now six-thirty.

"Good!" said Kenmore. "Just going to open up?"

"Yes, I thought about doing so," replied Buster. "But I'm not sure whether the crowd will appear. It's the Fifth, you know. And most of the fellows will be over at the bonfire—"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Kenmore. "The display doesn't start until eight. Plenty of time for an hour's game. Buzz round, and collect the crowd. If you don't, it won't take me long to expose the whole thing!"

J.B.B.'s eyes gleamed for a moment, but he nodded.

"All right," he said. "Go and collect the chaps, my sons!" he added to his com-

panions. "I expect you'll be able to gather a good few."

Buster was by no means pleased at Kenmore's attitude. The prefect had played roulette regularly during the past two or three days. The fever, in fact, had taken complete possession of him. Buster didn't mind this. But what he strongly objected to was Kenmore's bullying, arrogant tone. He was always threatening to expose the true nature of the club if the juniors did not do exactly as he dictated.

And Buster was getting fed up.

He wasn't afraid of Kenmore. The prefect daren't "blow the gaff" because there were dozens of witnesses who could prove that he was a regular frequenter of the Recreation Club. And Kenmore's sin was a hundred-fold worse than the juniors', because he was a prefect.

If any exposure came, Simon Kenmore would not stand an earthly chance. He would be expelled as soon as ever the facts became known to the Head. In fact, Buster regarded Kenmore's inclusion in the party as a distinct acquisition. He made the whole thing safe and secure.

And Buster would be quite content to let matters go on—but he wasn't going to allow Kenmore much more rope. Any more of the prefect's "funny business," and he would be summarily put in his place.

The Faithful Five succeeded in collecting a goodly crowd of sportive Remove fellows—Fullwood and Co., Merrell, Marriott, Hubbard, Armstrong and that crew. They disdained the "childish" fireworks. Roulette and poker was more in their line.

They affected to scoff at the "harmless, healthy excitement of the Famous Fifth. But in their hearts they were just as keen as the smallest fags. And when eight o'clock came round they'd certainly be on Big Side for the display.

There was at least an hour, however, in which to gamble.

And by seven o'clock the club was going strong. Nobody paid much attention to that building behind the cloisters. The majority of the fellows were collecting on the playing fields. Here, an enormous bonfire had been constructed, and it was to be set going in advance of the firework display.

Within the Club, Kenmore was playing desperately.

He had lost a good bit at the roulette table, and it infuriated him to know that these juniors were getting his money, and laughing up their sleeves at him. And the deeper he plunged, the greater his losses became. That is generally the way with gambling.

Kenmore became grim. He demanded to run the "bank." At first the juniors objected—particularly Gulliver, who was at the wheel and doing well. But in the end he had to make way for the prefect. There was something about Kenmore that

would not allow of any prolonged argument.

But Kenmore's luck did not change.

On the contrary, it grew rapidly worse. He couldn't do anything right. At every spin of the wheel he lost money. The juniors caught the excitement. They were winning in an amazing fashion, and naturally increased their stakes.

And Kenmore, who had started playing with seven pounds, discovered that he was down to his last five shillings. He couldn't go on playing after he had lost this—he would have to sacrifice the "bank" to one of the others.

Believing himself to be absolutely safe, he took a chance. Spinning the wheel again, it finally came to rest. Kenmore laughed, and raked in all the money on the table—various sums amounting to about thirty shillings.

"You all lost that time," said Kenmore blandly.

The punters gasped with amazement. Kenmore's "nerve" was colossal. He had lost, and yet he had had the audacity to rake in the money!

"You—you rotter!" roared Fullwood. "I want two pounds!"

"And I won fifteen shillings!" said Hubbard feverishly.

"Bosh!" said Kenmore. "Get on with the game!"

He attempted to bluff it out by sheer bravado. He believed that the juniors would be so awed by his size and importance that he could play this kind of trick with impunity.

He was a prefect—and they were juniors. They wouldn't dare to make any fuss with him. They were completely in his power! But John Busterfield Boots thought differently. And he was just about sick and tired of Kenmore's scoundrelly ways.

"Just a minute, Kenmore," said Boots quietly. "Get up from that table!"

"What?"

"Get up, and clear out!"

"Why, you infernal young—"

"You needn't start any abuse—it doesn't scare me a bit!" interrupted Buster curtly. "This club may be against the school rules, but we run it on strictly honest lines. We don't allow any rotten cheating. Unless you get out of here quietly within the next ten seconds, you'll be chucked out."

There was something bitter and biting in Buster's tone that caused Kenmore to writhe. The knowledge that he couldn't bluff his action out was all the more ex-



50 pairs of these fine boxing gloves to be won.

asperating. He rose to his feet, clenching his fists.

"You'd better be careful!" he snarled. "Any more of that cheek, and I'm going to the Head to report about this—"

"All right—go!" interrupted Buster coolly. "But, anyway, you're going out of this place—now! Lend a hand, you fellows!"

Buster's example was good enough. Kenmore was seized, rushed to the door, and in spite of his threats and protests, he was hurled out. He landed on the hard flagged path with a crash that shook every bone in his body. He picked himself up, fairly quivering with rage.

"You've asked for it—and you'll get it!" he said. "I'm going to the Head!"

"You daren't!" retorted J.B.B. calmly. "You're just as much in this affair as we are, and you'd be the first chap to get the sack!"

And the other young sports chuckled in their complete safety.

Kenmore gave an unpleasant laugh, and rose to his feet.

"So you think you're secure, do you?" he snarled. "All right—we'll see! You've apparently forgotten that I'm a prefect, and that my word is better than yours! You've got no shred of evidence against me except your bare words—and you needn't think the Head will accept testimony of that kind as proof! I'm going to the Head, and I'll tell him that I've just discovered the true nature of this club! You've brought it on yourselves, and it'll mean the sack for the whole crowd of you!"

Kenmore turned on his heel, and strode away. And there had been that in his tone which caused the juniors to suddenly turn cold with alarm. They gazed at John Busterfield Boots with pale, drawn faces. Even Buster himself was startled. But he didn't show it.

"Rot!" he said scoffingly. "You needn't take any notice of his bluff! He can't do anything!"

"But—but he said—"

"Never mind what he said," interrupted Buster. "I know Kenmore better than you do—and he daren't say a word of this to the Head. He's got too much at stake on his own account. We'd better finish up for this evening, or some of the chaps might miss us. Let's go down to the fireworks."

A few more calming words from Buster had the effect of stilling the fears that had begun to take shape. And the juniors dispersed, feeling quite comfortable.

But John Busterfield Boots was inwardly alarmed. He had a terrible fear, within him, that Simon Kenmore would prove as good as his word!

CHAPTER VII.

ALL READY FOR THE CELEBRATION!



"SO here we all are, what? I mean to say, dashed priceless of you to stagger along, as it were!" said Archie Glenthorne, beaming through his monocle. "Welcome dear old things! Greetings, and what not!"

The girls from the Moor View School had arrived—Irene Manners and all her friends. Altogether, there were twenty or thirty of them—over half of the entire school.

Handforth, needless to say, was well to the fore. He lost no time in attaching himself to Miss Irene, much to the amusement of the Removites. But Handforth, in his present condition, was quite unconscious of his surroundings and the general scenery. There was only one portion of scenery that interested him.

Archie Glenthorne wasn't jealous—as he might have been a week earlier. For the susceptible Archie had undergone a subtle change of heart. Since the introduction to Miss Majorie Temple, Archie had saved all his special compliments for her. Marjorie's brown eyes and wavy chestnut hair had captivated him.

Mr. Crowell and Nelson Lee—and even the Head himself—were rather pleased to see these harmless friendships springing up between the school girls and the juniors. It was far better than any scoffing disdain. And frequently enough the effect of a girl's friendship is all for the good. It would cause many of the juniors to make better efforts at their lessons and at sports.

Some of the juniors, of course, affected to be sarcastic. They considered it childish and silly to have any girls knocking about. But these juniors were quickly put in their place and kept there.

The playing fields were looking wonderfully attractive.

The clearness of the evening was indeed fortunate. There was every sign of continued fine weather, and the celebrations promised to be a big success. The stars twinkled in the sky, and there was a touch of frost in the air.

The pavilion had been decorated lavishly. There were hundreds of electric lights outlining the roof and walls. And inside the pavilion had been fixed up as a big refreshment buffet. Mrs. Hake presided, and it was possible to obtain hot coffee, other hot drinks, sandwiches, pastry, cakes, and everything of that nature. And the place was well patronised.

Big Side was all ready for the great firework display. Standing out in the gloom, like ghostly figures, were various spidery frameworks, and poles and posts, with men flitting about, making the final preparations.

Archie Glenthorne's big contribution to the entertainment had necessitated some quick work on the part of the Bannington con-

tractors. And the original display was now improved upon so greatly that the show would be practically as good as any entertainment at the Crystal Palace itself.

The set pieces were enormous, and the flights of great rockets and Roman candles were destined to surprise the spectators.

But in the meantime there was no lack of interest.

For just at the corner of Little Side, and away from the carefully tended turf, a great bonfire had been prepared. This was practically due to be lit now—and it would form a preliminary to the firework display itself.

Many of the juniors had constructed guys in secret, and these would be brought out and burned with much joy and laughter. Some of these guys, by the way, were clever caricatures of well-known people.

And, unnoticed by the main throng, three small figures were hovering near the corner fence which divided Little Side from the meadows beyond. The three figures appeared to be intent upon a big, clumsy object which was securely lashed to the fence.

"Think it's all right, Willy?" asked Owen minor dubiously.

"If you're asking for a punch on the nose, you've only got to ask that question again!" replied Willy Handforth calmly.

"Great Scott! Is it all right! What do you suppose I've spent the giddy day for? I've made this rocket according to original designs, and it'll be a corker!"

"It's original—no doubt about that!" said Chubby Heath.

Willy's chums, to tell the truth, were by no means enthusiastic. Willy's famous rocket was a formidable looking object. It chiefly consisted of a long cardboard container, lashed to a big stick. Outwardly, it wasn't formidable—but Owen minor and Heath knew what was inside it!

"It might be dangerous, you know," said Heath, shaking his head. "Anyhow, as soon as you light that fuse I'm going to bunk!"

"Coward!" said Willy scornfully. "As a matter of fact, I shan't keep too close! This rocket's as powerful as a six-inch shell! When it goes off there'll be a terrific roar, and the rocket itself will shoot straight up for about two miles! At least, it ought to! That's what I've planned for!"

Everything was all ready. The fags had no intention of leaving their rocket until the actual display commenced. By doing so the whole effect would be spoiled. The idea was to give a private display of their own, first.

Willy cautiously struck a match, and applied it to the home-made fuse. There was a hiss, a splutter, and a burst of greenish fire.

"Scoot!" yelled Heath wildly.

He and Owen minor fairly took to their heels. But Willy was quite calm. He waited until he saw that the fuse was burning properly, and then he stood back. Within him surged a great pride.

"I'll show 'em!" he muttered scornfully. "Who can't make fireworks?"

Sizzz! Crash! Boooooom!

Willy reeled over backwards. A terrific burst of choking black smoke had surged over him. He was smothered. Indeed, it was only by a matter of luck that he wasn't hurt.

For the rocket had behaved quite differently to what Willy had intended.

Instead of whizzing straight up into the sky, the thing gave a kind of preliminary explosion—attracting the attention of all to the spot. The rocket managed to free itself from the fence in some way, and soared aloft.

But it did so in a most erratic, leisurely fashion. Instead of soaring directly upwards, as Willy had so fondly planned, the rocket proceeded to perform some wildly eccentric evolutions.

With sparks flying in millions, the thing shot through the air roaring like a motorcycle engine with an open exhaust. It made a kind of half circle, whizzed off at a tangent, and sailed away horizontally, only fifty or sixty feet above the ground.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a general roar of laughter after the first outburst of surprised exclamations. Willy himself stared up with utter disgust. He slunk away towards the Ancient House—to clean the awful black from his face. He didn't want anybody to know that he was the inventor of the rocket!

"Something went wrong!" he muttered sadly.

He watched the tail of the rocket as it descended out of sight beyond the buildings. And Willy thought no more of it. Neither did the crowd on the playing fields.

But they didn't know the truth!

The rocket, only half exhausted, had performed a most unexpected move. Willy had manufactured it so that it would soar upwards for a full minute. But it had only taken a bare ten or fifteen seconds in its flight. Then, descending beyond the buildings, it crashed on to the roof of the old laboratory annexe.

And more than this!

It crashed through the roof—through the glass skylight of the Remove Recreation Club! And there it was now, in that empty and deserted building, far from the sight or sound of any living person.

And spurting fire with appalling fury, the rocket was creating havoc!

CHAPTER VIII.

AS GOOD AS HIS WORD!



DR. MALCOLM STAFFORD was utterly horrified.

"Incredible, Ken—he exclaimed curtly. "This more perfectly incredible!" story of yours is altogether too outrageous."

"But it happens to be true, sir," said Kenmore, in a steady voice.

"Good heavens!" muttered the Head. "I cannot credit it—I cannot bring myself to believe that such a state of affairs actually exists."

He paced up and down his study agitatedly. Outside, the big bonfire was just being set going, and shouts of merriment and joy were floating in. The school was just beginning to enjoy itself.

But here, in Dr. Stafford's study, the atmosphere was tense.

The Head had just been about to leave for the playing fields to join in the fun with the rest of the school. Dr. Stafford was a sport. On any big occasion he always believed in joining in the festivities with his boys. At such times he became a genial, laughing, over-grown youngster himself. The Head had the happy facility of unbending at will. And he would take part in the fun so genuinely that his own enjoyment was infectious.

And then Kenmore had come—just as the Head was setting out. At first the Head had told the prefect to wait until afterwards if he wanted to make any report. But Kenmore had pleaded vital urgency. Inwardly, he was still burning with fury against Buster and the other juniors who had subjected him to such indignity. He was as vindictive as poison, and once having come to his decision he carried through with it.

In as few words as possible, he had told the Head that the seemingly innocent Remove Recreation Club was nothing more nor less than a mild gambling den. Kenmore described John Busterfield Boots as the leading spirit. He told of the roulette wheel, and the secret devices which had been invented for safeguarding the place against any possible surprise.

And to say that the Head was horrified is scarcely an apt term. He was utterly staggered by Kenmore's calmly related story.

"You must be mistaken, Kenmore—in some way, you have misunderstood. Why, these junior boys know nothing of such iniquity!"

Kenmore smiled—an unpleasant smile.

"They're not quite so unsophisticated as you seem to think, sir," he replied. "And please don't imagine that I'm telling you something that I've merely heard. I have been suspicious of that club for days, and visited it several times without finding anything incriminating."

"I have discussed the club with Mr. Stockdale," exclaimed the Head, halting and facing the prefect. "Only two days ago Mr. Stockdale was telling me how pleased he is that his junior boys have interested themselves in a harmless club. Since its inauguration the Lower School has been much quieter. This club is merely for the amusement of the Remove boys—chess, draughts, and so forth—"

"That's what I thought, sir, if you'll pardon the interruption," said Kenmore. "But

I know these youngsters better than you do, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Without wishing to be rude, sir, I think I can safely say that I am far more intimate with them than any of the masters," continued Kenmore boldly. "I come in contact with the juniors hourly. And this club was too good to be true. I suspected there was something behind it. And at last, after several fruitless visits, I took the youngsters by surprise. I caught them red-handed playing cards for money, and playing roulette."

"You saw this with your own eyes, Kenmore?" demanded the Head huskily.

"Yes, sir," said the prefect. "The roulette table is a special contrivance, made so that it can be reversed at a moment's notice—"

"Wait—wait!" interrupted the Head curtly. "Let me think. Roulette at St. Frank's! Roulette being played under this roof, and by mere juniors! It is utterly incredible—unthinkable!"

"Quite so, sir," agreed Kenmore. "But it happens to be a fact. Don't you think it would be better to come along and inspect the place? Couldn't have a better opportunity than now, sir. All the fellows are on the playing fields, and the club's deserted."

Dr. Stafford came to a sudden decision.

"I will come," he said grimly.

He was unconvinced, but he considered that it was his duty to investigate at once. The Head had many reasons to doubt Simon Kenmore—for the latter was not a senior whose word was sacred. There had been times when Kenmore had been found guilty of attempting to create mischief. And Dr. Stafford did not forget these little things.

However, he did not see how Kenmore could make these present statements unless he had something to substantiate them. It was the Head's obvious duty to make prompt inquiries.

And outside, quite close to the door of Dr. Stafford's study, crouched a figure. It was the figure of John Busterfield Boots. He had watched Kenmore for the past fifteen minutes—had seen Kenmore go to the Head's study.

Alarmed, Buster had risked a flogging by creeping up to the door and applying his ear to the keyhole. He had to know what Kenmore was saying. And now Buster fled.

He slipped away from the Head's passage, and paused in the junior quarters. He was alone, for the passages and studies were deserted. Everybody was outside, partaking of the amusements.

John Busterfield Boots stood there—panting. He was pale, too, and his face was drawn and haggard. He had heard! Kenmore had proved as good as his threat! The Head knew everything!

"The cad! The beast! The brute!" muttered Boots desperately. "What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do? It's too late to

go there now—the Head would find me——”

He paused, his eyes glittering.

There was just a chance! If he could get to the club-room and destroy that table and the playing cards there would be no evidence! But how? How? The problem was well nigh insuperable.

But in moments of desperation one's wits are sharpened.

There was time for Buster to get to the Recreation Club before Kenmore and the Head arrived. Buster had the keys! Before Dr. Stafford gained admittance there would necessarily be a delay—and J.B.B. would be able to smuggle the roulette table out of the window!

To think was to act!

Buster ran like mad out of the Ancient House, swung round through the big archway, and found himself in the cloisters. But as he ran headlong for the door of the club he came to an abrupt halt.

“Why, what—what——”

The words which rose in Buster's throat seemed to choke. He stood there, staring—his eyes protruding. And his heart was hammering fiercely and feverishly against his ribs.

For the club-room was no longer a place of darkness and silence. All the windows, artistically decorated with imitation stained glass, were filled with a lurid interior light!

During the first instant Buster thought that somebody had forgotten to switch off the lights. But then, in the same second, he knew that he was wrong. The illumination within that building was no normal fire. The place was blazing—and blazing fiercely. Indeed, as Buster turned a startled gaze upwards, he saw that sparks in myriads were leaping up through the skylight.

He stood there, transfixed. And the sparks grew in volume even as he watched. A few livid flames licked up into the darkness. Two window glasses cracked with sharp reports. And flames came curling out, shrivelling the ivy which was festooned round the walls.

Buster's mind was working like lightning. There had been an accident! In some extraordinary way, the club-room had got on fire—a fused wire, perhaps, or something like that. Nobody had been smoking—no matches had been struck. And, certainly, the place had not been deliberately set on fire.

And, after the first fever of alarm and amazement, there came a feeling of untold relief. The club was burning—with all its incriminating contents! But even now, by taking prompt action, the school fire-brigade might be able to quell the flames! Just the charred remains of that table would be sufficient! The evidence would be there.

Buster remembered one of the main fire-hydrants was situated in the cloisters, quite near by. It would not take long to fix a hose on there! The next nearest hydrant was in the Triangle. Supposing the clois-



Dr. Stafford looked on while the school fire brigade got to work. The alarm had spread now, but there was no panic, only excitement.

ters' hydrant was put out of action? This would mean delay! And delay was what Buster wanted.

He dashed to the hydrant, and crouched over it.

In what way could he render it useless? He turned and looked at the fire again and saw that it was gaining with startling rapidity.

"Hammer!" he muttered. "That's the idea! If only I can batter this thread they won't be able to screw the hose on—they'll never make the connection!"

Swift as the wind, he turned and fled back. He reached the Triangle, and tore for the College House. Everybody was on the playing fields, and not a soul witnessed this little drama. Buster could see the lurid glare of the Fifth of November bonfire over in the corner of Little Side. Small wonder the crowd hadn't noticed the conflagration within the school itself!

Boots didn't attempt to go in through the main doorway. He ran to the window of Study Q, tore it open, and entered. From a cupboard he took out a hammer, and went back to the window. But in the act of climbing out he paused. Something seemed to tell him that his projected action was a dastardly one.

He stayed there, held by agonising indecision. What if they were delayed too long with the hose? The whole school might become involved! So far, Buster was innocent—he had done nothing to contribute towards this fire, or towards extinguishing it.

With a sudden intake of breath, he flung the hammer back into the study, and dropped to the ground.

"No!" he muttered grimly. "If they find any trace of that table I shall be done—but I'll take the chance! I'll never have it on my conscience that I tampered with the fire-fighting apparatus."

It was the second time that John Busterfield Boots had shown that he was capable of something better. But he was still thinking of his own skin—his own safety. For instead of sounding the alarm of fire, he melted into the darkness, and joined the crowds on Little Side. It wasn't up to him to do anything, he told himself.

And the Recreation Club continued to roar and crackle!

CHAPTER IX.

A NARROW SQUEAK.



"THIS way, sir," said Kenmore briskly.

The remark was quite unnecessary, for Dr. Stafford knew the way well enough. The Headmaster and the prefect

turned into the cloisters from the Triangle, but at that moment they were aware of a commotion behind them.

They turned, without seeing the glare from the club.

"Fire! Fire!"

It was the frightened scream of a girl, and the Head and Kenmore saw one of the maidservants running swiftly across the Triangle. The pair had their backs towards the conflagration, and so were unaware of its close proximity.

"Wait!" shouted Dr. Stafford, striding forward. "What is the matter there? Good gracious! Doesn't the girl know it is the Fifth of November? Is she frightened by a bonfire?"

The maidservant heard the command, and turned.

"Oh, sir!" she panted, running up, and holding a hand to her breast. "Oh, Dr. Stafford! The—the school's on fire!"

"Don't be absurd, girl!" snapped the Head impatiently. "It is merely a bonfire—"

"No, no—not that, sir!" cried the maid, nearly beside herself with alarm. "I don't mean the bonfire! The school's on fire—back there, sir," she added, pointing. "Look! Oh, look! Can't you see the glare, and all the sparks!"

The Head swayed unsteadily. Gazing over the Ancient House, he saw numbers of sparks rising in the air. And there was a glare, too. Kenmore shouted with consternation, and commenced running.

"It's coming from the cloisters, sir!" he shouted. "This way!"

"I was right at the top of the house, sir," panted the maidservant, clutching at the Head's arm. "I'd gone up there to get a good look at the fireworks and the bonfire. And I saw a big rocket go up—"

"But the fireworks haven't started yet!" said the Head sharply.

"I know, sir—this one wasn't like a real rocket," exclaimed the girl. "It came over the school, and fell right through the roof of one of the buildings—through a skylight, sir!"

"Good heavens!"

"I didn't think anything of it at the time, sir," went on the maid, in a frightened voice. "I thought it was just a little accident, and I watched all the boys on the playing-fields as they set the big bonfire going. Then, not three minutes ago, my attention was attracted by a glare from the old laboratory place—where the boys have started a club, sir—"

"What?" interrupted the Head, with a start.

"That's right, sir—that's where the rocket fell through the skylight," said the girl. "Oh, if only I had known at first! I was horrified to see sparks and flames coming up. Oh, sir, I was so frightened! I just flew downstairs, and I don't know where I went or anything. I came outside, trying to find somebody—"

"Give the alarm!" interrupted the Head, realising the necessity for action. "Find somebody and—Fenton—Fenton! Here, my boy! Here!"

Fenton, of the Sixth, coming out of the

Ancient House, turned as he heard his name. A minute later Fenton knew the truth, and he was dashing away to get help. And when Fenton started anything he didn't waste time.

Dr. Stafford, filled with alarm and anxiety, hurried through the big arch into the cloisters. He found Kenmore just dashing back. Kenmore's face was pale, and he was shaky.

"The place is burning like a torch, sir!" he gasped. "Oh, those young demons! They knew I was going to report to you, and they deliberately set fire to the club! They ought to be put in prison——"

"Silence, Kenmore!" commanded the Head angrily. "How dare you make such insane accusations against the boys? Good gracious! This is indeed serious!" he added, as he saw the blazing annexe. "Ah, the boys are coming with the hose! Perhaps, pray Heaven, they will be able to quell the flames quickly!"

Kenmore stared at the Head almost stupidly. It was only natural, perhaps, that the prefect should suspect the juniors of deliberate complicity. The circumstantial evidence was strong.

"Why, sir, Boots and the other juniors did this!" declared Kenmore. "Didn't I tell you about the gambling? They knew you were coming, and they set fire to the place——"

"Don't be ridiculous, Kenmore!"

"But——"

"This fire was a pure accident," snapped the Head. "One of the maidservants saw a rocket drop through the skylight. Your suspicions are entirely unjustified, and you have no right to make such dastardly accusations! I will deal with your complaint later. There is no time now!"

Dr. Stafford hurried away, and looked on while the school fire brigade got to work. The alarm had spread now, and the bonfire was forgotten. But there was no panic—only excitement. The juniors, for the most part, regarded the affair as something of wonderful interest.

"A real fire!" said Hubbard tensely. "Better than a rotten bonfire, eh?"

"Rather!"

Such is the careless indifference of extreme youth!

And it is an absolute fact that half the fellows were greatly disappointed. The fire, once the hoses were turned upon it, proved to be a simple affair. The annexe itself was hopelessly destroyed within, but there was no further damage. The fire did not spread to any of the adjoining buildings. The school itself was in no danger.

The seniors at the hoses worked with a will. And very soon the blazing furnace within the Recreation Club was reduced to a steaming mass of blackened ashes and charred remains. The fire was out within fifteen minutes, and it was not even necessary to call the local fire brigade.

The damage was insignificant, great as it had appeared at first. The building itself remained intact. The windows were burned out, and the ceilings and rafters. But the roof and the walls remained.

John Busterfield Boots, on the outskirts of the crowd, bitterly regretted

not tampering with the hydrant. He felt sure that the evidence would remain recognisable within the ashes.

But there came no summons to the Head.

The school was told to return to the playing fields, and to continue the firework celebrations. Dr. Stafford curtly told Kenmore that he would investigate the prefect's charges later. And as the Head was leaving the scene, more relieved than he could express, Willy Handforth appeared before him.

"Please, sir, it was my fault," said Willy quietly.

"Eh? Good gracious!" ejaculated the Head, thinking of Kenmore's statement. "What are you saying, my boy?"

"I started the fire, sir," blurted out Willy miserably. "You see, I made that rocket, and—and somehow it went wrong. It fell down before it was all exhausted. It went through the skylight——"

"You mean that the rocket which caused the fire was let off by you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you not know it was against my orders to indulge in promiscuous fireworks?" asked the Headmaster sternly.

"Ye-es, sir, but I thought this one would be all right," groaned Willy.

"I will deal with you to-morrow, Handforth minor," said the Head quietly. "For this evening you may enjoy yourself. I am convinced that the fire was quite accidental, and I shall punish you accordingly."

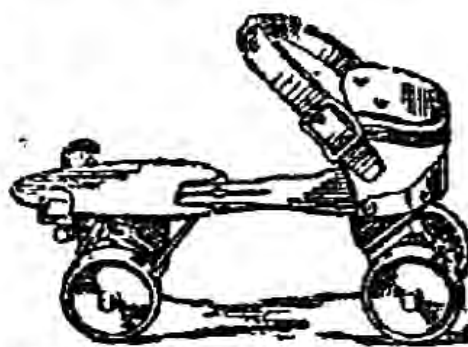
"Then—then you won't sack me, sir?" asked Willy eagerly. "Some of the fellows have been saying that I shall be expelled!"

"I don't think your punishment will be as severe as that, my boy—particularly as you have come forward and confessed your guilty carelessness," said Dr. Stafford smoothly. "Don't let the thought of your punishment spoil your evening's pleasure," he added, patting Willy's head.

And the hero of the Third went off, happy. At the worst, it would be a flogging, he told himself. Well, that wasn't going to hurt much! And Willy forgot all about it.

The firework celebrations were a great success.

There were tremendous showers of wonderful rockets—rockets which burst in the sky with multi-coloured stars—rockets which



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whistled and sang—rockets which burst and seemed to go insane, streaks of white fire darting in a thousand different directions. There were Roman candles of the most extraordinary variety. Green fire—red fire—blue fire—and every other colour of fire, too.

And then there were the set pieces. These were wonders of the firework-maker's art. The crowd were greatly impressed, and the whole entertainment ended up with much cheering and goodwill.

Crowds of fellows gallantly escorted the girls of the Moor View School back home, and there were no restrictions about the time the juniors had to go to bed. Upon the whole, the evening was considered to be a roaring success.

But there was a reckoning to come—for some, at least!

CHAPTER X.

THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT.



THE FAITHFUL FIVE looked scared and alarmed.

"It'll mean the sack, sure as toffee!" said Percy Bray, in a hollow voice.

"I knew all along that the club would get us into trouble," muttered Crooks miserably. "I was against it—"

"Cut that rot out!" interrupted Buster Boots curtly. "As long as there was no danger you were as confident as could be. But at the least sign of trouble you crumple up like a lot of snow-men in the sun! There's no danger, I tell you! Keep your hair on!"

"But you say that Kenmore told the Head—"

"So he did, and in the morning we shall go through the mill," interjected Buster calmly. "In other words, we shall be on the carpet, and if we're bowled out it will mean the sack."

Directly after breakfast the summons came.

It was like the knell of doom. Boots and the Faithful Five were ordered to report in the Headmaster's study at once—together with Fullwood and Co., Armstrong, Marriott, and a few others.

The juniors all entered the sacred apartment with a big show of confidence, but inwardly they were quaking. Buster had primed them well in advance, and his only anxiety was lest they should weaken under the strain of Dr. Stafford's cross-examination.

Kenmore was there, sneering and triumphant.

Dr. Stafford, however, was not in sympathy with the prefect. From the very first he had doubted Kenmore's lurid story. It had seemed too impossible to be true. This inquiry was really a matter of form, for the Head could not ignore Kenmore's

complaint entirely. He had to satisfy himself.

"I understand, my boys, that the building which was burned out last night was run as a kind of Recreation Club," commenced the Head gravely. "Mr. Stockdale has informed me that the club met with his entire approval."

"You were the originator of the Recreation Club, Boots?" asked the Head.

"Yes, sir."

"Describe to me the average forms of amusement in the club."

"Certainly, sir," said Boots easily. "Being captain of the Remove, I thought it a good idea to provide the fellows with a kind of club-room where they could spend the winter evenings. The nights are getting wet and cold and long now, sir. The common-rooms are not exactly ideals of comfort, and I wanted to have something better—something that was calculated to generate a warm feeling of good-fellowship and cheeriness. In other words, sir, a club."

"An excellent idea, Boots," commented the Head. "I commend you for your thoughtfulness. Go on."

"I discussed the whole matter with my Housemaster before commencing the scheme, and the club wasn't opened until Mr. Stockdale had seen it and approved," went on Buster glibly. "As for the amusements, these were perfectly harmless and simple, sir. Ping-pong, chess, draughts, table-football, amateur cinema shows, reading, and all that sort of thing, sir."

"H'm! Nothing else, Boots?"

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Buster in surprise. "You don't think we'd play anything against the school rules, do you, sir? I'm the Remove skipper, and my object was to set a good example to the others."

The Head was frankly impressed by Buster's cool, calm statement. The other fellows were impressed, too. Boots was a corker when it came to coolness. Kenmore fairly boiled with rising rage.

"Don't be deceived, sir," he urged. "I was in the place last night, sir. They had roulette, cards, and they were playing for money. Ask Boots about the two locked doors, sir—"

"Oh, the locked doors?" smiled Buster. "Yes, that's true, sir."

"Why were the doors of this innocent club always kept locked, Boots?" asked Dr. Stafford quietly. "What were you afraid of?"

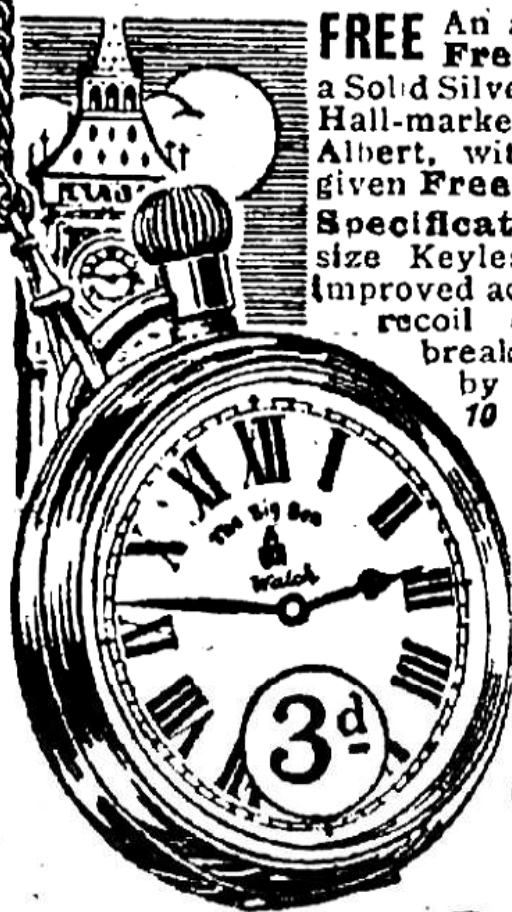
"Nothing, sir—except interruptions," replied Buster. "You see, a few fellows in the Remove didn't entirely agree with the club, and I wanted to avoid all possibility of trouble—"

"Why did these certain boys—I won't ask for names—why did they disagree with the club?"

"For no reason at all, sir," said Boots. "But you know what it is in a junior Form

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