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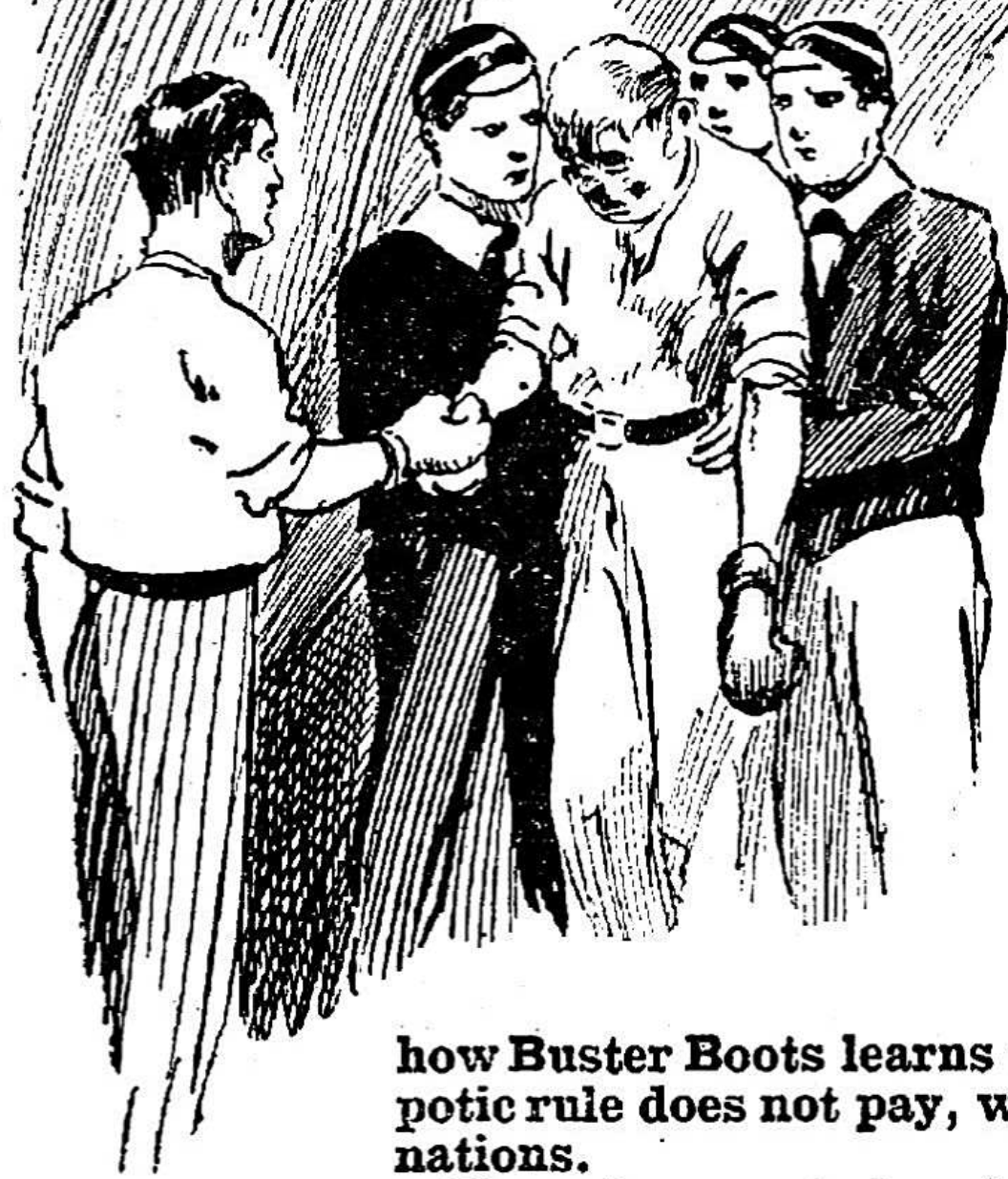


Read This Week's Exciting Story:—
**ARMISTICE DAY AT
ST. FRANK'S !**



In a flash the captain swung the 'plane round as he felt the dip. But, masterly as his effort was, one wing-tip touched the topmost branch of the tree.

Armistice Day at St. Frank's



Big events have been happening at St. Frank's lately. Last week it was the Fifth of November celebrations. Now, scarcely a week after, comes the anniversary of the end of the greatest war the world has ever known. No school, no institution under the British Flag, least of all St. Frank's, can allow this Day of Victory to pass unnoticed. The anniversary falls on a Sunday this year, but the Head has allowed the school a special holiday in the week in order that the usual display and festivities can take place. This week's story not only gives an account of the doings at St. Frank's on Armistice Day, but it also tells

how Buster Boots learns the lesson of humility and that despotic rule does not pay, whether among schoolboys or among nations.

If you have not already entered for the Great Footer Competition, you have another opportunity this week, for I am publishing again the first three series of pictures to be solved, together with the fourth series. Never has there been such a magnificent array of prizes offered in a single competition, and, consequently, never have your chances of winning something been so great. So when you have read this story, don't forget to have a shot at the competition.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

ARCHIE'S BRAIN WAVE!

"Do you think so, Phipps?" asked Archie Glenthorne languidly. "Or not?"

"Pardon, sir?"

"I say Phipps! Dash it!" protested Archie. "What, I mean to say, is the bally use of my warbling the good old conversation if you don't listen? If it comes to that, what are you here for?"

Phipps—Archie's faithful man—coughed discreetly.

"I beg pardon, sir, I heard your words, but I didn't quite catch the meaning," he said. "Do I think what, Master Archibald?"

"Oh, come!" said Archie, adjusting his monocle and regarding Phipps with considerable concern. "I mean to say, come! What's the idea, Phipps? I make a perfectly lucid remark, and it fails to penetrate the good old gear-box. Pull yourself together, laddie, for duty calls!"

Phipps, of course, was quite accustomed to this sort of thing. He was a man of infinite patience and resource—and, being Archie's valet, these qualities were highly necessary. For occasionally Archie was difficult to understand, and had to be treated with discretion.

The pair were in Archie Glenthorne's beautifully equipped study in the Ancient House at St. Frank's. It was a Wednesday,

and a half-holiday, and the Genial Ass of the Remove was taking things easily.

Outside, the November day was brisk and nippy, with a fairly stiff breeze blowing, and the sun shining out of a pale-blue, washed-out looking sky. On the playing fields a First Eleven football match was in progress. The Remove had no fixture for to-day, but there were many spectators for the big game.

Within Archie's study, all was cheery and warm. The fire crackled and blazed cosily in the hearth, and there was an air of supreme comfort in the very atmosphere. Archie felt rather pleased that his study mate, Alf Brent, was out watching the football. For just at present Archie was reveling in his languid peace. Alf was a dashed good sort, but inclined to be a bit noisy!

"Well, Phipps?" inquired Archie, at length.

"You were saying, sir, that duty calls," observed Phipps gravely. "Do I understand that you require some special task——"

"Oh, absolutely!" said Archie, nodding. "That is to say, what do you think? Referring to the old what-nots that turned up this morning. Shall we choose the green stripes, or do you favour the mauve?"

Light burst upon the hitherto puzzled Phipps.

"Oh, you are referring to the silk shirts, sir?" he asked.

"Absolutely," said Archie. "Dash it, what did you think I was talking about? Personally, I'm rather in favour of the mauve. Somewhat striking, if you know what I mean. Mauve gives a chappie a distinguished appearance."

"I should strongly advise you to readjust your view, sir," said Phipps respectfully. "In my opinion the mauve is much too glaring."

"Oh, I say!" protested Archie. "Really? I mean to say, don't you absolutely think that I should impress the populace?"

"With regard to the green stripes, sir," proceeded Phipps, "they are even more atrocious than the mauve. As I told you before, sir, the only possible course is to dispatch the entire consignment back to the makers. They were sent on approval, and——"

"Wait, Phipps—wait, dash it!" interrupted Archie. "Kindly allow the young master to roll forth a few words of wisdom! I mean to say, who's going to wear these bally shirts? Kindly allow me to decide for myself! Without wishing to tick you off, old companion, let me remark that you're getting too dashed finicky! Allow that to soak in, old bird!"

Phipps looked duly chastened, but there was the same gleam of determination in his eye.

"Very well, sir, I will say no more on the subject——"

"Good!"

"Except for the one observation that I shall not consider myself responsible for

any derision that may fall upon you, sir," went on Phipps. "I have always attempted to do my duty, Master Archibald. I take a pride in your personal appearance—in seeing that you dress in a manner befitting to your station. If, however, you will insist upon wearing colours that are only suitable for a fancy-dress carnival, I must absolve myself from all responsibility."

Phipps spoke with feeling, and there was a kind of break in his voice. At first Archie sat listening with a frigid expression. Then he started, and turned slightly pale. The monocle dropped from his eye and dangled on its cord.

"I mean to say, what?" he murmured feebly. "But, dash it all, Phipps! Absolutely dash it! Have a heart, laddie! I didn't positively mean to upset you, don't you know!"

"Please allow me to get over this quietly, sir," said Phipps, in a sad voice.

"Gadzooks! I never thought you'd be so bowled over!" remarked Archie, with interest. "Jolly good! I mean to say, it shows that you take a vast and well-assorted interest in the young master. To return to the washing—or, to be exact, to the shirts! Do you really think they're poisonous?"

"You have made use of the correct word, sir."

"In that case, Phipps, bung the ghastly things back to the criminals who loosed them off at us," said Archie indignantly. "Now I come to think of it, those colours are certainly pretty foul. I mean to say, chappies who make shirts of that design and colour are little better than blights upon the old landscape!"

"I agree, sir," said Phipps, with a happy smile. "I will attend to the matter at once."

And the valet, without further ado, slid noiselessly from the room while Archie lay back with closed eyes—intensely pleased that the matter was done with. Although Archie had been attracted by the bright colours, his innate breeding told him that they wouldn't do. Archie was always rather horrified by his attraction towards brilliant colours. One of these days, he told himself, he would get really loose and make a perfect exhibition of himself.

"It's a dashed good thing I've got you, Phipps, old lad," said Archie fervently. "I mean to say, you act as a kind of rudder, as it were—a priceless balance-weight. You pull up the Last of the Glenthornes just in the nick of time——"

Archie opened his eyes, and stared round.

"Well, upon my word!" he exclaimed. "The blighter's just like a bally ghost! He steals in, and he steals out, and he totters hither and thither without a chappie knowing anything about it! Bally uncanny, when you come to think of it. Ah, well! I suppose we'll have to have forty of the best and brightest!"

And Archie composed himself to sleep.

But he was only just getting into the first preliminary doze when he heard a discreet cough, sounding far away and distant. He stared, thinking that he had been half dreaming. But no. There was Phipps, standing before him. The valet had returned as silently as he had gone forth.

"Good gad! You gave me a most horrid turn!" said Archie severely. "There you were, and a moment later there you weren't! And now, dash it, there you are again! Like one of those bally tricks you see at Maskelyne and Thingummy's!"

"A letter for you, sir," said Phipps evenly.

"Oh, really?" asked Archie, starting up. "Good! Probably from the pater. It's just about time that the dear old chappie buzzed along his usual message of love and advice, and so forth."

Archie took the letter, and languidly inspected it.

"What-ho!" he exclaimed, becoming more alert. "This letter is from Bertie! Absolutely! What, I mean to say, is blowing up, Phipps? Bertie doesn't write to me at all! I'd practically forgotten the old lad's existence!"

Phipps maintained a discreet silence.

"You know Bertie, of course," went on Archie, as he tore open the flap. "Ah! The good old Croydon postmark! Now, I wonder what the dickens Bertie's been doing in that far-flung corner of the Universe?"

"No doubt you mean Mr. Bertram, sir, your elder brother?"

"Phipps, sometimes I have a frightful suspicion that your brains are becoming dormant!" said Archie stiffly. "Who else could I mean by Bertie? Absolutely! Captain Bertram Glenthorne, D.S.O.! Sounds pretty rich, what? One might imagine the chappie was somebody important instead of just my brother!"

It was very seldom that Archie referred to his brother—not because there was any lack of affection between the two, but because Bertram was twelve years older than Archie, and this wide gulf needed some bridging. Archie only saw his major at brief intervals during the holidays, and for Bertram to write was well-nigh unprecedented.

Archie's brother had distinguished himself superbly during the war—keeping up the magnificent traditions of the Fighting Glenthornes. Not only had he won the D.S.O., but he had been mentioned in dispatches on so many occasions that he was

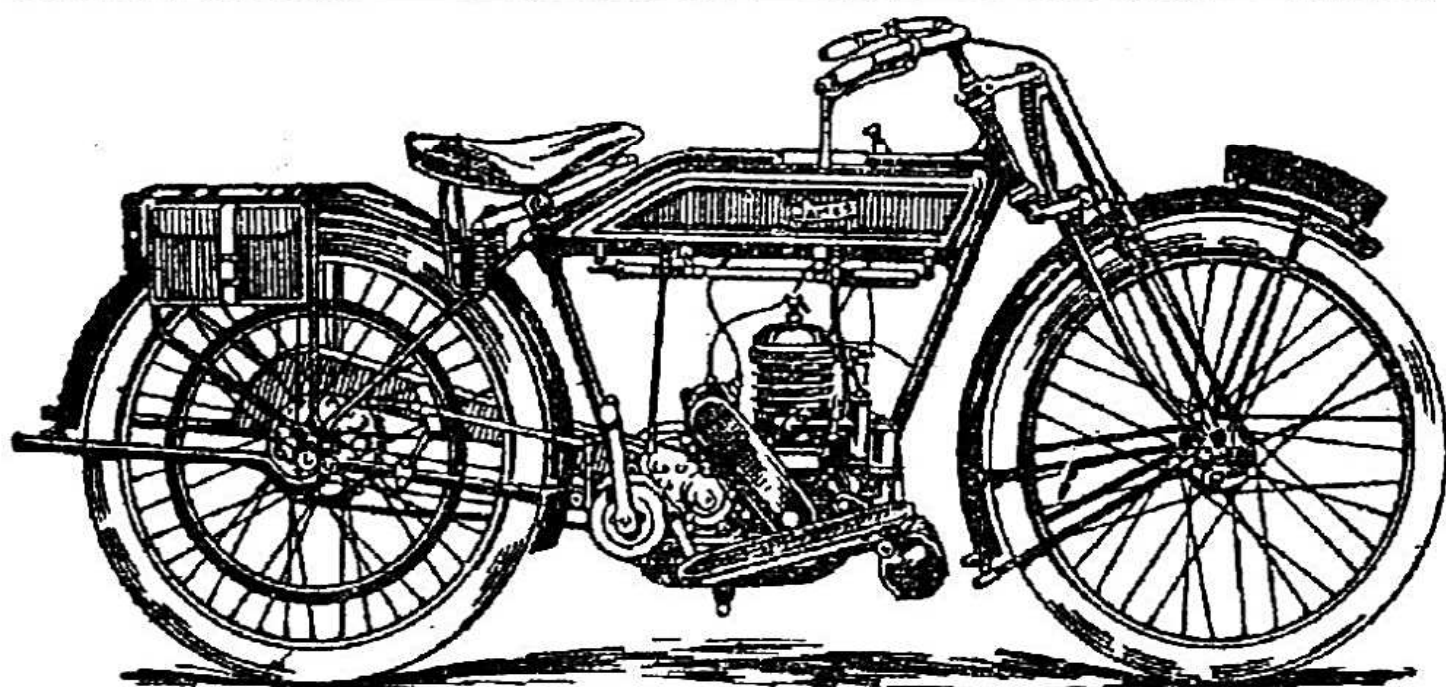
regarded as a brilliant soldier. Had the war lasted two or three months longer, Archie's brother would have become a colonel.

He had been through St. Frank's while Archie was still comparatively an infant. But he was certainly an Old Boy, and he had a kind of affection for the school. Becoming attached to the Royal Air Force at the beginning of the war, Bertram had done some wonderful things. Bertram was now in the Guards, but he still did a great deal of flying for the sheer pleasure of it. His own private machine was a speeding racer of the most modern type. Indeed, Bertram regularly competed in all the big national air races.

"What-ho! What-ho! What-ho!" exclaimed Archie, as he perused the letter. "Not too long, Phipps, but dashed interesting."

"Indeed, sir."

"Absolutely," said Archie. "It appears, old dear, that Bertie is coming down to Bannington on Armistice Day. They've



You have still a chance of winning one of these splendid motor-bikes!

arranged a kind of celebration of some kind, and Bertie's going to fly over the bally town, perform sundry stunts, and then unveil a few dozen monuments, and so forth! Bertie appears to be several kinds of a celebrity these days."

"I am delighted to hear of his progress, sir," said Phipps.

"Progress, what?" repeated Archie. "Why, dash it, he hasn't started from Croydon yet! Ah! That accounts for the old post-mark! Why, Phipps, do they have these priceless aerodromes in such outlandish spots?"

"Croydon, sir, is a large, enterprising town, so close to London that it can be truthfully said that it is now a portion of Greater London itself," said Phipps, with the air of a lecturer.

"Really?" asked Archie. "Good! What, I mean to say, don't you know, Phipps? I'd always thought of Croydon as a bally outpost of Empire, as it were—somewhere near a bleak and desolate heath!"

"Thornton Heath is a district of Croydon, sir."

"Ah!" said Archie triumphantly. "I knew there was a heath somewhere!"

Phipps didn't think it necessary to explain to Archie that the "Heath" at Thornton Heath was decidedly conspicuous by its absence. Phipps was a man of few words. There was no object in turning himself into a geography master.

"Yes," went on Archie. "Bertram is coming down to Bannington on Armistice Day. And, what's more, he's promised to whizz over here during the afternoon—when the celebrations are over—and give some priceless exhibition flights over the school. Rather decent of him, what?"

"Indeed yes, sir," said Phipps. "The young gentlemen will doubtless be quite enthusiastic. It will probably be the occasion for a big display of patriotism. I trust the weather will be suitable, sir."

Archie looked sad.

"That's the worst of it, Phipps," he said. "One never knows in this dashed country! And in November, particularly, rain storms and hurricanes and what-not are liable to whizz out of the offing like anything! Still, there's nothing like the Old Country, what?"

"Nothing, sir," said Phipps stoutly. "I've travelled in every corner of the world, sir, and I know. Stay-at-home people sometimes bewail the fact that they can never get out to see the world. But if they live in England they needn't worry—because there's nothing better to see!"

"Phipps, I'm afraid you wouldn't do as a booster for a foreign tourist agency!" remarked Archie. "However, we'll let that pass. I think I'll trickle forth and chat with the lads of the village."

He rose from the lounge, and then abruptly sat down again.

"Gadzooks!" he said hoarsely.

Phipps looked at Archie's staring eyes with concern.

"I trust there is nothing wrong, sir?" he asked quickly.

"The fact is, laddie, a brain wave smote the young master so swiftly that the good old legs wobbled!" said Archie. "It struck me all of a heap. A brain wave don't you know—a topping idea with gilt edges and bound in real leather! In other words, absolutely the alligator's elbow!"

"Indeed, sir?" asked Phipps politely.

"Listen, Phipps, while the young master pours forth a few pints of wisdom," said Archie. "Listen while I play a few records! I mean to say, I'm absolutely enthused like anything!"

And Archie Glenthorne strode firmly out of the study, and made his way down the little passage—leaving Phipps quite unperturbed. It was nothing new for Archie to act in this way. The Genial Ass had

apparently forgotten that he had instructed Phipps to listen.

In the lobby of the Ancient House Archie came upon a scene of grim battle. He paused, watching, his enthusiasm somewhat dampened.

"I mean to say, this is somewhat foul," he murmured, in distress.

It was nothing serious—merely Handforth and Co. having one of their usual arguments. In exact words, Edward Oswald Handforth was fighting Church and McClure with such good effect that the two unfortunates were already negotiating in gasping tones for an armistice.

"Had enough?" demanded Handforth breathlessly.

"Yes!" gasped Church. "You—you dangerous ass! What's the idea of biffing us like this? Just because we mentioned Irene's name—"

"By George!" said Handforth thickly.

He hurled himself at his chums once more—and it was rather unfortunate that Archie had assumed the fight to be over. For the elegant junior had walked fairly upon the battle-field, between the combatants. Church flung out his arms to defend himself, and smote Archie in the back. At the same second, Handforth lashed out, and Archie received a broadside, so to speak, with all the force of Handy's muscles.

"Wow! I should say, what-ho!" wailed Archie despairingly. "Cease fire, dash it! My only sainted aunt! This is absolutely foul!"

"Who told you to interfere?" hooted Handforth, grasping Archie by the hair, and hauling him to his feet. "Clear off, you dummy! And if you dare to mention Irene's name I'll turn you inside out!"

Archie had no intention of mentioning anybody's name—he was practically beyond speech of any kind. He stood there, dazed. Handforth released him suddenly, with disastrous effect. For Archie sat down abruptly on the floor, and gave himself up for lost.

His arrival, however, had given Church and McClure an opportunity to fade into the distance. And when Handforth turned round to continue the battle, he found himself alone.

"See what you've done?" he snorted, turning to Archie. "They've escaped!"

"Good!" murmured Archie. "Pray desist, old lad! I mean to say, here I am, full of priceless ideas, and I find nothing but warfare proceeding in vast and goodly chunks!"

"This is only the beginning!" said Handforth curtly.

"But, dash it all, this is no time for warfare!" protested Archie, staggering to his feet. "Armistice Day is near at hand, and my scheme concerns a ripping peace celebration!"

It cannot be truthfully said that Archie Glenthorne felt encouraged!

CHAPTER II.

BUSTER'S WANING POWER!



ARCHIE was attempting to dust himself down and maintain an air of dignity at the same time—a difficult task—when Tregellis-West and Watson and I appeared on the scene. Church and McClure hovered in the background, feeling that there was safety in numbers.

"Hallo!" I said, pausing. "What's this? You chaps fighting?"

"Fighting?" snorted Handforth, with a glare at Archie. "Fighting that?"

Archie seemed to wilt slightly.

"Dash it all!" he protested. "Why the emphasis on the word 'that,' old dear?" he asked. "And, when you come to think of it, it's a pretty ghastly insult for one chap to refer to another chappie as 'that.' It isn't done, you know!"

"Isn't it?" growled Handforth. "I've just done it!"

"It wasn't Archie's fault," put in McClure, from the rear. "Handy was having a dust-up with us, and Archie butted in by accident. It's all over now, anyhow. I should think Handy's satisfied!"

He uttered these last few words in a bitter tone. He gazed at Church, and felt his own features. Church was suffering from a grazed lip, a swollen nose, and a crumpled collar. McClure himself had the impression that his left ear was standing out from his head like an inflated balloon. It was certainly somewhat thick, but nothing so bad as McClure imagined.

"And just because we happened to mention Miss Irene!" growled Church. "You know—Irene Manners, of the Moor View School. Everybody knows that Handy's a bit soft on her——"

"What!" howled Handforth. "Why, you—— Lemme get at him!"

He created havoc with the throng. Sir Montie was shoved back, Tommy Watson was pushed violently aside, but before Handforth could reach Church he was securely grasped. His struggles to free himself were of no avail.

"Steady, you duffer!" I said, grinning. "What's the idea of being so touchy? Supposing you are a bit friendly with Miss Irene? Can't a chap have a girl friend now without going off the deep end every time she's mentioned? If you act like this, Handy, the whole Remove will think you're in love!"

Handforth gurgled unintelligibly.

"That's just what I said!" put in Church triumphantly. "If it comes to that, Archie's a bit struck on Marjorie!"

Archie turned a delicate pink.

"Oh, I say!" he protested. "Dash it. I mean, when it comes to Marjorie—— That is, she's a pretty priceless proposi-



Boots turned his back on the girls and refused to make way for them to pass.

tion, and all that. Absolutely! And if any chappie dares to say a word against her I'll slap him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a pity these girls came near the place at all!" growled McClure. "These two chaps ain't the only ones who've had their heads turned——"

"There wouldn't be any trouble at all if you were a bit tactful!" I broke in severely. "And don't be too cocksure, my lad! One of these days you might catch the symptoms! The best thing is to let it go on, and say nothing. It's a good thing to see the chaps being friendly with these girls. Handforth's been tremendously improved during these last two or three weeks!"

By great efforts I succeeded in turning the conversation into other channels, and after a while the juniors cooled down. Archie Glenthorne, by this time, had managed to revive himself, and his former enthusiasm was bubbling to the surface again.

And, attracted by the gathering, a few other Remove fellows had come up, including Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey and Fatty Little.

"What's all the excitement about here?" demanded Pitt. "Why this thusness? Anything doing here?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie hastily. "Dear old lad, it may interest you to know that I've had a ripping brain wave."

"It doesn't interest me much," said Pitt frankly.

"Oh, but I mean to say!" said Archie. "This isn't like the others—it's something special. It's one of those dashed ideas that only come to a cove once in a lifetime! Kindly gather round, and lend me the good old ears!"

"You can have this one of mine!" said McClure obligingly.

"Oh, we can't stop listening to this dummy!" said Handforth, with a lamentable lack of politeness. "Some more of his rot, I suppose! If he ever thinks of a good idea——"

"Armistice Day," said Archie solemnly.

"What?"

"Armistice Day," said Archie, "is near.

Archie, with a puzzled frown. "Now you come to mention it, it does seem somewhat ridic. But there you are. I mean to say, there it is! Or, rather, there he is—a major in the Guards. No! A captain in the Guards, I should say. At the same time, he's my major. Do you grasp the trend?"

"Clear as pea-soup!" said Handforth impatiently. "Who do you mean—your major?"

"Why, my brother."

"We didn't know you had a brother!" said Grey, with interest. "You don't mean to say there are two like you in the family?"

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In other words, the good old Eleventh of November—the anniversary of the gladsome hour when the war suddenly went weak at the knees!"

"Well, what about Armistice Day?" I inquired, smiling.

"Yes!" said Archie brightly.

"What do you mean—yes?"

"You see, my major is coming down to St. Frank's on Armistice Day!" exclaimed Archie. "He's a captain——"

"If he's a captain, how can he be a major?" asked Pitt innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dash it all, that's rather queer!" said

"Of course, we don't absolutely boast about Bertie," said Archie, in an apologetic tone. "At the same time, we don't exactly keep him dark. He's just there, you know, and that's it!"

"What is he—an escaped convict?" asked Handforth.

Archie adjusted his monocle, and attempted to wither Handforth with one glance.

"My brother," he said, frigidly, "is an officer in the Guards—Captain Bertram Glenthorne. During the war he did some fairly sprightly things in the air. I mean

to say, shooting the enemy, and what not!"

"Why, of course!" I said. "I've heard of him—won the D.S.O., didn't he?"

"Well—er—I suppose he did!" said Archie, blushing.

"And you don't want to boast about it?" snorted Handforth. "A giddy General in the Guards, with the D.S.O., and the V.C.! A chap who shot down thousands of German aeroplanes during the war!"

"And people wonder how stories get exaggerated!" said Pitt sadly. "Why, if this thing was repeated by a dozen chaps like Handforth, in the end we'd be learning that Archie's brother won the war single-handed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about your major, anyway?" I asked, laughing.

Archie explained about the letter from Bertie. There was a great deal of enthusiasm when the fellows learned that the worthy captain was coming down, and would give an exhibition flight over the school—a flight which would include a number of thrilling stunts.

In the space of five minutes Archie's popularity soared to heights that it had never before attained. His brother was coming to St. Frank's to provide entertainment for the whole school! Archie's major, in fact, was a brick! And Archie himself received some of the glory.

"But that's not all!" exclaimed Glen-thorne, fairly bubbling with joy at the impression his news had created. "There's the good old brain wave, you know. I've got a scheme absolutely without price!"

"What, is it as worthless as all that?" asked Pitt sympathetically.

"Gadzooks!" said Archie, pained. "When I say without a price, I mean just the opposite to what you mean."

"Well, let's have it, Archie!"

"Choke it up, old man!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie, distributing beams freely. "It struck me, don't you know, that we ought to do something special on Armistice Day. Flags, and all that sort of thing. Patriotic displays of—of patriotism! You grasp the idea? A good old celebration, as it were!"

"With your major's exhibition flight as a star turn?" asked Pitt.

"You've absolutely put your finger on it!" agreed Archie, nodding. "Why, as it were, can't we dig out the Cadet Corps? It seems to be impressed on the plates of memory that we've got a Cadet Corps looming about in the offing. Why not gather it in, and hold a ripping parade? Fancy drill, and so forth? A parade through the village, with banners and flags, and all that sort of material. How about it? Past the Moor View School, by gad! All the girls admiring us in our uniforms, what? Pretty good?"

"By Jove, it is pretty good!" I said

heartily. "Archie, old son, it's the best idea of the term! You've hit it! It's the real thing!"

Archie visibly swelled with pride.

"Good!" he said. "I mean, you absolutely approve?"

"Rather!" chorused the fellows.

And the matter was decided upon at once—for there wasn't a fellow who didn't feel enthusiastic. As Archie had outlined, a parade of the Cadets through the village, with flags flying, in commemoration of Armistice Day—this was, indeed, a notion of first magnitude.

And, by common consent, it was agreed that I should make all the arrangements. Archie himself was quite delighted at this, for he was absolutely hopeless at anything practical.

The Ancient House, particularly, was filled with delight at the prospect. The juniors backed me up loyally. For, although John Busterfield Boots was the captain of the Remove, his power and influence had waned.

Indeed, the great J. B. B. was a mere ghost of his former self.

Things had been going badly with him—particularly since the narrow escape when the Recreation Club had been burned. Several days had elapsed since then—three, to be exact, but the memory of it was still fresh in the minds of Buster and his supporters.

The terrorism which Boots had instituted in the Remove had collapsed abruptly the previous week—when I had treated Buster to some of his own medicine. Fighting fairly, without pressure of any kind, Buster had found himself in a greatly weakened position.

For he had relied upon tyranny and force to maintain his supremacy. But even when things began to look black, he had believed that the Recreation Club would keep all his supporters with him.

And, on the face of things, John Busterfield Boots was in a position overwhelmingly superior to my own. For he was captain of the Remove, with a great following which constituted the bulk of the Form. And I was merely the leader of the seemingly feeble Opposition—the Die-Hard Party, as we called ourselves. We had numbered twelve, all told.

Then had come the fire—not a serious one, but fraught with the most dramatic possibilities. Luck had certainly been with the Remove on that night.

Buster himself had formed the club. It was his own special idea to keep the Remove under his control. The club permitted the fellows to indulge in mild forms of gambling—even including roulette for small stakes. And the sporty juniors had enthusiastically backed Buster up. Fullwood & Co., and their crowd, regarded the club as the last word in brilliant ideas.

And the weaker fellows—and these were the majority—although quite decent enough

in every ordinary way, easily fell victims to the taunts and persuasions of the so-called "sports." Thus, the whole Remove except the Die-Hards got into the habit of visiting this club, and gambling with their money.

It was quite safe, because Buster had taken such precautions that no master or prefect could enter without full warning being received. But there had been a flaw somewhere, for Kenmore, of the Sixth, had got "wise" to the things that were going on.

For a time Kenmore had kept mum—for the simple reason that he himself joined in the gambling. Discovered cheating, however, Kenmore had been thrown out on the evening of the Fifth of November.

Filled with vindictive hatred, Kenmore reported to the Head!

And it really seemed that it was all up with Buster Boots and his close friends. Discovery of that roulette table and the other gambling devices would mean instant expulsion for the ringleaders.

But Fate, in the shape of a stray rocket, had come to the assistance of the juniors. The rocket, still burning, had crashed through the skylight of the club, and set light to the place. Thus, the deadly evidence was destroyed before Dr. Stafford could examine it.

There had been an inquiry, of course, but Buster & Co. had maintained their innocence so glibly and cleverly that the Head had given them the benefit of the doubt. Kenmore's plan of revenge was spoiled.

But what a lesson the Remove had received!

Even Buster himself was subdued and quiet at the narrowness of his escape. The knowledge that he had come within an inch of being sacked in disgrace took a great deal of his natural arrogance away.

As for the rank and file, they were utterly startled when the story came out. If that inquiry had gone the other way, they would have been hauled before the Head and questioned! Public floggings would have been general, and the news would have got home, too! The juniors fairly shivered as they pictured the scenes with their parents after the school report had arrived!

Yes, the escape had been a hair's breadth one. And the effect was great. For the very next day twelve Ancient House fellows came to me and asked to be included under the Die-Hard banner.

In one sweep the Opposition was doubled—and now John Busterfield Boots only had a majority of nine. And he and I had come to a solemn agreement that the leader who had the most followers would automatically be the Remove skipper. There was to be no canvassing for support, or any attempts to talk the juniors over.

Under this arrangement, if my own party became larger than Buster's, I should then

become captain of the Remove without any re-election. It would be quite an automatic process.

After the first shock of the fire was over, John Busterfield Boots had pulled himself together, and by almost superhuman efforts he had kept the rest of his supporters around him. There had been no more desertions.

Thus, J. B. B. was still supreme—but I was perfectly content. Instinctively, I knew that my time was soon coming. And I didn't want to make the slightest move, for Buster & Co. would probably make a lot out of nothing, and accuse me of violating the agreement.

So I was content to remain absolutely passive.

My reward came much more swiftly than I had believed. And it was entirely Boots' own doing. He made a blunder which at once stamped him as a poor leader. In spite of all his arrogance and coolness, he was not the fellow to control a big Form at a public school.

And the trouble came that very afternoon, soon after Archie Glenthorne had aroused enthusiasm by his scheme for Armistice Day. Reginald Pitt happened to see a notice on the board—one that had not been there half-an-hour earlier.

"Hallo!" said Reggie. "Come and look at this! Here's the team for Saturday's match against Helmford."

"Oh, good!"

"I'm goalie, I suppose?" said Handforth briskly.

The memory of the last football match under Buster's regime still lingered. It had been a farce—or, rather, a tragedy. The game had been utterly ruined. For Buster had chosen his own favourites, instead of the best players. It seemed inconceivable that he could make a blunder like that again.

But he did—and, upon due consideration, it was not hard to understand. For Buster was not going to choose all the team from the Die-Hard Party! In fairness to himself he couldn't do it—to say nothing of the attitude of his own supporters.

His selections for the Helmford match were dictated by the knowledge that his own supporters had to be considered first and foremost. He couldn't please everybody—and it was the Die-Hards who suffered.

The team was as follows: Oldfield; Denny, Crowe; Talmadge, Crooks, Yorke; Buster, Bray, Nipper, Christine, Pitt.

I smiled grimly as I looked at the list. So Buster had made me centre-forward—my usual position on the field! He had also included Reggie Pitt, Christine, Talmadge, and Yorke and Oldfield—all excellent players.

The team was a tremendous improvement upon Buster's last, and I could easily understand that he considered it to be a

wise selection. But at the time Buster hadn't foreseen the trouble that was bound to arise.

Of the Supreme Six—Boots and his "set"—only Webb had been left out. He had been so awful that even Buster dared not include him again. And he had shifted himself and his pals to other positions. With the six strong members, he considered that all would be well. He had pleased everybody!

But had he?

CHAPTER III.

A SHOCK FOR J.B.B.!



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH let out a roar as he scanned the list.

"I'm not down here!" he shouted wrathfully.

"Doesn't seem like it!" grinned Pitt. "Take it calmly, old man—"

"Calmly!" roared Handforth. "Look! Oldfield in goal! He's no good—"

"Oh, yes he is," I interrupted. "Oldfield's a pretty decent goalie. He's played for the Eleven several times, and has acquitted himself well. Buster has had Christine's advice with this list, I'll bet."

"The right wing is horribly weak," said Reggie critically. "Phew! Buster Boots and Percy Bray! They'll let us down, I'm afraid. And then Crooks playing centre-half! It's just wicked, you know!"

The indignation quickly spread.

There were plenty of fellows who considered that the list was a fairly good one, under the circumstances. The team wouldn't win, of course, because Helmford was a hot eleven; but there would at least be a game.

The majority, however, went about breathing words of fury—at least, the Ancient House fellows did. Even those juniors who had had no chance of being included in the team were angry. And these included Buster's own supporters. For it had resolved itself into a matter of House rivalry.

This was what Buster had overlooked.

He had included six sound players, and he considered that this was a great concession. But when the list was analysed it was found that there were nine Monks and only two Fossils! Just Pitt and myself!

The Fossils were highly insulted and enraged.

Owen major was quite hot about it. For some reason he took it into his head to make a big fuss. Owen major was one of Buster's supporters—he had positively refused to have anything to do with the Die-Hard Party. Owen major had been heard to declare, on many occasions, that Buster was the best skipper that the Remove had ever had. Owen major had been a keen player in the Recreation Club.

But Owen major had been scared stiff over that fire, and the consequent narrow escape. His enthusiasm for Buster had waned a good deal since, and this afternoon something else had happened. To be exact, Owen major had been promised a place in the team—and Buster had forgotten him! In reply to Owen's inquiry, Boots had calmly told him that he would have to wait until the next match!

So Owen major changed—rapidly. He not only determined to join the Die-Hards, but he had other plans, too. Owen major, in fact, had a great idea. Like Archie, he had been struck with a brain-wave that afternoon.

He had his own particular circle of friends, the same as other boys. These included Hubbard, Doyle, Simmons—to say nothing of his own study chums, Farman and Canham. He rounded them up in double quick time.

In less than ten minutes, an indignation meeting was taking place in the Triangle. And Owen major was addressing the throng vehemently. He had a plan in mind, and he wanted to put it into execution. He knew that if he succeeded he would have even less chance of appearing in the Remove Eleven; but, at least, he would see the complete eclipse of the great J.B.B.

There were at least a dozen juniors round Owen major—all of them of minor importance usually. Just now they were of paramount significance. They included Canham and Hubbard, and Doyle and Burton, and Clifton and some more.

"The time's come for us to act," declared Owen major firmly. "Listen to me, you chaps. I'm going to make a speech! It's all rot about the football, that's what I say. When you come to consider it, it's all rot! Take Buster's footer list, for example—the cad! I used to be pally with him, but no more! He's done for himself now. His ideas are all rot!"

"You mentioned that once before," said Doyle tartly.

"I say it's all rot—"

Owen major paused, trying to calm himself a bit, and to get hold of a few new expressions and phrases. He wasn't much of a speaker, and it was only because of his indignation that he was getting on his hind legs now. He glared round, realising that his audience was getting impatient.

"If you ask me," said Doyle, "your speech is all rot, too!"

"Hi! Don't go away," yelled Owen major, as two or three of the juniors began to wander off. "Look here! Do you believe in Buster's favouritism? Think of it! Nine Monks in the team, and only two Fossils!"

"Rotten!"

"Something ought to be done!"

"Oh, what's the use? He's the skipper, isn't he?"

"Yes, he's the skipper; but we can put

a spoke in his giddy wheel if we like," shouted Owen major, warming to his subject and becoming lucid. "If we stand by and do nothing, Buster will ruin that match on Saturday. It's up to us to make a move—and to make it now!"

Hubbard snorted.

"Blessed if I can see why you're so jolly excited," he said. "It doesn't affect us, does it? We shan't ever get into the team, I suppose? What's all the fuss about? We don't care who's in the eleven!"

Several others nodded in agreement.

"You don't care!" roared Owen major hotly, indignation adding to his eloquence and power of speech. "You cads! You miserable worms! What about the honour of the school? Instead of thinking of yourselves so much, why can't you help to rid the Remove of this—this evil influence?"

The audience stared; they hadn't expected this of Owen major.

"You're a fine critic," sneered Simmons. "You've always boosted Buster——"

"I can change my opinion, can't I?" demanded Owen. "When I see the rotten things Buster's been doing I get wild! I've been an idiot—a fool! We've all been fools to leave Nipper and give our support to this outsider—this beastly College House tyrant!"

"Oh, don't be silly——"

"Silly, am I?" shouted Owen major. "Don't we want the Ancient House to be top? Why should we allow these blessed Monks to run the whole show? Ever since Buster came he's been causing trouble! I think I must be blind not to have seen it before, and you fellows are blind still."

"Buster's too powerful to fight against," growled Doyle. "You know what a fist he's got——"

"According to his agreement with Nipper, he can't do any more of that bullying," retorted Owen major. "So you needn't be afraid of him in that way. I suggest that we all go straight to Nipper and join the Die-Hards! We'll leave Buster in the lurch—as he deserves!"

"What's the idea of this?" asked Clifton. "Wasn't it a distinct understanding that no chaps were to try to influence other chaps?"

Owen major looked at him witheringly.

"Ass!" he snorted. "The agreement was that no Die-Hards should try to influence any of Buster's party—and the Die-Hards have kept to that agreement strictly! But we're all members of Buster's party here—and I'm suggesting that we should chuck the cad up, and go with Nipper!"

"Why?"

"Why?" repeated Owen. "My hat! You're a dense lot, if you like! Haven't I just been explaining why? Buster's failed to maintain his control—he's lost ground tremendously, and if we like we can polish him right off!"

"It's all very well to talk big like that——"

"I'm not talking big—I'm talking sense," retorted Owen major. "When Boots knocked Nipper out and gained the captaincy—and that wasn't a fair fight, either!—he promised all sorts of things. He jawed and jawed and fairly hypnotised us with his spoofo and blather. When I come to think of it, I go fairly red with shame! Us allowing a rotten Monk to boss over us!"

The audience listened with more attention. Owen major was working them up now; he had succeeded in getting well "into" his speech, and his words flowed freely. He was becoming more eloquent every moment.

"What about the Recreation Club?" he went on grimly. "It's burned up now, and a good job, too! Don't you fellows realise what a rotten thing it was? Cards and roulette——"

"Not so loud, you donkey!" hissed somebody.

"Oh, we're safe here," said Owen major. "I'm trying to clear the fog out of your heads, and open your giddy eyes! That club was an evil influence, and Buster started it. Now that it's gone I can understand better—while we could go into that place and gamble I was under the rotten spell. I'm downright ashamed of myself," went on Owen stoutly. "I'm not afraid to admit it, either!"

The audience said nothing. There was no question of Owen major's courage in admitting his fault before the juniors. He was so excited and worked up that he brought it out spontaneously. In calmer moments he would never have admitted his sins in this frank way.

"Just consider for a moment," continued the speaker tensely. "How much did you fellows make at the club? How much did you win at cards or roulette? Eh? Anybody—I don't care who! Let's have this straight! If any of you chaps won a penny I shall be surprised!"

"You'll get us all sacked if you yell like that!" muttered Doyle uneasily.

But he and the others, thus goaded by Owen major, were face to face with the truth. After all, how much had they really won? There wasn't a fellow who could state that he had won anything! All were out of pocket.

"There you are!" sneered Owen major triumphantly. "I knew it! You've all lost money! A fat lot of good the club did for you! I'll tell you the truth—you seem too blind to see it for yourself. Buster and his rotten set, including Fullwood and our own particular cads, used us all as mugs! That's us—mugs! Those so-called 'sports' know all about gambling, and they simply fleeced us all along the line! Buster must have won quids at his rotten roulette table! And we're the poor simps who fell into the fire at his bidding!"

Owen major paused, hot and angry. He was surprising the audience, and he was surprising himself even more. He hadn't thought himself capable of delivering such a speech. But it was easily understandable. All the pent-up indignation within him was finding an outlet. And the crowd became worked up, too.

"Owen's right," declared Canham. "We've been a set of asses."

"Then again," went on Owen. "How did Buster gain his imitation popularity? How did he rope in his supporters? By terrorism! For weeks he bullied everybody, and forced them to rally round him. You know it! The Supreme Six, as they call themselves, got up a secret society and persecuted those chaps who defied Buster's rule.

Remove captain. Buster's got the most followers, so he's still skipper. That is where we come in!"

"How?"

"By going over to Nipper," replied Owen triumphantly. "All of us—the whole crowd in a bunch. And as many more as we can get, too! Nipper's the best skipper for the Remove! Look at the way he led us in the barring-out against the mistresses a month or two ago! Look at the way he made the Junior Eleven the crack footer team of the whole season! And then look at Buster! That cad has done nothing but mess up the sports ever since he became skipper—and he's going to lose us the Helmford match on Saturday, if we let him!"



A slight figure was running towards us. It was Marjorie Temple. We could see at once that something was wrong.

Remember how Fatty Little went through the mill? And Archie and Brent? They were all persecuted and bullied and terrorised."

"My stars! He's right there!"

"Rather!"

"Go it, old man!"

"Yes; and who put a stop to Buster's tyranny?" demanded Owen major, greatly encouraged by the comments. "Nipper, of course! Nipper—the best skipper the Remove ever had! It was Nipper who got fed up and formed the Die-Hard Party. We laughed at him and jeered him—and we ought to be shot for it! Nipper's little crowd forced Buster to stop his bullying games, and the agreement was that the leader with the most supporters would be

"How can we stop it?" asked Doyle eagerly.

"My hat! How?" roared Owen major. "By joining the Die-Hards, of course! Don't you see? If we all leave Buster and go over to Nipper, Nipper will have a majority. He'll be skipper then, and can tear up Buster's footer list for Saturday! Nipper will select his own men!"

The audience became very excited and hot.

"Great Scott!" said Clifton. "That's a great scheme! Why should we put up with Boots any longer? Only two Fossils in the eleven for the most important match of the month! If Nipper selects the team he'll include Tregellis-West and Handforth and De Valerie, and all the tip-top players. We've got all the champions in the Ancient House!"

"You bet we have!" shouted Owen major. "And only two being used! All the rest left out, to make way for such rank duffers as Crooks and Denny and Bray and that set! Are we going to stand it? Are we going to let this bragging Monk spoil the whole footer season, and allow all the other schools to cackle at us? This is a matter of honour, don't forget—"

"We'll go and join Nipper's party now!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Come on—let's find him!"

Owen major had won his battle, and he was flushed and hot with victory. He hurried away towards the Ancient House, with the other juniors crowding excitedly round him. Handforth was on the steps, arguing indignantly with De Valerie and Somerton about the footer list.

"What's all this fuss about?" he demanded. "Pity you can't do something worth while, instead of making a noise! I'm left out of the team, and if you chaps had an ounce of sense you'd drop Buster like a red-hot brick—"

"We have dropped him!" yelled the crowd.

"What!" shouted Handy, his eyes glittering.

"We're just going to join the Die-Hards," said Owen major. "I've made these chaps see daylight! We shall turn the tide and Nipper will be captain again, and then he can choose a decent team for Saturday!"

"Then—then I shall be goalkeeper!" gasped Handforth. "Oh, great!"

He was full of intense enthusiasm. And a few moments later, when I emerged from the lobby, I was overwhelmed. The fellows fell over themselves in grabbing at my hand. They all shouted at once, saying that they'd left Buster and were now ready to follow my leadership.

It wasn't altogether unexpected, but all the same I was gratified. I had half-believed that the reign of John Busterfield Boots was nearly ended. It came to a finish suddenly, and without much display.

For the fever spread.

Within fifteen minutes other Fossils joined the Die-Hards. For Buster the affair was a débacle. The only Ancient House juniors remaining true to him were Fullwood, Gulliver, Bell, Merrell, and Marriott. And Buster was welcome to them—for I had no use for these cads.

My triumph was complete. Buster was swamped out, and when he learned the truth a few minutes later he nearly lost that wonderful composure of his. He had come out, surrounded by the Faithful Five, to find out what all the shouting was about. He vaguely suspected that the fixture-list had something to do with it, but he never dreamed of the actual truth.

Then he heard the verdict. It came like a thunderbolt. He had lost his majority, and I had automatically become skipper! Buster,

as he stood there, was no longer the Power that he had been.

"Oh!" he said tensely. "So that's the idea, is it? All right!"

He shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, swept a withering glance over his late supporters, and walked calmly back to the College House. Somehow, the juniors didn't feel like jeering.

Buster had taken it so quietly that he almost seemed indifferent. But I knew what an effort it had been for him to control himself. His lips had tightened, and there was a hard glitter in his eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

VENTING HIS SPITE!



VINDICTIVE rage consumed Buster Boots as he approached the College House. Percy Bray and the other members of the Faithful Five were startled so much that they

were almost pale.

"The miserable worms!" said Percy. "Leaving us like that—without any warning! Nipper's skipper again now! I expect that list for Saturday was the cause. I was afraid there'd be a fuss—"

"Oh, you're very clever, aren't you?" sneered Buster savagely.

"Well, didn't I say—"

"I don't care what you said!" snapped Boots. "Shut up!"

"No need to bite my head off," growled Percy bitterly. "This is all Owen major's doing—the traitor! No credit to Nipper—"

"You're wrong," interrupted Buster. "All the credit is Nipper's. Look at it as you will, you've got to admit that he's whacked me by a method that can only be described as masterly."

"Oh, I don't know—"

"But I do know!" said Boots. "Nipper tied our hands—he made us promise that we wouldn't practice any more terrorism. That's when we started to decline. Nipper's deep—as deep as a well. He knew that the fellows would rally round him sooner or later, and the burning of the club helped him enormously. But I haven't finished yet!" added Buster harshly.

"Can't we revive that Ku Klux Klan idea?" asked Denny. "Look here—"

"Don't talk to me know—I want to be alone," interjected J.B.B. curtly. "Go to the dickens! I'm off for a walk, and if you follow me I'll smash you! Your faces make me sick!"

This was rather unkind of Buster, considering that his chums were doing the best they could to rally round him in his hour of downfall. But the ex-skipper was bitter and vindictive, and only held himself in control by a sheer effort of will.

He turned on his heel, and went off towards the gates. The Faithful Five looked

after him, and then discussed the general situation. In the meantime, J.B.B. continued on his way down the lane.

He wanted to be alone—that was his only consolation now. He wanted to think—to make fresh plans for the conquest of the Remove. He had lost the first round, but Buster wasn't beaten. That's the way he looked at it.

Arriving at the old rustic stile which led into Bellton Wood he settled himself on the top bar and gazed moodily into space. His thoughts were far distant. And his expression was unpleasant in the extreme.

The more Buster thought, the more venomous became his temper.

He was alone now, and it was no longer necessary to keep up the pretence of being indifferent. He allowed his features to mirror the vindictive thoughts that surged through his heated brain. He was beaten! His power had gone, and before long even the Monks would desert him. Buster knew it.

He was a fellow who sparkled under the spell of popularity and who became morose and sullen in adversity—just as a flower will open in the sunshine and wither in the icy wind.

At the moment, the icy wind was rather fierce, and Buster accordingly withered. His arrogance had gone. His bold front was a mere ghost of itself. He sat on the stile glowering his hatred across the lane. And now and again he would kick viciously at the lower bar of the stile.

As Archie would have expressed it, John Busterfield Boots was in a dashed foul mood.

He was so occupied with his thoughts that he entirely failed to hear girlish voices in his rear. As a matter of fact, Irene Manners and Doris Berkeley, of the Moor View School for Young Ladies, were walking briskly along the footpath through the wood.

The two girls, with Marjorie Temple, had been out for a long ramble, exploring the rural delights of the countryside. Being a half-holiday and a fine afternoon, the girls had made up their minds to enjoy themselves. The Moor View School had not been opened long, and the majority of the young ladies were strangers to the locality. They liked to get acquainted with the countryside.

Irene and Doris were laughing merrily. They had left Marjorie somewhere behind, in the wood. She had insisted upon searching for some highly-decorative brown leaves which had taken her fancy. She wanted them to adorn the study mantelpiece—for these three girls all shared one study. But Irene and Doris, becoming impatient, had walked on. They laughingly wondered how long it would be before Marjorie came racing after them.

There was nothing "clinging" about these sturdy maids. They were dainty enough, and pretty, too, but they were full

of healthy vigour, and revelled in the outdoor freedom. Attired in tweed suits and shod with brogues, they were ready for any amount of tramping.

Yet the absence of frilly silks and laces did not detract from their charm one whit. Irene, with her clear blue eyes and fair hair—tall and slim and graceful—was an ideal type of English girlhood. It was she who had stirred such emotional chords in the massive breast of Edward Oswald Handforth.

Doris was smaller, and her face was alight with a permanent alertness. She was the possessor of delightful curls which fell entrancingly about her slim shoulders. And in her eyes there lurked a little imp which frequently led Doris into minor trouble.

The two girls were still talking about Marjorie when they turned the final bend, and came within sight of the stile. A figure was sitting there—a hunched up, dejected looking figure.

"Oh, it's one of the St. Frank's boys," said Irene. "I do hope he's nice."

"Handforth, for example?" smiled Doris.

"Handforth is a nice boy, in spite of his roughness," declared Irene firmly. "But this isn't Handforth—Why, I declare! It's that horrid fellow with the red hair!"

"Rats to him," said Doris lightly. "They call him Buster, don't they? If he tries any nonsense with us I'll slap his face!"

"Oh, Doris, be careful!" said Irene, frowning. "You are so impulsive!"

They had no reason to like Boots. He had played a mean trick on them a week or so earlier, and the girls hadn't forgotten it. They regarded Buster as one of their natural enemies. He was a boor, with no respect for the fair sex.

The two girls almost reached the stile before Buster heard them. He grunted, looked round with a ferocious scowl, and his expression did not change when he saw who the newcomers were. He just turned his head again, and sat there.

"Oh, goodness!" murmured Irene. "Did you see that?"

"The beast!" said Doris. "Glaring at us like that?"

They reached the stile and paused, John Busterfield Boots sat on the top bar, and there was certainly not room for anybody to pass while he remained in that position. A boy could have squeezed over, no doubt, but it was out of the question for a girl to attempt any such thing.

The girls were rather embarrassed, and their faces expressed their feelings. Buster knew very well that they wanted to pass, but he had his back to them, and made no attempt to shift. Irene gave a little cough.

Buster Boots looked round, still scowling.

"What are you staring at me for?" he demanded sourly.

Irene flushed crimson, and Doris' pretty eyes flashed.

"We've got something better to do than to stare at you!" she retorted hotly. "Will you please move?" she added, with admirable restraint.

"I can't be bothered!" snapped Buster. "There's plenty of room!"

Irene and Doris exchanged angry, indignant glances as Boots turned his back again. Never before had the girls met with such outrageous behaviour. Boots was deliberately insulting them. They didn't know his frame of mind, and that he was only too glad to vent his spite upon the first people he met. But this was no excuse. Boots deserved to be horse-whipped.

"Oh!" exclaimed Irene breathlessly. "How dare you?"

"Don't make a fuss!" growled Buster. "Can't you squeeze through here?"

"How DARE you?" cried Irene, again. "Move this instant!"

Her tone of contempt and scorn succeeded in biting through J.B.B.'s tough hide. But in his present mood it only provoked him the more. He turned his head, looked the girls up and down, and laughed unpleasantly.

"Ordering me, eh?" he said, with a snap in his voice. "I won't move now!"

Doris jumped forward, and her hand was held ready to deliver a sounding smack, when Irene drew her back. Irene has a horror of "scenes." She thought it better to ignore this detestable fellow.

"Come, Doris," she said quietly. "There's a gap just here; we can easily slip through."

She drew Doris with her, and they moved a yard or so away, and succeeded in squeezing through the gap. It was undignified—it was atrocious. But it was better than listening to more of Buster's horrid insults.

"Oh!" breathed Irene, as they walked up the lane. "Oh! The—the cad!"

"Why didn't you let me smack his face?" asked Doris hotly.

"Doris, dear, I couldn't," said Irene, her face still flushed. "Couldn't you see what a dreadful mood he was in? It would only have made things worse. I'm afraid to think what he would have done if you had smacked him!"

"The beast!" said Doris angrily. "Oh, I'd like to whip him!"

"Quick, dear—quick! There's Archie and one of the other boys coming along," breathed Irene hastily. "Don't let them see us all red like this! And don't say a word about that horrid Buster. We

mustn't sneak on him, although he does deserve a thrashing."

The two juniors who were coming down the lane were Archie Glenthorne and myself. We were by no means displeased to meet the girls, and we instinctively felt our ties and brushed our clothes.

"This, old scream, is absolutely distressing," murmured Archie. "I didn't shove on the old clean linen, you know —"

"Rats! You're as neat as a new pin!" I chuckled.

There was not much time for Archie to make any further remark, for we had now met the two girls, and we paused, and raised our caps. I noticed at once that both Irene and Doris were looking slightly different to usual. Their frank, friendly glances were lacking. They almost seemed embarrassed. But I took care to act as though I had seen nothing unusual.

"Just out for a ramble, I suppose?" I asked cheerily.

"Yes, we've been all round Edgemore, and through Belton Wood," replied Irene. "Oh, the country's wonderful about here! It must be simply delightful in the summertime."

"Absolutely," said Archie, nodding. "What-ho! I mean, rather! Great things have been happening at the school, dear girls! Kindly assist me in cheering. What I mean is, gaze upon the Remove skipper, and trot out the old congrats!"

"Why, what do you mean, Archie?" smiled Doris.

"Well, the fact is, that dashed smudge, Buster Boots, has been bowled over!" said Archie chattily. "Positively biffed off the old pedestal, don't you know! The dear chappies have rallied round in the most frightfully decent way, and Buster has been quietly smothered, as it were. In other words, Nipper is now the Remove captain, and the sun shines again!"

"Really?" asked Irene, holding out her hand. "Oh, I'm so pleased! Thank goodness that awful boy, Buster Boots, has been deprived of the captaincy. I do congratulate you, Nipper!" she added heartily.

They both shook hands with me frankly and without the least trace of silliness.

And I had noticed that a quick glance passed between the two girls. But at the time I did not realise its significance. As a matter of fact, our news about John Busterfield Boots had explained much to them.

"By the way," said Archie, flushing slightly, and polishing his eyeglass vigorously. "That is, what about it? I mean, somebody missing, what? How about the third member of the old firm?"

"Oh, Marjorie!" smiled Irene. "Absolutely!" agreed Archie, with concern. "I sincerely trust the dear girl is not unwell? I mean, you're usually out

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HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

But for a son by a secret marriage the heir to Lord Easington would fall to Professor Mark Rymer, the crafty and unscrupulous cousin of the late peer. The story opens in Sydney, Australia, with Nelson Lee and his opponent, Rymer, setting off in search of the missing heir, who, as Richard Seymour, is employed as a stockman in the interior of New South Wales. Rymer's intention is to get Seymour out of the way of the inheritance. The detective and the professor reach Garoo Downs within a few hours of each other. Exciting experiences from bush fires and bushrangers delay their progress. From Australia, Rymer and Nelson Lee follow their quest to New Zealand, and from there to Honolulu. Rymer succeeds in embarking from here on the same boat as Seymour, leaving Nelson Lee behind. They are bound for San Francisco, to where Lee sends a

cablegram warning Seymour of his danger. This message is intercepted by the wily professor.

(Now read on.)

WITH the dagger in his right hand and the glass ball in his left, he crept out of his berth, and stole to the berth in which his intended victim was sleeping.

Thrusting the glass ball into the pocket of his pyjama coat, the professor slid his left hand beneath the sheets, and felt for the spot on Dick's chest where the beating of his heart was most plainly to be felt. Then he raised his right hand in the air, and was just about to plunge his weapon into Dick's heart, when—

"Help! Murder! Help!"

The cry rang through the sleeping-car with the clearness of a bugle-call. At the critical moment Dick Seymour had awakened, had grasped the professor's up-

raised arm in a vice-like grip, and had raised his voice in a ringing shout for help.

Aroused by his shout, the rest of the sleepers awoke. Most of them were Americans, who never travel unarmed, and, in less time than it takes to tell, a dozen revolvers were levelled at Mark Rymer's head. An instant later the attendant rushed into the car and switched on the lights. Seeing the professor struggling in Dick Seymour's grasp, he whipped out his revolver; but even as he did so the professor wrenched himself free, thrust his hand into his pyjama-pocket, and held up the small glass ball.

"Back! Back, all of you!" he snarled. "This is charged with nitro-glycerine, and I have only to drop it on the floor to wreck the car and blow you all to atoms!"

The passengers recoiled. They had only to look at Mark Rymer's blazing eyes to see that his threat was no idle one.

For three tense seconds nobody spoke. The silence was positively uncanny. The only audible sounds were the laboured breathings of terror-stricken men and the bee-like hum of the wheels of the train.

Then Mark Rymer emitted a sibilant sound that was half a chuckle and half a laugh.

"I think I hold the ace of trumps, gentlemen!" he said, stretching out his hand, with the deadly bomb held lightly between his finger and thumb. "I have no particular wish to be blown sky-high, but if any of you move without my permission, either towards myself, or towards the door of the car, or towards the electric alarm, I'll drop this ball on the floor, and we'll all go on a trip to the moon together! I should also like to point out, for fear of misadventure, that if any of you were so thoughtless as to fire at me, you would certainly end my earthly career, but you would also end your own as well; for as I fall to the ground this bomb would slip from my fingers, and would strike the ground with so much force that it would instantly explode."

He paused for a second or two to let his words sink in. Then he waved his hand imperiously round the car.

"Back to your berths, if you please, gentlemen!" he murmured.

In the twinkling of an eye the professor and the attendant, whose teeth were chattering with fear, were the only persons on the floor of the car.

"Now stop the train!" said the professor, turning to the attendant.

Like a man in a dream, the attendant staggered to the electric push and pressed the button. A grinding, grating sound arose, and the train began to slacken speed.

"Thanks!" said the professor coolly. "Now, into my berth, and look quick about it!"

A moment later the terrified attendant was cowering in the professor's berth. At the same instant a hubbub of excited voices

was heard proceeding from the neighbouring cars. The passengers, alarmed by the application of the brakes, were clamouring for the same reason.

Quickly the professor strode to the door at the end of the car. The train had then slowed down to fifteen miles an hour, and was passing along an elevated track, bounded on each side by gently-sloping embankments.

Upon reaching the open platform between the sleeping-car and the next, Mark Rymer halted and spun round on his heel. For one brief fraction of a second he stood with the bomb in his upraised hand.

Then, with a mocking laugh, he hurled the bomb into the sleeping-car, whilst at the same instant he vaulted over the platform rail into space.

None but a man of iron nerve would have dared to run the thing so fine. It was literally a question of the hundredth part of a second, for even whilst he was still in the air, before his falling form had reached the ground, the silence was rent by an appalling roar, accompanied by a dazzling flash, and the next instant the whole of one end of the sleeping-car seemed to melt away in a rain of hurtling splinters.

Four hours later a slumbering Catholic priest, living alone in a desolate little mission house on the outskirts of Maryville, was awakened by the sound of somebody moving in one of the rooms downstairs.

He lit a candle, and opened his bed-room door with the intention of going downstairs to investigate. Even as he opened the door, however, he found himself face to face with the dishevelled figure of an elderly man, barefooted, and clad in a mud-stained suit of silk pyjamas.

There was a short, sharp scuffle, a single piercing cry for help, then the silence of the grave.

Next morning it was reported in Maryville that the priest in charge of St. Joseph's Mission had been foully murdered, and that the sum of fifteen hundred dollars—the proceeds of a recent bazaar—was missing from his safe. Later still, but too late to serve as a clue, it was likewise discovered that the unknown assassin had stolen a suit of his victim's clothes, and had left behind, in a cupboard, a ragged suit of silk pyjamas.

Three days later, or, to be exact, on the morning of Saturday, June 18th, a benevolent-looking individual, arrayed in the garb of a Catholic priest, and giving the name of Father O'Brien, arrived in New York, and engaged a bed-room at the Murray Hill Hotel, in Park Avenue.

This worthy "priest" was none other than Mark Rymer. After killing the priest

in charge of St. Joseph's, and disguising himself in his victim's clothes, he made his way on foot to Albany. Here he had purchased a copy of the "Missouri Herald," from which he had learned, to his mortification and chagrin, that Dick Seymour had been rescued from the wreck of the sleeping-car, with no more serious hurt than a dislocated elbow and a scalp wound. According to the "Herald," he had left for New York as soon as his injuries had been attended to; and to New York, there-

sent to "Oswald Brooke, Esq.," at the Knickerbocker Apartments. A smaller bag, containing a suit of ready-made tweeds, a collar, a shirt, and a tie, was ordered to be sent to "Father O'Brien," at the Murray Hill Hotel.

In the dusk of the evening he paid a visit to a well-known maker of wigs in West Twenty-Third Street. At eight o'clock he returned to his hotel.

Some time between midnight on Saturday night and seven o'clock on Sunday morn-



Before his falling form had reached the ground the silence was rent by an appalling roar, accompanied by a dazzling flash, and the next instant the whole of one end of the sleeping-car seemed to melt away in a rain of hurtling splinters.

fore, Mark Rymer had come in search of him.

Early on Saturday afternoon he sallied forth from his hotel, and wended his way to the famous Knickerbocker Apartments on Fifth Avenue. Having rented a suite, with attendance included, he devoted the rest of the afternoon to a round of shopping in Broadway and Union Square. One large portmanteau, crammed with wearing apparel and the like, was ordered to be

ing "Father O'Brien" disappeared from the Murray Hill Hotel, leaving behind him an unpaid bill.

And some time between noon and two o'clock on Sunday afternoon "Mr. Oswald Brooke," a venerable-looking old gentleman, with silvery-white hair and beard, drove up to the Knickerbocker Apartments, and entered into possession of the suite of rooms which "his kind friend the parish priest" had engaged for him.

PICKING UP THE THREADS.

ON the same day that the disguised professor reached New York, the ss. Doric, with Nelson Lee aboard, arrived at San Francisco from Honolulu.

Immediately upon landing, the detective drove to the office of the Occidental and Oriental Steamship Company, where the presentation of his visiting-card sufficed to procure for him an immediate interview with Mr. Stubbs, the general manager.

"You received my cablegram—or, rather, Hackfield's cablegram?" was Nelson Lee's first question.

"I did," said the manager.

"And you carried out my instructions?"

"Practically, yes. I didn't meet the Ventura myself, for I was unexpectedly called away on important business the day before she arrived. But I sent one of my clerks, who saw Mr. Seymour on board the steamer, and delivered the cablegram into his hands."

"And Mr. Seymour said——"

"That he would remain at the Palace Hotel until you arrived."

"Then he is at the Palace Hotel at the present moment?"

"I expect so."

The detective thanked him, and drove to the Palace Hotel, which was only a few blocks farther along the same street. In ten minutes' time he was back at the office again, pale with anger and anxiety.

"Somebody has been guilty of a hideous blunder!" he declared. "Mr. Seymour is not at the Palace Hotel. He has never been there. They know nothing about him!"

A gasp of incredulous amazement rose to the manager's lips. He snatched up a speaking-tube and whistled to one of the offices upstairs.

"Tell Kitson I wish to see him!" he called.

There was a moment's interval; then Kitson appeared—a weedy-looking youth with sandy hair and colourless eyes. He was the clerk whom Mark Rymer had hypnotised and robbed of the cablegram.

"Tell this gentleman exactly what happened on board the Ventura," said the manager.

"I boarded the steamer at the same time as the Revenue-men," replied the clerk in a sing-song voice. "I asked the purser which was Mr. Seymour, and he pointed him out to me. He was a tall, good-looking young fellow, with dark-brown hair and moustache. I gave him Hackfield's cablegram, and he said I was to thank Mr. Stubbs for his courtesy, and to tell him that he would stay at the Palace Hotel until Mr. Lee arrived. I never spoke to anybody else on board the steamer except the purser and Mr. Seymour."

The detective wrinkled his brow and re-

garded the clerk with a keen and penetrating glance. Somehow or other, the story did not "ring true" in the detective's ears. It was too complete, too circumstantial, too much like a lesson learnt by heart and repeated by rote.

"Yet the fellow doesn't look as though he had brains enough to have invented such a plausible lie," he murmured to himself. "Can it be that he has been 'got at' by Mark Rymer? Has the professor bribed him? No! By Jove, I think I know what has happened! He has been mesmerised!"

He sprang to his feet, his brain in a whirl of excited suspense.

"Look at me!" he exclaimed, seizing the clerk by the shoulders, and unconsciously repeating Mark Rymer's command.

The clerk obeyed, as meekly as he had obeyed Mark Rymer. In half a dozen seconds the detective had "put him under control," and in five minutes' time he had wormed the whole story out of him—how he had met Mark Rymer on board the steamer; how the professor had hypnotised him and stolen the cablegram; and how he had been ordered to say that he had given the cablegram to Dick Seymour, and had never spoken to anybody else but Dick and the purser.

"I cannot tell you how grieved I am that this should have happened," said the manager, when the clerk had been de-hypnotised and sent back to his desk. "At the same time, I don't see how I could have prevented it."

"You couldn't," said the detective frankly. "I do not blame you in any way whatever; you did what you thought was best, but luck was against us, and once again Mark Rymer has scored."

"What was Seymour going to do when he reached this place? Was he going to settle here, or was he going farther east?"

"I have no idea. I expected to find him here when I arrived; otherwise, I would have cabled to his late employer before I left Honolulu, and asked him if he knew what Seymour's plans were. I may do so yet. But, in the first place, I shall make it my business to interview the police and all the hotel proprietors in the place, and the officials at the railway-station, with a view of ascertaining what has become of him."

"That's a pretty tall order."

"Not so tall as it appears at first sight. You see, I know for a fact that Seymour and Mark Rymer were in San Francisco five days ago. I have a photograph of Seymour—given me by his friend Dr. Irving, of Napier—and I know Mark Rymer sufficiently well to be able to describe him from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. I am not without hope that, with patience and perseverance, I shall ultimately find somebody who has seen them."

As events turned out, he had no need to exercise either patience or perseverance. From the steamship offices he drove to the headquarters of the local police, and in less

OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION

than a quarter of an hour he had learned all there was to learn.

"Seymour?" said the chief of police, when the detective had unfolded his tale. "Richard Seymour? I seem to remember the name. Why—yes, of course! Seymour was the name of the young fellow who played such a prominent part in that sensational affair last Wednesday night, when the Overland Mail was wrecked between Omaha and Kansas City. Surely you have read the accounts in the newspapers?"

"How could I? I only arrived from Honolulu this morning."

"Oh, yes, of course! I was forgetting that. Well, what happened was this: Shortly after midnight on Wednesday, the passengers in No. 14 sleeping-car of the Overland Mail were awakened by a shout

overturned. A good many lives were lost, but Seymour escaped with a dislocated elbow and a cut on the scalp. His injuries were attended to by a local medical man, and the following morning he left for New York."

"But surely the police took his name and address?"

"Of course; otherwise I shouldn't have known that his name was Seymour."

"What address did he give?"

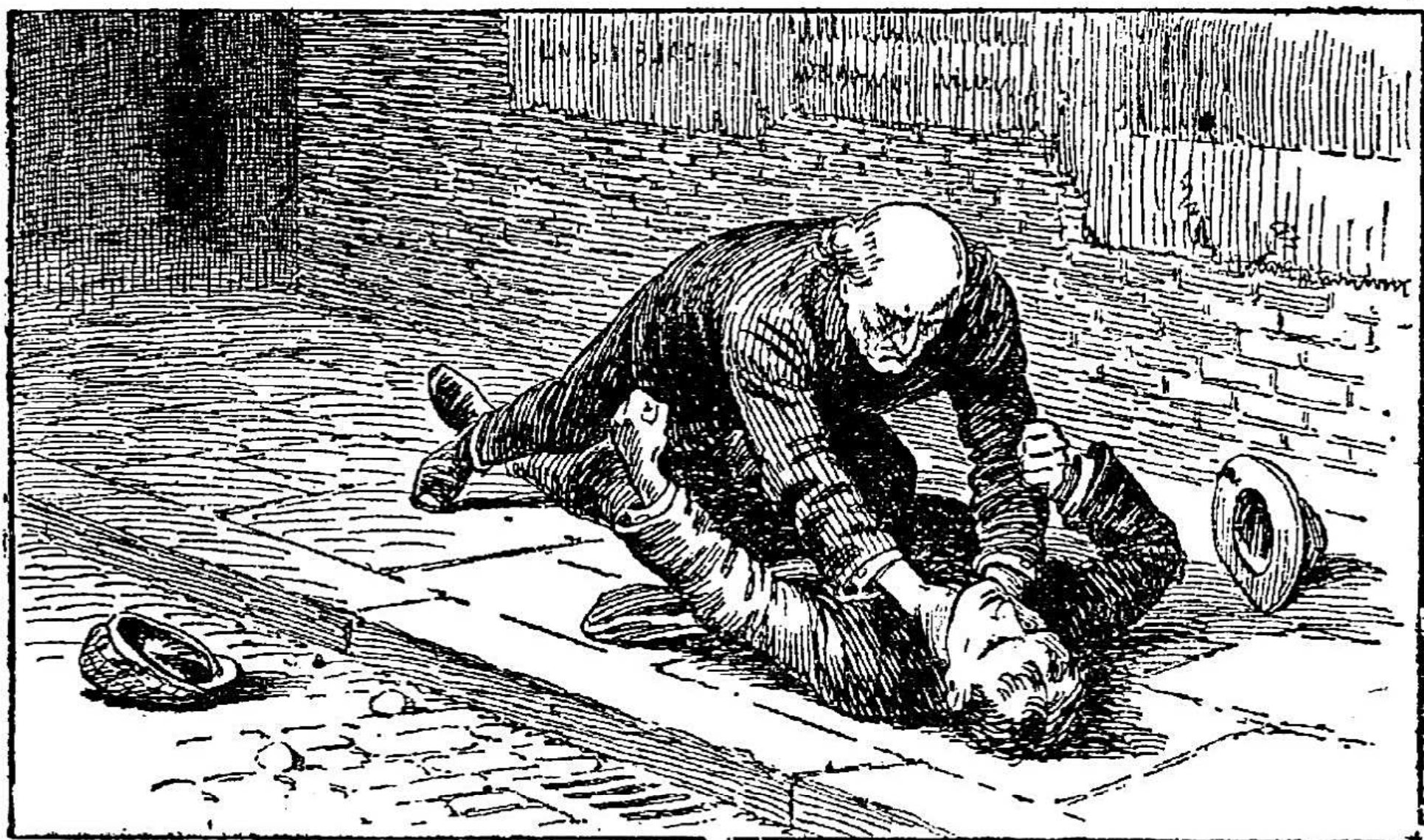
"Continental Hotel, Broadway, New York."

"He is there now?"

"For anything I know to the contrary."

"And the other man—the elderly, big-nosed man in the pyjamas—what became of him?"

"I only wish I knew! Nothing has since



Half dazed by his fall, Dick lay motionless, and by the time he had collected his scattered wits, Mark Rymer was kneeling on his chest, his two thumbs pressed tightly on Dick's windpipe.

for help. They then found that one of the passengers—an elderly, big-nosed man, dressed in pyjamas—was struggling with another passenger, a young fellow named Richard Seymour, whom the elder man had tried to stab. Before the others could interfere, the would-be murderer wrenched himself free, and produced a bomb. By means of this he terrified the passengers into returning to their berths, forced the attendant to stop the train, and then jumped off, after first throwing the bomb into the car and shattering it to splinters."

"And was Dick Seymour killed?" asked the detective, in an agony of apprehension.

"No. The sleeping-car was wrecked, and the cars behind it either left the metals or

been seen or heard of him, though we have a shrewd suspicion that it was he who murdered a priest on the outskirts of Maryville, and made off with a suit of clothes and fifteen hundred dollars in hard cash."

"Do you know who he is?"

"No. The police cross-questioned Seymour at great length on the subject, but all he could tell them was that two previous attempts had been made on his life—one in the island of Hawaii, and the other at Honolulu—and that he was firmly convinced that the author of these attempts was the same man who had tried to stab him in the train. But who his enemy was, or why he wished to murder him, he hadn't the remotest idea. If you can throw any light

upon the mystery we shall be greatly obliged."

Nelson Lee thereupon told the chief the story of the late Lord Easington's secret marriage, of the hunt for the Silver Dwarf, and of the search for the missing heir.

"And now," he asked, at the conclusion of his story, "which is my quickest route to New York?"

The chief consulted his watch. It was a quarter to ten.

"If your baggage is packed——" he began.

"It is at the door," interrupted Lee.

"Then you've just time to catch the Overland Limited Mail, which leaves at ten o'clock, and will drop you in New York at half-past one on Wednesday morning. But you've not a moment to waste."

Nelson Lee accordingly bade him a hurried farewell, and drove post haste to the railway-station. He had no time to wire before the train left, but from Sacramento he telegraphed to "Richard Seymour, Continental Hotel, Broadway, New York," telling Dick that he was coming, bidding him remain at the hotel until he arrived, warning him to be on his guard against treachery, and asking him to "wire reply to Ogden."

Ogden was reached at a quarter past two on Sunday afternoon. But no reply had arrived!

With a vague feeling of uneasiness, Nelson Lee wired to the manager of the Continental Hotel, describing Dick's appearance, and asking if anybody answering to that description had stayed at the hotel within the last six days.

The manager's answer came to hand at Council Bluffs on Monday evening. It shattered the detective's remaining hope. For this is how the wire ran:

"Man you describe never been here. Know nothing about him."

AN ADVENTURE IN THE BOWERY.

FIVE weary weeks elapsed—five weeks and three days, to be exact. It was now the morning of the 27th of July, and Nelson Lee was as far from finding the missing heir as he had ever been.

Upon arriving in New York the detective had driven to the Continental Hotel, and interviewed the manager. The latter, however, could add nothing to what he had said in his telegram.

He had never seen Dick Seymour in his life, and nobody answering to his name or description had ever stayed at the hotel.

Disappointed, but in no wise disheartened, Nelson Lee had engaged a bed-room and private sitting-room at the Continental Hotel, and had then commenced an exhaustive series of inquiries. He had interviewed the New York police, and had wired Dick's description to the Chief Commissioners of all the principal towns on the

Atlantic seaboard. He had caused advertisements to be inserted in the New York dailies, offering a reward for such information as would lead to Dick's discovery. He had visited every hotel, both large and small, in the city. He had questioned and cross-questioned the conductors of street-cars, the officials of the elevated railroads, and the booking-clerks and porters at the various stations. He had examined the passenger-lists of every ship that had sailed from New York since the 13th of July.

But so far his labour had been in vain. From no source could he obtain the smallest shred of news concerning the man for whom he was searching.

On this particular morning, however—the morning of the 27th of July—the detective received a letter which seemed to promise a speedy termination to his search.

There is no need to reproduce the letter in full. Suffice to say that it was from the chief of the Boston police, who "had the honour to inform Mr. Nelson Lee" that a young fellow answering to the description of Dick Seymour had recently been admitted into the Boston Hospital, suffering from "an unreduced dislocation of the elbow."

"He is extremely ill, and the doctors fear for his life," wrote the chief. "He denies that his name is Seymour; but refuses to say anything about his past life, or the manner in which his elbow was dislocated. Seeing that he almost exactly answers to your description of the missing man, and seeing, moreover, that he is suffering from a similar injury (you said in your telegram that Seymour had recently dislocated his elbow), I have thought it wise, in spite of his denials, to lay these facts before you, in order that you may exercise your judgment as to whether you think it is worth your while to run up to Boston and question him."

The detective did think it worth his while, and left for Boston by the first train after the receipt of the letter. By the time he reached Boston, however, the patient who was supposed to be Dick Seymour had lapsed into unconsciousness, and the detective, therefore, decided to remain in Boston until such time as the man was able to answer his questions.

As a matter of fact the detective was merely wasting his time by remaining in Boston. The young man in the hospital was not Dick Seymour. Dick Seymour was in New York, in a low lodging-house in that vile and insalubrious region of the great city which is known as the "Bowery."

If the truth must be told, Dick's nerves had been completely shattered. The three mysterious attempts which had been made on his life, his ignorance of his enemy's identity and motives, the uncertainty as to when another attempt would be made to murder him, the loss of the greater part of

his money and all his belongings in the wreck of the sleeping-car, the terrible shock he had received on that occasion—all these had simply played havoc with his nervous system, and had left him a physical and mental wreck.

Day and night he was haunted by the fear that his unknown foe would renew his attempts to murder him. He started at the slightest unaccustomed sound, and blanched whenever a stranger spoke to him. Nellie Pryde had become a dream of the past. All hope of making his fortune and returning to claim her had been abandoned. His one ambition—his only aim in life—was to keep his identity a secret, in order that his mysterious foe might not be able to trace him.

In pursuance of this aim he had changed his name on arriving in New York, and, instead of going to the Continental Hotel, had taken lodgings in one of the northern suburbs. By the time he had recovered from his injuries his slender store of money had well-nigh become exhausted. So he had moved into cheaper lodgings, and had set about seeking employment. But as he always declined to say where he had been last employed, or to give any references (for fear of betraying his identity), it had followed that nobody was willing to give him a situation. From which again it had followed that his little stock of money had grown smaller and smaller every day, until at last he had been compelled to take refuge in a tramp lodging-house in the Bowery, and accept employment as door-keeper at a Yiddish theatre.

Heir to one of the proudest titles in the English peerage, owner of one of the finest estates in the United Kingdom, with a rent-roll of over a hundred thousand a year, and door-keeper at a Yiddish theatre in the Bowery! Was it any wonder that Nelson Lee had been baffled in his attempts to find him?

But Nelson Lee was not the only person who had been baffled. A silvery-haired old gentleman, living in luxurious apartments on Fifth Avenue, and known to his neighbours as Oswald Brooke (but better known to the reader as Mark Rymer), had been equally unsuccessful in his search for the missing heir. Like Nelson Lee, the professor had laboured night and day to find out what had become of Dick. He knew that Nelson Lee was in New York, and on several occasions he had shadowed the detective in the hope that he would lead him to Dick's hiding-place. But all his efforts had ended in failure. From him, as from Nelson Lee, the whereabouts of Dick had been hidden behind an impenetrable veil of mystery.

It has already been described how Nelson Lee, on the morning of the 27th of July, received a letter which made him hope that the end of his quest was in sight. On that

very same morning, by a curious coincidence, Mark Rymer came across an item of news which filled him with a similar hope.

It happened in this way. Having finished his breakfast, Rymer flung himself into an easy-chair, lit a cigar, and opened a copy of the "New York World." Presently his eye fell on the following paragraph, under the heading "Fashionable Arrivals":

"Mr. and Miss Pryde, late of Kalapana, in the island of Hawaii, have arrived in New York, and are staying at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Mr. Pryde has sold his extensive plantations in Hawaii, and is proceeding with his daughter to England, where he intends to purchase a country estate and settle down. He and Miss Pryde will sail for Plymouth on Saturday by the Dardania."

Now if Nelson Lee had seen this paragraph, it is more than likely that he would have gone to the Fifth Avenue Hotel before he left for Boston, on the off-chance that Mr. Pryde might be able to furnish some information as to Dick Seymour's whereabouts. But the detective did not see the paragraph.

As for Mark Rymer, as soon as he had read the item he leaped to his feet with a smothered cry of triumph.

He had overheard the conversation between Dick Seymour and Mr. Pryde on the lower slopes of Kilauea, and he knew how deeply Dick was in love with his former employer's daughter.

"If he's anywhere in New York," he muttered to himself, "and if he sees this paragraph, neither fear nor anything else will prevent him hanging around the Fifth Avenue Hotel on the off-chance of seeing the girl."

He tore off his wig and beard, and dashed into an inner room. A quarter of an hour later he emerged, and left the building disguised as a hawker of music-hall songs.

From ten o'clock in the morning until long past midnight he plied his trade in front of the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

Three times he saw Mr. Pryde, and twice he saw his daughter. But of Dick he saw nothing, for the all-sufficient reason that Dick had not yet seen the paragraph in the "World," and had no suspicion that Nellie Pryde was in New York.

The professor returned to his post next day, disguised as a newspaper-seller. Shortly before noon he saw Mr. Pryde and his daughter emerge, and at four o'clock in the afternoon he saw them return, followed by a porter laden with parcels.

At seven o'clock in the evening he saw them enter a closed car, and heard the old man give the order "Grand Opera House." Then five long, weary hours of fruitless watching ensued.

"He's not in New York, that's certain," he muttered to himself, as a neighbouring

clock struck the hour of midnight. "If he were——"

His musings ended in a quick, spasmodic gulp. Every fibre in his being grew suddenly tense with excitement.

Round the corner of Twenty-third Street there had just appeared a shabbily-dressed young man. As he turned the corner into Madison Square the piercing light of the overhanging electric lamp beat fiercely down on his pinched and careworn face—the face of Richard Seymour!

Quick as thought the professor crumpled his unsold papers and his contents-bill into a shapeless bundle, and dropped them in the gutter. Instinctively his right hand stole into the inside pocket of his coat. Then a look of malignant satisfaction crossed his face. Revolver and bowie-knife—both were there!

With hungry, wolfish eyes, he watched Dick cross the road and take his stand beneath one of the lamps, just opposite the principal entrance of the hotel.

It looks as though he knew they were out, and had come to see them return," the professor mused.

He was right. Dick did know that Mr. Pryde and his daughter were out. Although Mark Rymer had not seen him, he had been to the hotel earlier in the evening, and had seen them drive off to the opera-house.

Poor though he was, he had followed them to the theatre, and had invested one of his few remaining coins on a seat in the pit, from which he had feasted his eyes on Nellie Pryde for four delightful hours.

The moment the curtain had fallen he had hurried from the building and had hastened back to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, in order to obtain what he firmly believed would be the last glimpse he would ever get of the girl he loved.

He had not long to wait. A few minutes after his arrival a closed car pulled up in front of the hotel, and Mr. Pryde and Nellie stepped out.

Dick watched them mount the steps and vanish into the brilliantly-lighted entrance-hall. Then something suspiciously like a sob burst from his lips, and he turned away with the intention of retracing his steps to his dingy lodgings in the Bowery.

Mark Rymer glided after him—down Broadway, across Union Square, along Fourth Avenue, and so into that squalid region of opium-dens, gambling-hells, shooting-galleries, dime-museums, tramp lodging-houses, Yiddish theatres, and tattooing establishments, which bears the name of the "Bowery."

Like a human sleuth-hound, Mark Rymer dogged his unsuspecting victim through the crooked slums and squalid alleys of this ill-famed quarter of New York.

At last, however, Mark Rymer's patience met with its reward. With chin on breast

and hands deep down in trousers-pockets, Dick turned down a narrow, deserted alley—an open passage, really—between a Chinese joss-house and a two cents "amusement arcade."

Fearful of losing sight of him, Mark Rymer quickened his pace, and darted into the passage with so much haste that he almost fell over Dick, who had suddenly halted and stooped in order to tie up a trailing bootlace.

He saw that Dick was stooping just in front of him, saw that there was nobody but themselves in the alley, and instantly he whipped out his bowie-knife and sprang at Dick with a snarl of savage triumph.

Quick as he was, however, Dick Seymour was quicker. His 'five weeks' residence in the Bowery, if it had taught him nothing else, had taught him to be on his guard against prowling footpads.

A sudden shadow on the ground, and a hurried footstep just behind him, warned him of his danger in the nick of time, and, with lightning-like rapidity, he straightened himself and sprang aside.

The result of this manœuvre was that Mark Rymer's knife struck only vacant space, whilst the professor himself lost his balance, pitched forward on his face, and measured his length on the ground.

He was on his feet again in an instant, but his knife had fallen from his grasp, and ere he could pick it up Dick darted towards him and planted a fist between his eyes. The professor replied with a skilful feint, which enabled him to get inside his opponent's guard, and in less time than it takes to tell he had seized Dick round the waist, and had thrown him heavily to the ground.

Half-dazed by his fall, Dick lay motionless, and by the time he had collected his scattered wits, Mark Rymer was kneeling on his chest, with his fingers interlocked behind Dick's neck, and his two thumbs tightly pressed on his windpipe.

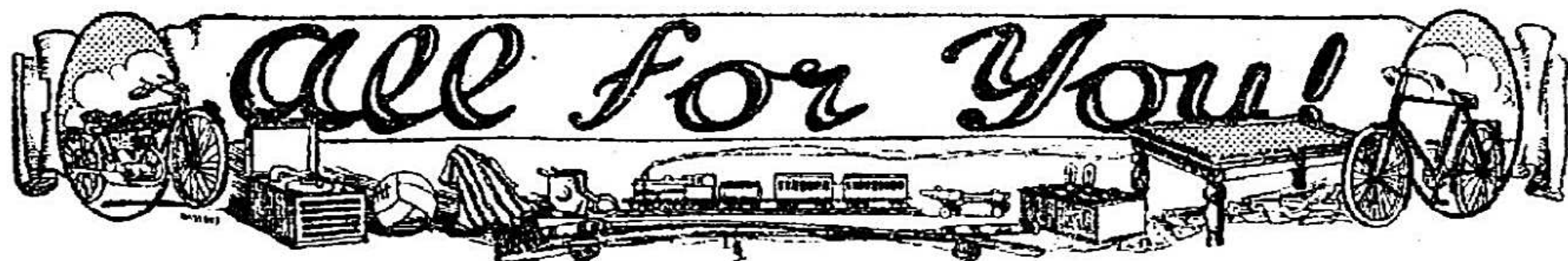
Dick fought and struggled with demoniacal fury, now dashing his fists into the professor's face, now dealing him sledge-hammer blows on the chest, now seizing him by the wrists, and exerting all his strength to force him to relax his strangling grip. But all in vain. Dick's recent illness, coupled with the want of proper food, had robbed him of his strength. He was helpless in the sinewy hands of his remorseless foe.

With a last despairing effort, he summoned up all his remaining strength, and tore the professor's hands from his throat. "Help!"

One choking, half-inarticulate cry was all that was permitted to cross his lips. The next instant something struck him between the eyes, and he remembered no more.

(To be continued.)

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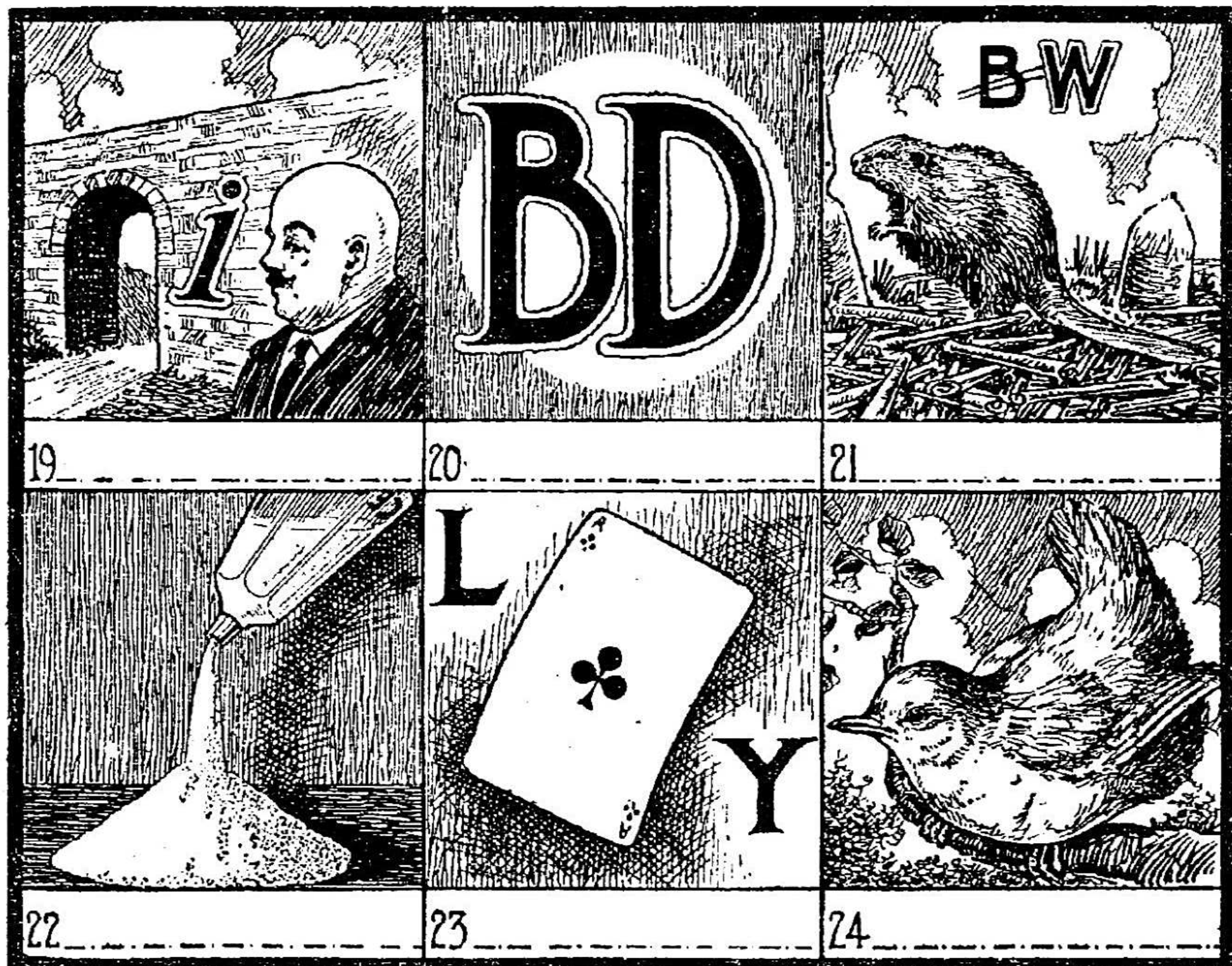
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FOURTH SET!

FOURTH 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.

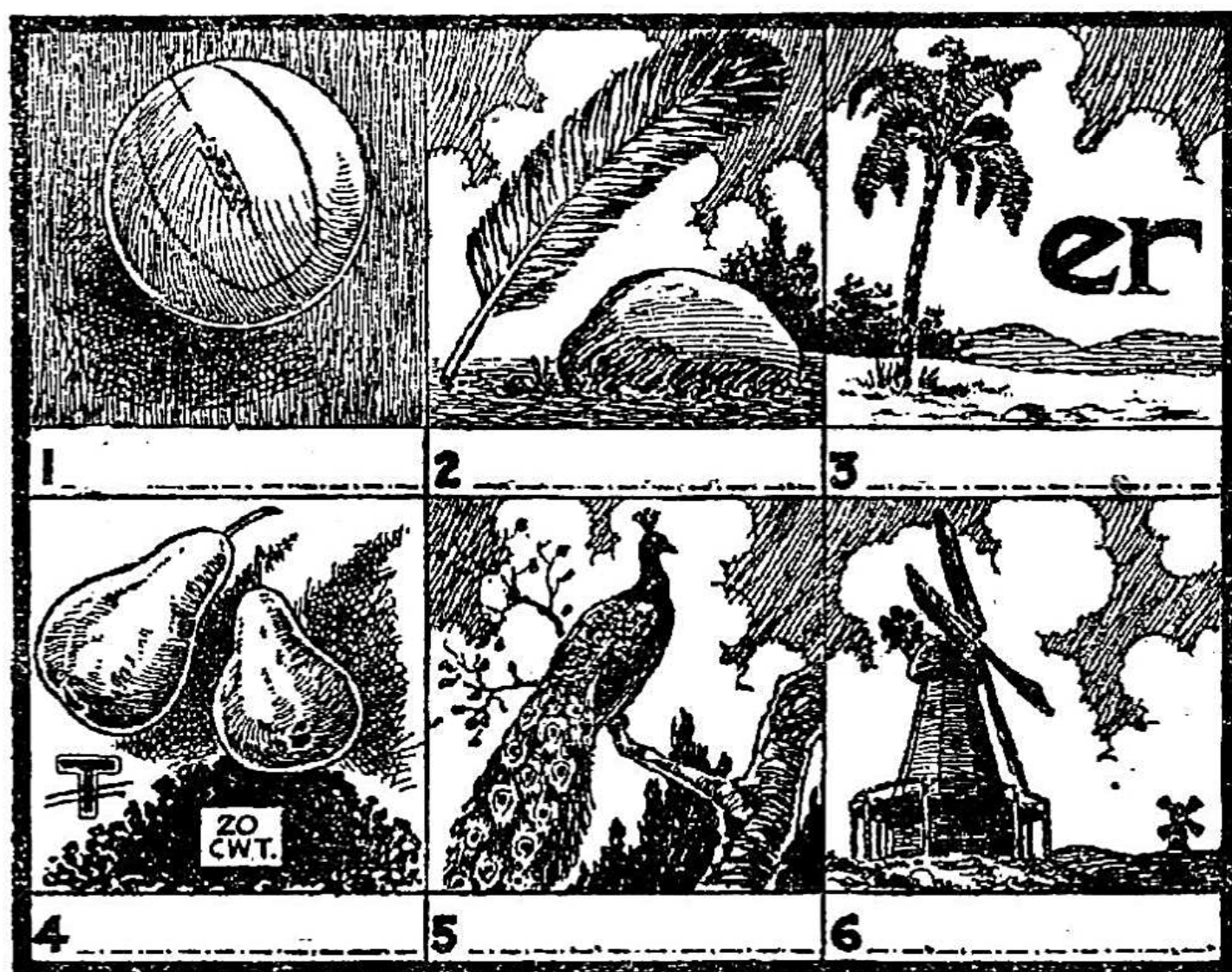
Readers of the "The Champion," "Boys' Friend," "Union Jack," "Boys' Realm," "Pluck," "Magnet," "Young Britain," "Gem," "The Popular," "The Rocket," and "Boys' Cinema," are also taking part in this Contest, so that additional attempts may be made with the pictures from these allied journals.

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. On pages xi and xii 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. To aid readers, it will be seen that No. 1 picture here represents the name BALL. In all, there will be EIGHT SETS OF PICTURES, so keep your solutions until the other sets appear.

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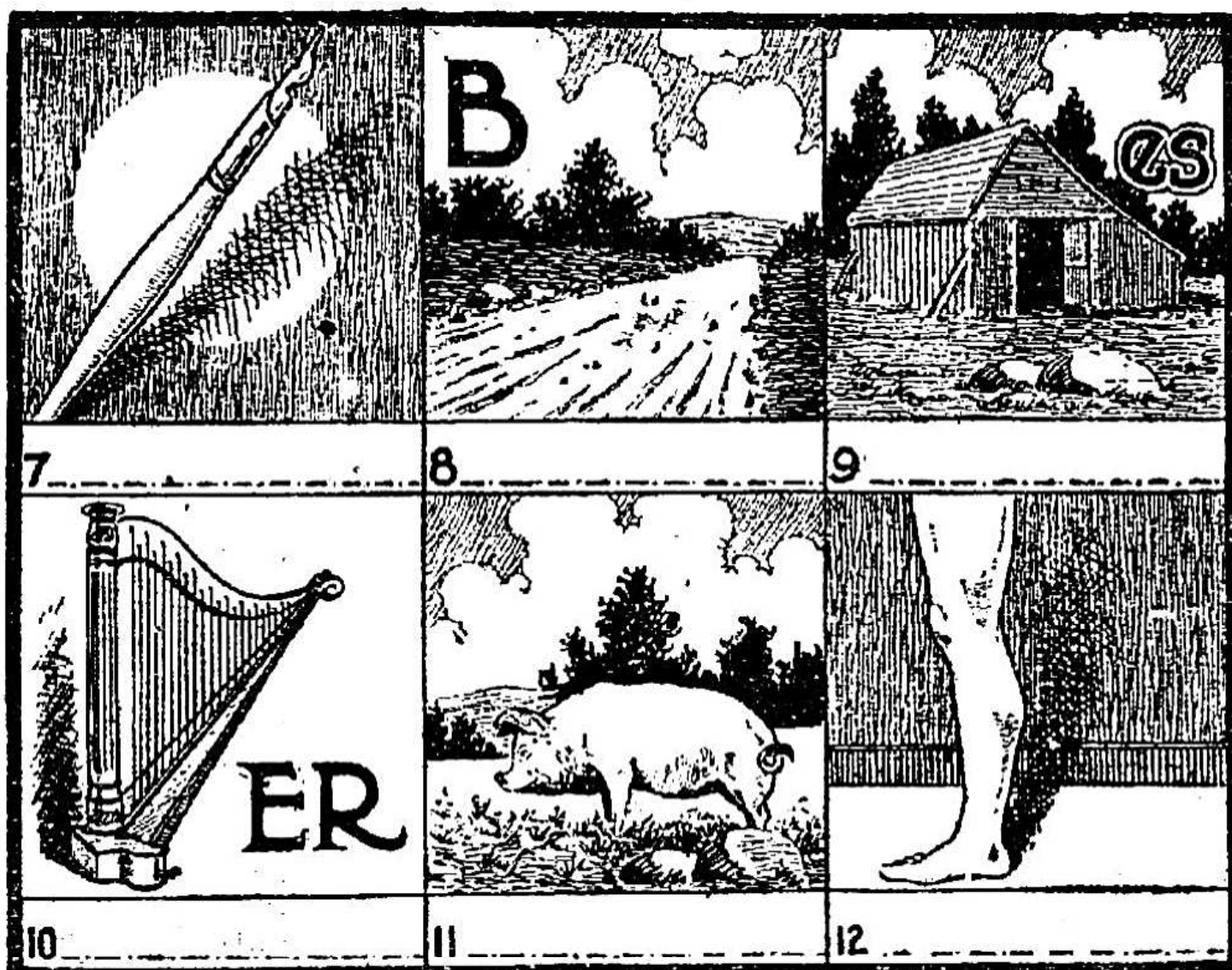


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Cockle, Crosbie, Cross, Clennel, Cameron, Chedgoy, Cock, Chadwick, Clough, Curry, Cookson, Cope, Cook, Crilly, Chaplin, Collier, Crockford, Campbell, Crown, Chance, Chipperfield, Crompton, Charlton, Conner, Craig, Cosgrove, Cherrett, Crossley, Carter, 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, Gallogley, 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.

(Continued on next page.)

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, Pater-son, Pearson, Penn, Plum, Page, Preston, Probert, Pagnam, Peel, Potts, Palmer, Prouse, Puddefoot, Pender, Pape, Peacock, Pantling, Partridge, Peers.

Quantrill, Quinn.

Robson, Rollo, Raitt, Richardson, Raw-

lings, Ruffell, Robbie, Rigg, Radford, Ridley, Reay, Ramsey, Robb, Ritchie, Rauskin, Reed, Rooke, Roe.

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

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

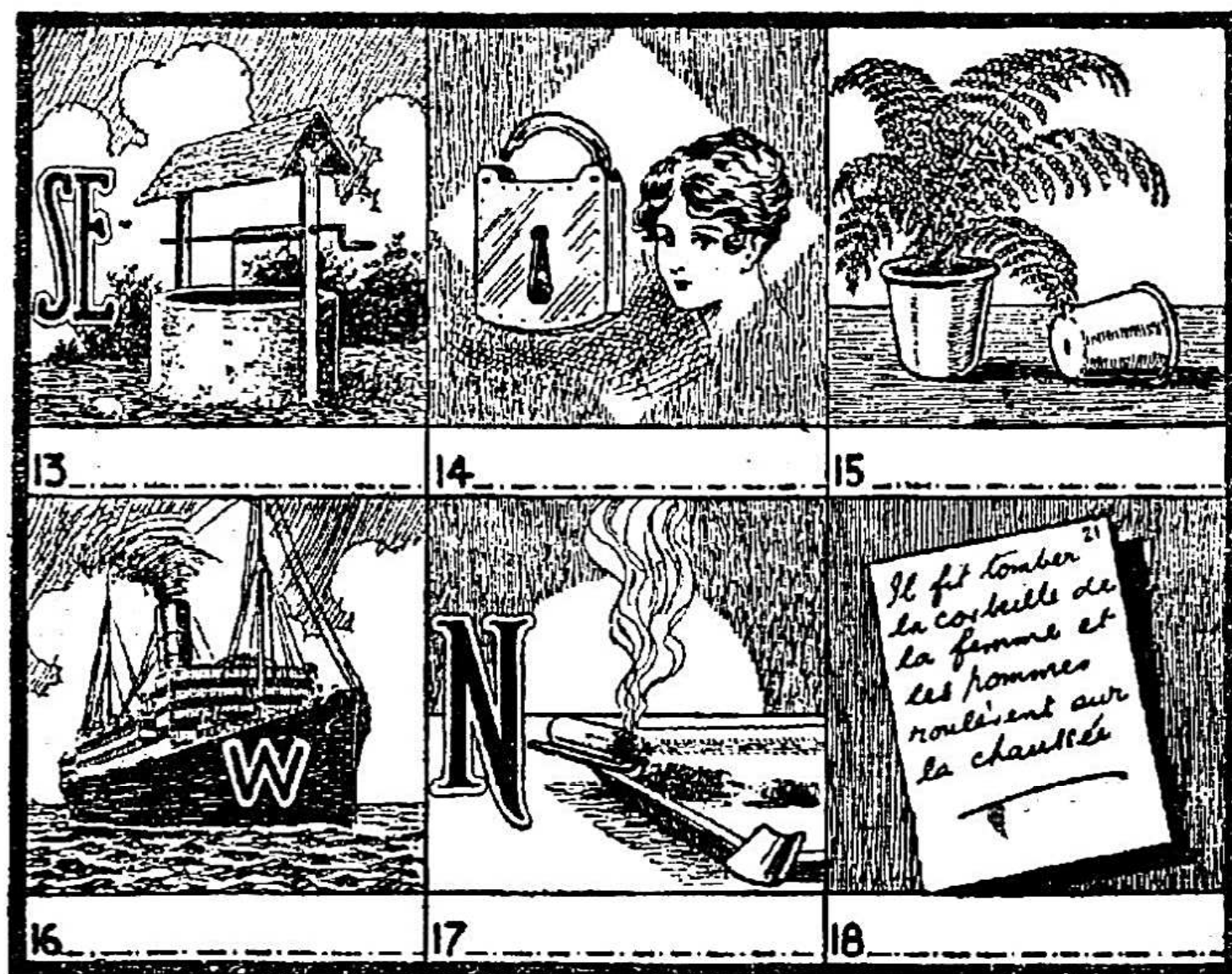
Urwin.

Voysey, Vizard, Vallis, Voisey, Vigrass.

Womack, Walsh, Weaver, Wilding, Whit-ton, 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.

THIRD SET. Specially reprinted for new competitors.



ENTER NOW

And try to win one of the numerous handsome gifts to be presented to readers who can solve this simple picture competition.

(Continued from page 14.)

and about, tripping hither and thither, in one gang—I—I should say—

"Marjorie is somewhere in the wood," said Doris briefly.

"In the wood!" repeated Archie, aghast. "Not alone?"

"Yes—she took a fancy to it," said Doris. "We tried to make her come on, but she wouldn't shift. Don't bother about her—"

"Oh, but dash it, I do," protested Archie, who regarded Marjorie with more than a casual interest. "I mean to say, the wood! Full of crawly things, don't you know! I think something ought to be done!"

Irene was about to make some remark when we were all rather startled to hear a scream in the distance—a sharp, short cry of anger. We all turned, and stared down the lane. And as we did so a slight figure appeared from near the rustic stile, and ran out into the road. It was Marjorie Temple. She stood there for a moment, holding her hands to her face. Then, turning swiftly, she ran towards us. We could see at once that something was wrong. Irene and Doris ran to meet her. But Archie and I remained still.

"It's all right," I said. "We don't want to butt in, old man,"

"Absolutely not," said Archie. "But, the fact is, I'm worried. I mean, that scream, you know. Dashed alarming!"

Irene and Doris, of course, were instantly filled with the same suspicion as they ran down to meet their girl chum. They thought of their own experience at the stile, and had never realised, until now, that Marjorie was liable to the same treatment.

But it appeared that matters were far worse with her.

For Marjorie was crying with indignation and shame as she ran into the arms of Irene and Doris. For a few moments she sobbed rather convulsively, anger gradually becoming stronger than her tears.

"Oh, the beast—the cad!" she sobbed.

"Why, what's the matter, Marjorie?" asked Irene anxiously. "What's happened?"

"Oh, I shall die of shame!" breathed Marjorie, her eyes flashing with indignation. "There—there was a boy on the stile as I came up, and he wouldn't move! A big boy, with red hair! Before I could jump away, he took hold of me, and—and kissed me! Oh, the beast!"

CHAPTER V.

SWIFT RETRIBUTION!



IRENE gave Doris a startled horrified glance. "He kissed you?" she shouted, in amazement.

"Yes—yes! I—I couldn't stop him!" sobbed Marjorie, in distress. "He took right hold of me, and in spite of all my

struggles he kissed me! He ought to be thrashed—he ought to be whipped!"

"This is terrible!" exclaimed Irene, her anger causing her to raise her voice so that Archie and I could hear her words. "It was Buster, of course! And he was cad enough to kiss you, Marjorie! Oh, the brute!"

Instinctively, Archie and I ran down and joined the girls. And it so happened that Handforth and Co. had appeared upon the scene from the other direction. The chums of Study D had turned the corner, and upon catching sight of Irene, Handforth's pace had quickened in a most astonishing way. He, too, had heard those fatal words.

"Pardon me, Miss Irene, but I think we ought to be in this!" I said quickly. "Did I hear you say that—that—"

"We must tell the boys, Marjorie—we must!" said Irene quietly. "Don't worry, dear. Buster ought to be punished, and it isn't sneaking. It's too serious for that."

"But—but what happened?" demanded Handforth breathlessly.

"Why, Marjorie was going to cross the stile, and she found that boy, Buster Boots, sitting there," put in Doris hotly. "And the cad actually took hold of her and kissed her! No wonder she screamed! I think I should have died!"

Handforth let out a terrific bellow.

"He—he kissed her!" he shouted furiously. "The—the hooligan!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie, flinging his topper away, and peeling off his jacket. "By gad! Where is the blighter? I'll dashed well knock him down! I mean to say, he's nothing more nor less than a blot on the landscape!"

"Oh, please—please!" pleaded Marjorie, still flushing deeply. "I don't want you to do anything about it—"

"I'm awfully sorry, Miss Marjorie, but we regard this as a matter of honour," I said quietly. "Buster is a St. Frank's chap, and he's acted like a ruffian. He's got to be punished. But are you sure it was Buster? I can't possibly believe that he'd be such a cad."

"Oh, it was Buster all right," said Doris promptly.

And she quickly told us of the experience which she and Irene had undergone.

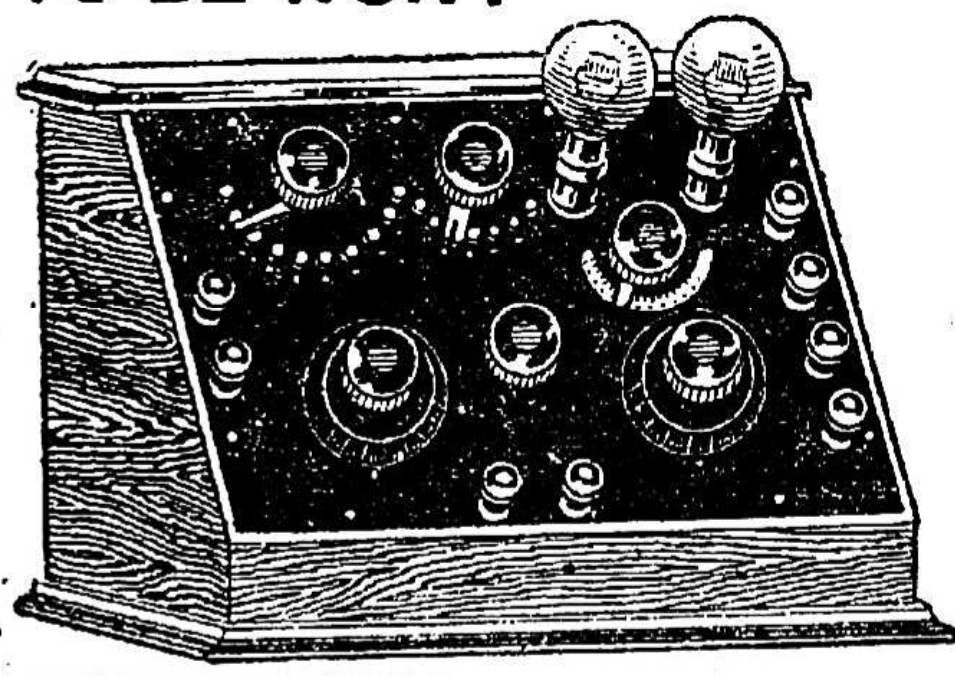
We grew more angry than ever as we listened. Our original doubts were all thrust aside. There could be no mistaking this evidence. It wasn't as though Buster was unknown to the girls—they had met him before, and knew his caddish character. Handforth fairly raved as he listened.

"The beast actually sat there and refused to move!" he said thickly. "By George! And then after that he had the rotten nerve to kiss Miss Marjorie!"

"Please—don't!" murmured Marjorie.

"It seems to me that the occasion is one that demands a frightful amount of dashing about," said Archie, with a gleam in his eye.

10 TWO-VALVE WIRELESS SETS TO BE WON!



"What I mean is, we've dashed well got to move! This Buster chappie, you know. We've got to find the insect, and lead him to the bally slaughter!"

I looked at the heated juniors grimly.

"Look here, you fellows, I want you to leave this to me," I said quietly. "But first of all I should advise the young ladies to get back to the Moor View School as quickly as possible." I turned to them. "You see, we don't want you to be mixed up in any scenes," I added. "And there's going to be a pretty big scene soon."

Irene nodded at once.

"You're right, of course," she said. "Come on, Doris; come along, Marjorie. We can leave Nipper to avenge the insult. By the way, I don't like Nipper at all!"

"I'm sorry," I said flushing. "What have I done?"

"Oh, I don't mean you, yourself!" interrupted Irene, laughing. "I just mean your name. Nipper! It sounds so—so undignified. Besides, it doesn't fit you at all! You're such a strong, sturdy looking fellow, and Nipper suggests just the opposite."

I laughed, and became aware of a peculiar hard-breathing from Handforth. I found that he was looking at me with terrible jealousy in his eyes. Irene was giving me all of her attention, and Handforth received none! He could hardly contain himself.

"The name was originally given to me by the gov'nor," I said smilingly. "I suppose it fitted me at the time all right, when I really was a nipper. Mr. Lee's always called me that, and the name's stuck."

"But surely you've got a real name—of your own?" asked Irene.

"Why, yes—Dick Hamilton."

"Oh, that's ever so much better," said Irene promptly. "I shan't call you Nipper at all—I shall call you Dick!"

"Rather!" said Doris, nodding. "Dick's a nice name."

"Thanks?" I said, with a chuckle. "If you like Dick better, I'm charmed."

Handforth shuffled his feet.

"My name's Edward," he said carelessly. "Ted for short."

"Oh, that's a nice name, too!" said Irene demurely. "Can we call you Ted?"

"Rather!" said Handforth enthusiastically.

"All right, good-bye, Ted—good-bye, Dick—good-bye, Archie!" laughed Irene.

She and her two companions waved their hands and walked briskly away. And the instant their backs were turned my expression changed. I became grim and determined. The girls were rather disposed to treat the recent incident too lightly. Marjorie, perhaps, was the only one who still allowed a fiery gleam to show in her eyes. But she was a quiet girl, and just at the moment she was subdued.

"I say, that's ripping!" exclaimed Handforth. "Ted, you know! Of course, it's all rot calling you Dick, Nipper—"

"Never mind that now," I interrupted curtly. "We've got something more important to discuss than Christian names! The chief thing is to find Buster, and I want you to leave this affair to me—as I said before."

"Not likely!" retorted Handforth, becoming angry again. "We'll all be in it! We'll take Buster, and we'll chuck him in the duck pond—"

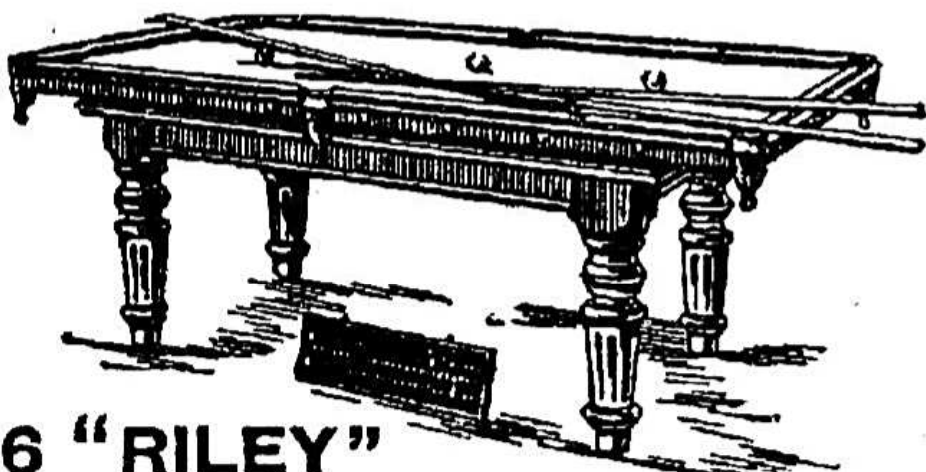
"Wait a minute!" I interrupted. "Let me finish. I'm the captain of the Remove again, and I regard this as a personal affair. As a favour, I want you fellows to leave Buster to me."

"Good idea!" said Church and McClure. "You'll fight him, eh?"

"Yes," I replied quietly. "There couldn't be a better opportunity. Buster gained the captaincy by knocking me out, when I was in a bad condition, after a cold. To-day I've regained the captaincy, and it would be absolutely fitting that I should show the whole Remove that it isn't a fluke. By delivering the knock-out to Buster I shall prove that the captaincy is really mine."

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie stoutly. "A sound scheme, laddie. In fact, a dashed ripe scheme!"

"Buster's acted like an utter cad to Irene and Doris, and deserves to be shot for forcing his rotten kiss upon Marjorie," I said hotly. "Why, even an outsider like Fullwood wouldn't act in that way to a girl!"



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

Buster, of course, was in a filthy mood—reckless and morose after hearing the verdict. I suppose he acted on the spur of the moment. He didn't care who his victim was. But he's got to pay—and dearly, too!"

Archie nodded.

"A priceless proposition, old soul; but there seems to be one flaw," he remarked. "I mean, Buster appears to be lacking. The bally chunk of garbage has legged it pretty heftily!"

"He can't be far away," I replied. "In the wood, I'll bet. We know he hasn't come this way, and there's only the footpath. We're asses not to have gone before. Come on!"

We hurried away, and I failed to observe that Church remained in the lane. Church had caught sight of Armstrong and Griffith on bicycles, and he ran to meet them. In the meantime, the rest of us, to use Archie's expression, legged it along the footpath.

And our quest came to an end much sooner than we expected. For we had hardly proceeded a hundred yards when we came upon John Busterfield Boots sitting on a fallen log in a clearing. We almost went by him, for the clearing was off to the left, and partially hidden.

We strode straight up to him, and Buster instinctively jumped to his feet. He scowled at us sullenly, and his eyes were alight with suspicion. His guilty conscience knew exactly why we had come.

"Well?" he demanded harshly.

I wasted no time in getting to the point.

"Did you insult Miss Irene and her companions?" I asked.

"Mind your own business!"

"Did you refuse to get off that stile when Irene and Doris wanted to pass?"

"Yes, I did!" said Buster savagely. "What of it? I had just as much right to sit on that stile as they had to cross! I'm sick to death of these girls, with their airs! They think they own the whole county! I just taught them a lesson—that's all."

"You unmitigated cad!" I said hotly. "And what about Marjorie? What the dickens do you mean by having the infernal impudence to touch her?"

"Touch her?" sneered Buster.

"Yes—you not only touched her, but forced a kiss upon her!"

"Oh!" said Buster calmly. "That's very interesting!"

His assumed coolness irritated me beyond measure.

"You're going to pay for that insult—now!" I said. "I'm going to thrash you!"

Buster started, and took a step backwards.

"Don't be a fool!" he snapped. "I didn't touch the girl! I didn't even see Marjorie—don't know who she is! I'll admit I refused to move for the other two girls, but——"

He was shouted down by the others. His denial regarding Marjorie was even more contemptible than the act itself. And, finding the bluff wouldn't work, he stood back, and glared at us balefully.

"You're going to thrash me, eh?" he ex-

claimed. "All right—try it! If you call this fair play, I don't! Four of you against one——"

"Not at all!" I interrupted curtly. "I'm going to fight you single-handed. And even if I lose the fight, I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I've given you some punishment. The best man's going to win."

"Hurrah!" yelled McClure excitedly.

"When we fought before it was an unequal contest," I snapped. "But this time we're both fit, and it'll be even. Now we'll see who's the best fighting man of the two."

John Busterfield Boots almost turned pale for a second. My fierce, determined tone took him aback. But after that first moment he gave vent to a harsh, sharp sounding laugh, and peeled off his jacket.

"All right—we'll fight," he said shortly.

There was nothing else for it, and Buster knew this. At least he had the common sense to see that there was no backing out. McClure and Archie constituted themselves Buster's seconds; not because they were anxious for this, but because somebody had to act in the capacity.

Handforth and Church were my seconds. Church wasn't on the scene, but we assumed that he would soon turn up. We couldn't understand why he had lagged behind. But we discovered the truth a minute later.

Buster and I both stripped to our waists until we were wearing nothing but our under-vests. In the absence of boxing gloves, this was to be a bare fist fight, and we should probably be badly marked in the end. But that couldn't be helped. There was going to be no delay over this fight.

But just at the last moment, when Buster and I were preparing to start, we heard the sounds of excited voices in the distance. And through the trees we caught sight of the familiar St. Frank's caps and Eton suits.

Then Church came rushing up, carrying two pairs of boxing gloves.

"Good!" he panted. "Just in time! We thought you'd be a long way further on!"

Church was followed by about half the Remove.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KNOCK-OUT!



EXCITEMENT reigned supreme.

Church, it appeared, had dashed to St. Frank's on a bicycle, had spread the story, and obtained the gloves. And the

news had gone round like wildfire, with the result that the juniors dashed off at a run for the wood. Others were arriving at every moment.

And that clearing became an arena.

It was quite large enough for the purpose. In fact, Nature could not have designed a better. There was a kind of hollow in the centre, and the slopes were filled with eager

juniors, who all had a clear view of the "ring."

John Busterfield Boots looked round, and his lip curled.

"We're going to have quite a respectable audience!" he said sneeringly.

"Yah!"

"Cad!"

A perfect storm of abuse was hurled upon Buster's head. He recoiled, startled at the bitterness of the attack. He, who had been so popular the previous week! It was the first time Buster had met with adversity, and he wasn't enjoying the experience. He was finding out that an idol, once knocked off his pedestal, was a mere object of scorn.

Armstrong and Griffith, and many others were present, to say nothing of many members of the College House. These Monks were silent. They stood looking on with glowering eyes. Instinctively, they were against Buster. Their decent feelings revolted against him. But he was a Monk, too, and still their leader, they couldn't revile him in the presence of the Fossils.

In the meantime, Buster and I took no notice of the gathering throng. We were donning our gloves, assisted by our seconds. We looked upon the matter grimly, and not as a spectacle.

This was to be a fight—a real, determined battle.

My object was to punish Buster for his caddish behaviour to the girls, and to prove my superiority over him at the same time. I was filled with confidence that I could smash him, but it would be no easy task.

For J.B.B. was pulling himself together.

He knew, too, the absolute significance of this contest. Indeed, it provided him with an opportunity of re-establishing himself in the Remove. He almost began to feel glad, as the excitement of the battle surged through his veins. He began to have more confidence in his ability.

Already he was a shattered leader—his power had gone. Only a very few members of the Remove still stuck to him. Fight or no fight, he was done with, so far as the Remove was concerned. If he lost the battle, the position could be scarcely any the worse.

But if he won?

If he won! Buster's eyes shone with a wild hope. If he won, the fellows would forget his misdeeds, they would forget everything except the one fact that he had beaten me fairly and squarely. And they would rally to his support by the dozen—he would be skipper again, and rule supreme!

That was the dream that came to John Busterfield Boots. It braced him up, tightened his muscles, and put a keen edge on his determination. His jaw squared itself, and he was eager to begin.

What a sensation—if he won! Deposed and rejected, and re-established all in one short afternoon! It was indeed a wondrous thought!

I could see the subtle change in him, and more than ever I knew that I had my work

cut out. Buster was not a sullen, beaten fellow. He was firmly determined to fight, and to fight to the bitter end. He would give me a run.

Percy Bray and Denry had rushed up, demanding to be Buster's seconds. Archie and McClure were only too pleased to relinquish their jobs. And Tommy Watson insisted upon being one of my seconds, with Handforth.

Reggie Pitt was the referee, and nobody objected to him. For Reggie was known to be as straight as a rod, with a cool head and a fine judgment.

"I'm ready!" said Boots grimly.

"You, too, Nipper?" asked Pitt. "Good!"

He glanced at his watch, gave a final look round the arena, and a hush fell over all the fellows.

"Time!" said Reggie briskly.

There was no handshake at the beginning. I had started out to give Buster a thrashing, and the formalities were dispensed with. Buster approached cautiously from his corner, sparring for an opening.

But I was in no mood to play to the gallery. My one object was to thrash Buster, and to do it as quickly as possible. This was no exhibition, for the amusement of the crowd. Neither was it an ordinary fight. I had a duty to perform—a duty which involved the honour of the school.

And, although perfectly cool, I pressed the attack to the full extent of my ability. I wanted to give Buster as much punishment as I possibly could. He deserved it.

But his guard was perfect, and the round was half over before I had an opportunity of getting in a direct punch. Buster was enraged by one or two light taps, and he swung at me viciously with his right. Side-stepping swiftly, I returned his blow with a swinging left, getting under his guard, and landing a heavy punch on the chin.

Buster staggered back, but came on with redoubled fury.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

My gloves hammered upon Buster's chest with short, hard blows. He succeeded in hitting me once or twice, but only lightly. We clinched, broke away, and I forced the pace until Buster was backing away, desperate and infuriated by his own patent inferiority.

He was stunned—bewildered.

That other fight, which had taken place a few weeks earlier, had given Boots the impression that he was at least nearly a match for me. And he had assumed that by putting forth every nerve and sinew, he would be my equal.

But in this very first round he found out his mistake.

In science, in footwork, in quickness in every form of the game I had Buster beaten. And as I found this out, I gloated within me. Buster was startled, and the discovery had the effect of making him reckless.

Just before time he fairly hurled himself at me, lashing out wildly and savagely. His

blows were easily swept aside. He reeled back from the effects of a punch which caught him fairly on the point.

And before he could recover I pressed the attack. Buster suffered severely. He received three sharp body blows in quick succession, a direct drive on the nose, a punch on the left eye, and his guard went to pieces. At that moment I could have delivered the knock-out, but Pitt would not allow it.

"Time!" he said briskly.

The call of time had saved Buster from being beaten in the first round. He staggered to his corner, and was immediately seized by his seconds. Water had been obtained from a near by brook, and Buster was fairly drenched with the icy cold spray.

It had a wonderful reviving effect. When he came up for the next round he was looking practically himself again—except for a much swollen nose, a puffy eye, and one or two other marks. His arrogant air of cocksureness had gone, to be replaced by a grim, sullen obstinacy.

The second round was very much the same as the first. But now Buster was more cautious. He took no chances. He realised that it was quite useless to force the pace, or to assume the aggressive. Throughout the round he clung tenaciously to defensive methods. And although I tried more than once to deliver the knock-out, Buster evaded me.

"It's all right, old man—you'll win!" said Handforth, after the round was over.

"I think I'll have him now," I said quietly.

"You bet!" said Watson. "He can't last much longer!"

Boots still kept up his defensive tactics in round three. But now I pressed him so severely that he was compelled to make a stand. Suddenly flying into one of his desperate tempers, he again tried to take me by surprise. But he only succeeded in receiving further punishment.

I was as cool as ice, and sure of myself.

Tommy Watson told me afterwards that my display was a masterly one—but perhaps Tommy was biased. He declared that my exhibition of boxing was one of the prettiest he had seen for years.

By the end of the third round Buster was very weak and groggy. He almost fell as he went to his corner after the call of "Time!" Percy Bray and Denny were much alarmed and concerned.

"Better throw in the towel!" said Denny dubiously.

"No, confound you!" snarled Buster. "If you do that I'll never speak to you again! I'll fight until I'm whacked!"

And so round four started, with Buster only partially recovered from his punishment. He was still groggy. I punished him severely during the first few seconds. One blow sent him staggering backwards, and I dropped my fists.

"Had enough?" I asked quietly.



"Yes—yes! I—I couldn't stop him!" sobbed Marjorie, in distress. "He took right hold of me and, in spite of all my struggles, he kissed me!"

Somehow, I didn't feel like punching him any more. I couldn't bring myself to deliver a smashing blow when he was in such a weakened condition. In spite of my anger, I had a little pity for this sagging figure. He had received so much punishment that I was willing to finish the affair then and there.

But Buster took a mean, contemptible advantage of my generosity.

Seeing my hands down, he leapt in, and, before I could raise my guard, he delivered a smashing blow on the chin which sent me hurtling down with a thud that shook every bone in my body.

I lay there, dazed.

"One—two—three—" counted Pitt, between his teeth.

Reggie was furious; but, being a strictly impartial referee, he had to admit the fairness of Buster's blow—fairness, that is, regarding all boxing rules. It was my own fault that I had lowered my hands.

But, as a sportsman, Pitt was positively mad. Buster's action was mean, contemptible and dastardly. If he obtained the decision because of his action, not a member of the audience would honour him.

They refrained from hooting, or making any demonstration. The situation was too tense for that. My chums watched, pale with anxiety. Buster's pals were already glowing with expected triumph.

But at the count of "nine" I sprang to my feet. A great sigh of relief went up, accompanied by two or three hoarse cheers. I had deliberately waited, allowing myself to recover.

Buster started back, scowling—sick with disappointment.

I didn't wait a second. Inwardly I was infuriated. My attack was grim and cool and devastating. Boots' guard was knocked aside, and he wilted and shrank under a storm of blows.

Then, seeing my opening, I finished the fight in whirlwind fashion. I delivered an uppercut which caught Buster fairly and squarely, and practically lifted him off his feet. He rolled over, and took the count.

"Hurrah!"

"Nipper's the winner!"

"Good old Nipper—he's the chap for us!"

It was Armstrong who shouted the last remark—Armstrong, who had been one of Buster's most faithful supporters. There was no doubt about the revulsion of feeling in the Remove!

Buster's exhibition of caddishness had sealed his fate.

His chums, the Faithful Five, picked him up and attended to him tenderly. They were pale and shaken with disappointment. Buster himself was coming round now, and there was an expression of calm resignation on his face. It was not exactly what I had expected to see.

The crowd shouted and cheered, and made a tremendous demonstration. I had established my supremacy in a manner that would have a lasting effect. The Remove was behind me now.

Buster, having been helped to his feet, was sponged over, and then assisted into his clothing. He was a sorry spectacle. Not that he was marked very severely. Considering the severity of his punishment, he showed comparatively few signs. But he looked utterly cowed, and all his blustering arrogance had vanished.

"Well, you whacked me!" he said quietly, as I approached him.

"Yes," I replied. "I whacked you, Buster; but we haven't quite done with you yet. Take him by the arms, you fellows, and help him along."

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

Buster looked startled.

"What are you going to do?"

"Take you to Moor View School!" I replied curtly. "You're going to apologise to the girls—especially to Marjorie!"

CHAPTER VII.

A SLIGHT MISTAKE!



PERCY BRAY glared at me balefully.

"Aren't you satisfied?" he shouted.

"You've knocked Buster about until he's nearly crocked, and now you want to make an exhibition of him! It's hitting a man when he's down!"

"Oh, no!" I replied sharply. "Get that idea out of your head, Bray. I've thrashed Buster for being a hooligan—but that isn't sufficient. An apology from Buster himself is needed."

"Hear, hear!"

"Nipper's right!"

"Make him go and apologise!"

The whole crowd backed me up. There was no question about the sincerity of the demands. Buster's own clique protested. The others knew well enough that an apology from Buster was essential.

Boots himself shrugged his shoulders.

"It's no good me protesting," he said. "I'm not in a position to say much. Do your confounded worst—and be hanged to you!"

There was a vindictive, ugly gleam in his eye. But he had quite sufficient sense to see that he was indeed helpless. His thrashing had subdued him, and he was sick with chagrin to find that his dream was over, and that the Remove no longer backed him up.

Marched along between Handforth and Pitt and several others, he went up the lane after emerging from the wood. Only a few juniors followed him, for I had quietly addressed the crowd, asking the fellows to keep out of this. It would only cause fresh embarrassment to the girls.

And, like good sports, the Removites consented. Reggie Pitt himself dropped out as we passed the school gates. So it was only the original little bevy of us who accompanied Buster to Moor View School—just Handforth & Co., Archie, and myself.

As he walked along, Buster recovered a great deal of his strength. The effect of the knock-out was wearing off, and although he was sore and aching his sturdy frame soon recovered its full vitality. And as the grogginess left him, so he seemed to improve in spirits.

This was another surprise for me. I had been expecting him to grow sullen, morose, and savage-tempered. No fellow, being led along to apologise to a girl, would be in the best of tempers.

But John Busterfield Boots was the type of chap to spring a surprise. Victory, success, triumph—all these things got into his blood and aggravated his arrogance.

But defeat was something new; we had never seen how he would act in defeat. We did not know what effect it would have upon his mentality.

We had not walked far past the school gates before Buster turned to me.

"No need to lead me along, like a sheep to the slaughter!" he said gruffly. "Don't be afraid—I won't try to get away."

"All right. Let him walk alone, you chaps," I said.

Handforth objected at first, but I silenced him with a look. In moments of this kind I was capable of subduing even Handy. Somehow, there was something about Buster's attitude that pleased me. My instinct is not frequently wrong. I felt that Buster was going to surprise us.

"Yes, you lashed into me pretty thoroughly," said Buster, after a while. "I shall be a sight by to-morrow. Well, I dare say I deserved it. I was in a rotten, vindictive mood, and I'm glad you pulled me out of it."

I said nothing, but I was pleased. Without any question, the thrashing had done J.B.B. a world of good. He was not turning sullen, as I had feared. Defeat was having the opposite effect upon him. It was bringing—realisation.

"Sorry I took you by surprise during that last round, Nipper," went on Buster frankly. "It was a caddish trick. But I was just about dotty with rage. I'm cool now."

"My dear chap, don't say a word!" I said quickly. "The fight's over, and there's nothing else to be said."

I noticed that Handforth and Archie were regarding Boots with suspicion. They couldn't understand this humility of his. It was so unexpected. But I knew that Buster was sincere. The conceit had been knocked out of him, and there was a distinct chance that he would improve from this minute onwards. Many a bragging cad has been turned into a good sportsman by a sound thrashing.

If Buster turned over a new leaf, I should indeed feel rewarded for my efforts. I had no wish to see the fellow go down. My only hope was that he would find his true self and live down his former actions.

We came into sight of the gates of the Moor View School. The November afternoon was getting a little dull now, and there were signs of a frost. The air was nippy and sharp.

To our satisfaction, we saw two or three of the girls standing near the gate, and as we drew closer we recognised them as Irene Manners, Marjorie Temple, and Doris Berkeley. There were two others with them—Edith Marion and Connie Oakland.

They all looked at us as we came up.

"Now, Buster, it's up to you!" I said softly.

For an instant John Busterfield Boots scowled, and an obstinate light crept into his eyes. But he shook himself, and I saw his jaw grow firm. A slow flush crept up into his neck, and spread over his features.

He bowed low before Irene and Doris.

"Please allow me to express my regret for being such a detestable boor," he said hand-

somely. "There was absolutely no excuse for my caddishness, and I can only crave your forgiveness."

The two girls flushed, and looked at him awkwardly.

"Well, you were horrid, and I'm glad you realise it," said Irene, her voice quite cold.

"Horrid isn't the word," said Buster with a great deal of his old assurance. "The fact is, I was in a rotten temper, and ought to have known better. I'm in a different frame of mind now. As you will observe, my face is somewhat battered. Nipper did me the good service of giving me the best hiding I ever had. Fortunately, I've got the courage to admit myself in the wrong."

I felt strangely warm to Buster as he made these brave observations. For they were brave. It requires sterling courage to apologise in a way that is a real apology. It is so easy to mumble out a mere pretence—but so difficult to apologise with a ring of sincerity. And John Busterfield Boots had done the thing in a well-nigh perfect manner.

"I'm so glad!" said Irene quietly. "Of course we forgive you!"

"Well, rather!" said Doris promptly. "I've never known a boy say he's sorry like this before. I forgive you freely, Buster."

"Thanks," said Boots. "I feel much better."

And he looked much better, too. His eyes were shining with a big relief—and with the complete satisfaction that comes to one who knows that he has acted squarely. If only people would realise it, there is nothing quite so uplifting as to admit oneself in the wrong—when one really is in the wrong. It takes a load off the mind, and one regains self-respect.

But we were all puzzled, at the same time.

Why had Buster given his attention to Irene and Doris? Why had he ignored Marjorie—the girl he had so grossly and badly insulted? Perhaps it was because he was too ashamed of himself.

Marjorie herself solved the problem.

For some moments she had been looking at Boots in surprise, astonishment, and something that was very akin to consternation. We had hardly noticed her, for our attention had been occupied by Buster.

But now Marjorie impulsively stepped forward.

"Oh, but isn't there some mistake?" she asked breathlessly. "I—I don't understand! Is this really the boy who refused to move from the stile?"

"Why, of course!" replied Irene, at once.

"But he isn't the boy who—who insulted me!" panted Marjorie.

"What!" I shouted. "Didn't Buster kiss you, Miss Marjorie?"

She shook her head, blushing.

"No—no!" she said quickly. "It was some other boy!"

"You see," said Buster, "I'm not quite so

bad as you thought, Nipper. I tried to explain at the time, but you wouldn't listen to me. But perhaps it was just as well—I'm feeling all the better for it."

We were quite staggered and for a moment gazed at one another in sheer consternation. I had fought Buster because he had kissed Miss Marjorie; and now it turned out that he wasn't guilty at all! In some way, there had been an awful blunder. But how?

"Dash it all!" said Archie. "Without wishing to doubt your word, old lad, it seems bally queer! There's a frightful suspish buzzing through the old bean that Miss Marjorie is attempting to shield you."

"Why, no—don't be silly!" said Marjorie. "This isn't the boy at all! He was bigger, and his hair wasn't quite so red. Besides, he was dressed in an ordinary suit—not in Etons. He was rough, too."

We had been misled from the first by assuming that Marjorie was well acquainted with Buster. As a matter of fact, she had never met him, although she had heard quite a lot about him. Marjorie herself had been under the impression that it was Boots who had insulted her.

Buster himself gave vent to a short laugh.

"Perhaps I can explain the little puzzle," he said. "After these two young ladies had passed through the gap—owing to my beastly behaviour—I got up from the stile, and strolled along the path. And I hadn't walked a hundred yards before I met a certain young gentleman with tow-coloured hair—it would be an insult to genuine auburn locks to call that hair red. He was big and loutish, and I fancy he goes under the charming name of Lumpy Bill."

"Lumpy Bill!" roared Handforth.

"Lumpy Bill!" I echoed. "Why, he's the village loafer!"

"So I have always understood," said Buster calmly. "Well, this fellow passed me, and stood staring for a minute. But I took no notice and went into that clearing. I was too mad to care what happened to anybody. I just sat there and glared at nothing. Of course, it was Lumpy Bill who sat on the stile and who had the nerve to assault Miss Marjorie."

"I say, Buster, I'm sorry—awfully sorry!" I said earnestly. "Why, I wouldn't have forced you to fight if I had known this! I thought all along that you couldn't be such a beast as all that—"

"It's all right; don't worry!" smiled Buster. "I deserved the thrashing for the other thing. Besides, it's done me a lot of good. For the first time in my life I'm realising that I'm not a tin god."

There was no attempt at facetiousness about these words. Boots was simply candid—he seemed to enjoy admitting his faults. He was cleansing his conscience. Already he was standing more upright.

Without a doubt, John Bustersfield Boots was turning the corner!

CHAPTER VIII.

READY FOR THE GRAND PARADE!



LUMPY BILL paid the penalty two days later.

He was discovered by Handforth and Co., Pitt, and a few others. They were in the village, and captured Lumpy Bill as the latter was coming out of a small inn. It was the first opportunity the juniors had had.

The village lout was seized, forced to run the gauntlet, and finally dropped into the duck-pond. And when a few indignant village folks came round and tried to stop the proceedings, Pitt curtly told them why Bill was being punished. The villagers warmly urged the juniors to go ahead.

The match against Helmford was played with great enthusiasm, the team consisting of all the best players that I could pick from the Remove. For two days practice had been the order of the day, and the Remove had been getting back into something like its former shipshape condition.

And the Saints won the match comfortably, beating Helmford College by two clear goals. It was a fine tussle, and did much to bring even more juniors under my banner.

Bob Christine, for example, who played in the match, left Buster for good, and his two chums, Talmadge and Yorke, also placed themselves under my leadership. This was a signal for a few other Monks. Buster's crowd was growing smaller and smaller every day. Matters were indeed serious for him when juniors of his own House forsook him.

But, somehow, he wasn't taking the matter as badly as we had expected. His arrogance had gone—his blustering self-importance was no longer in evidence. But he was not sullen.

He went about as calm and serene as ever, but kept strictly to his own circle. He hardly ever moved unless he was surrounded by the Faithful Five. They seemed to have formed themselves into a kind of isolated band.

Everything, in fact, was going fine.

And Armistice Day came round, eagerly awaited for. To the intense disappointment of the Remove, the day broke dull, cloudy and with a drizzle of rainfall. It was, indeed, so thick and murky that the spirits of all were sent down to the lowest depths.

And this was to be a special day, too!

Archie Glenthorne was thoroughly pipped, as he expressed it to Phipps. He had never been so dashed upset in his life. The thing was foul.

But Archie needn't have worried. Towards the middle of the morning the drizzle ceased, the skies began to clear, and patches of blue peeped here and there amid the murk. And by noon the sun was shining, and a soft breeze was chasing the last of the giddy clouds away.

To the joy of all concerned, dinner-time arrived to find the wintry sun shining, the air crisp and sharp, and with atmospheric conditions in general as well nigh perfect as they can be in the month of November.

The spirits of the school arose as rapidly as the mists had vanished.

And the celebrations, which were almost on the point of being abandoned, were quickly organised. I was fairly busy on the job, for there was a great deal to do—and most of it was in my hands.

Being Armistice Day, we had the afternoon entirely to ourselves. The programme was all mapped out—a parade of cadets through the village, round through Edgemoor, and home again—with a final display of special drilling on the playing fields.

By the time this was through we expected to see some signs of Captain Bertram Glenthorne, D.S.O. For the final event of the day was to be the exhibition flight by Archie's brother.

Just before dinner, Archie was intensely gratified to receive a telegram. Crowds of fellows gathered round him as Archie opened it, and scanned the words. The expression of anxiety left Archie's face.

"What-ho!" he exclaimed gladly.

"What-ho!"

"Ass! What does it say?" demanded Handforth.

"Say?" repeated Archie. "Oh, rather! It's from Bertie, don't you know. The dear chappie will be dropping in on us at about three-thirty."

"Let's hope he doesn't drop too swiftly—that's all!" grinned Pitt. "When a fellow in an aeroplane talks about dropping on you, it's a bit significant. Well, thank goodness he's coming—we're not going to be dished out of that bit of excitement."

Armstrong sniffed.

"Fat lot of excitement in seeing an aeroplane!" he said tartly.

"I admit that it won't be very hectic, but in these days we have to be thankful for small mercies," said Reggie wisely.

"Weeks go by, and the most exciting thing that happens is a fight between two cats, or a sparrow's scramble! But here we're going to see one of our distinguished war heroes performing marvellous stunts on his latest air flivver!"

"Air which, dear old soul?" asked Archie politely.

"Oh, sorry!" grinned Pitt. "A Flivver, you know, is a Lizzie. But your major's machine is rather more distinguished, eh?"

"As a matter of fact, old thing, I haven't the faintest idea what the bally thing is like!" confessed Archie. "But I'm dashed glad that everything is topping. I mean to say, I'm always so frightfully nervous when I hear that Bertie is whizzing here and there on the old 'bus. He's such a blighter for taking risks. A perfect dare-devil, by gad!"

According to Archie, Captain Glenthorne's exhibition flight would not be a very tame

affair. And we set about the preliminaries, feeling that the afternoon was going to be an interesting one.

And it was, too.

The Cadet parade was an unqualified success. Over three parts of the Remove participated. And all the juniors looked fine in their neat khaki uniforms. Considering that we had had very little opportunity for drilling practice, the display was excellently performed.

We marched through the village, a brave procession. Big Union Jacks were held, to say nothing of patriotic banners. It was something quite new for Bellton, and the whole village turned out to look on, and to cheer. Celebrating Armistice Day in this fashion was a novelty to the sleepy place.

And most of the juniors were highly gratified to find that the Moor View School had turned out in its entirety to watch the parade go by. The girls lined the high banks near the school, and cheered and clapped as the procession marched by.

The only distressing incident was when Handforth caught Irene's eye in the middle of uttering an order. Handforth was so smitten that he gave the order all wrong, and a portion of the column commenced marching into the ditch—for strict obedience to orders was as rigid as the laws of the Medes and the Persians. In the nick of time, Pitt countermanded the order, and the column was restored to its original shape.

Handforth was the only one who walked into the ditch.

He did so quite unconsciously, still pushing his chest out, and with eyes right—towards Irene. It wasn't to be expected that he could see where he was going with his eyes averted in this way.

Happily, Edward Oswald pulled himself up while he was only immersed to his knees. He struggled out amid general laughter, and his attempts to regain his dignity were funny.

Upon arriving at the school, the special drilling took place—a fine display, which the Head pronounced to be most praiseworthy. The Cadets had now donned bright sweaters of different colours. A living Union Jack was formed, to say nothing of other interesting devices.

The audience was considerable—consisting of half the villagers, and Miss Irene and all her chums. They had heard all about the proposed display, and the exhibition flight by Archie's brother. They didn't want to miss the fun.

Somebody had suggested winding up the day by giving an impromptu concert in the big lecture hall. It was adopted enthusiastically, and every amateur singer and musician was roped in.

And the satisfaction was even greater when the Head announced that all visitors to the concert would be welcome—and when Miss Charlotte Bond, of the Moor View

School, gave permission to her pupils to attend the concert if they wished.

The drilling had finished at three o'clock, and there was an interval during which refreshments were served in the pavilion. And a sharp look-out was kept for the expected airman.

Three-thirty arrived, and still there was no sign of him.

But five minutes later Willy Handforth sang out that he could see a speck in the sky. And almost before the crowd knew it, Captain Bertram Glenthorne, D.S.O., was overhead.

The big event of the day was at hand.

CHAPTER IX.

A SUPREME MOMENT!



ARCHIE clutched at Alf Brent's sleeve.

"Dash it all!" he said huskily. "This —this is too frightful for words, you know! I mean to say, the dear chap—pie is positively asking for it in chunks! I'm all of a dither!"

And Archie certainly did look flustered.

His anxiety was for the safety of his brother. Without the slightest doubt, Captain Bertram Glenthorne was giving one of the most daring exhibitions of stunt flying that St. Frank's had ever seen.

Armstrong's sneering remark that there was nothing to see in an aeroplane flight was given the lie direct. Aeroplanes were fairly common, even over St. Frank's—in fine weather as many as five or six might be seen passing over in the course of a day.

But that was all they did do—pass over.

Nowadays people take little or no notice of aeroplanes. But it is an altogether different thing when a machine is giving an individual display—particularly when the pilot is one of the most famous stunt artists of the day.

Archie's brother was no longer in the Service, but he had lost none of his skill. Being an officer in the Guards, he merely used his aeroplane for pleasure purposes.

It was a small machine—a racy-looking biplane, glaring red from tip to tip. The engine was of enormous power, capable of hurtling the machine through the air at close upon two hundred miles an hour.

Bertie had won many races with this flying monster. Curiously enough, the 'plane did not give much impression of speed when at a great height, and this was partially due to the fact that the engine was muffled so effectively that the only sound was a low purr and the whining swish of the whirling propeller.

Having circled over the school at a height of three or four thousand feet—Bertie's usual cross-country altitude—the red machine commenced swooping downwards in a steep glide.

Then there was a fine display of looping the loop, tail sliding, rolling, and all the other well-known stunts. And it was all done so perfectly that the juniors never dreamed of danger. Captain Bertram's control of his machine was almost uncanny.

Finally, he came down to within three or four hundred feet of the ground, and then proceeded to make a good deal of hair stand on end. One can watch stunt flying at a high altitude with perfect equanimity—but when an airman begins to do fancywork near the ground, one's heart jumps into one's mouth.

And Bertie was a perfect terror.

He took no actual risks—he was too skilful for that. He endangered no lives, for he did these low-flying antics over the meadows, adjoining the playing fields. If there was any disaster, Bertie himself would be the only one to suffer. But Archie's brother was the master of his machine.

Several times he swept down, passed the playing fields, only twenty feet from the ground—hurtling along at a hundred and eighty miles an hour. There's nothing quite so impressive as a racing aeroplane roaring by at the level of the tree-tops.

A great gasp went up as the red machine suddenly shot skywards like a rocket in the middle of one of these dashes. Without any preliminary warning, the machine simply hurtled itself skywards; nose foremost, carried clean up by its own momentum, and the tremendous thrust of its own engine.

It was at this point that Archie nearly had heart failure.

The machine staggered after reaching two or three hundred feet, rolled over on its back; and many juniors yelled with terror, as an accident seemed inevitable. For the biplane dipped, sagged sideways, and swooped earthwards like a stone.

But the spectators needn't have worried.

Captain Glenthorne was enjoying himself. Just when disaster seemed certain, the engine roared a new note, and the 'plane shot off at a tangent, and commenced to climb. And again it rose to a big height, to perform new evolutions and swoops. Captain Bertie had succeeded in startling St. Frank's.

"My hat!" said Handforth. "I—I thought it was all up, you know!"

"The reckless ass!" said Church warmly.

"Why, he might kill himself by doing that sort of thing."

I chuckled.

"You don't seem to understand, my son, that a machine of this kind is under perfect control in the hands of a skilful pilot. Captain Glenthorne can do just as he likes with it, and the danger is practically nil," I said. "Archie's brother is an expert—that's all."

"All the same, dear old tulip, I do wish he'd have a heart!" exclaimed Archie breathlessly. "I mean to say, I'm all

flustered and woozy! The old pumping apparatus is doing chunks of overtime!"

And Archie held his heart, breathing rapidly.

Buster Boots, who was near by, laughed in his usual way.

"Not so bad, but I can't see what all the excitement's about," he remarked, with rather a supercilious air. "Personally, I'd rather ten times go up for a spin than look at all this stunting."

"Perhaps you'd like to do that trick-flying?" asked Pitt.

"I won't say anything about trick-flying—but I'd like to go up for a flight," replied Buster. "And if it comes to that, I wouldn't mind looping the loop, either."

"Perhaps you'll have a chance some day," said Reggie.

Five minutes later Captain Glenthorne shut off his engine, and proceeded to glide to earth as lightly as a feather. His machine, although a racing model, was capable of fluttering down in the most picturesque way. And at last it touched the grass of the adjoining meadow, and came to rest.

There was an immediate rush to surround him.

Captain Glenthorne got out of his pilot's seat, and removed his flying helmet, and stood revealed to the crowd.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Bertie!"

He was cheered vigorously. Archie had referred to him as Bertie so much that the juniors were quite familiar with the name. And they were anxious to see this intrepid airman. He was surprisingly like Archie in features—but stronger, with the air of a man of action. His age was about twenty-eight, he was clean-shaven, and when he spoke his voice had the same intonation as Archie's. But he used none of Archie's flowery phrases.

"Anybody, like a trip?" asked Bertie when the demonstration was over.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't laugh—I'm not kidding!" said Glenthorne major. "I'm ready to take up any fellow who likes to say the word—but I can't promise more than a dozen flights. Come along—one at a time, and I'll take you for a spin round the district."

The juniors were dubious at first—they still thought that Bertie was kidding. But when I jumped forward, and climbed into the passenger seat, the fellows began to realise that it was a genuine offer.

"No stunts, of course," said Bertie. "Just a straight trip, and you'll land as safely as you start. It's all right, I've got the Head's permission."

"Oh!"

Many of the juniors couldn't believe this, but it was a fact. Flying nowadays is so safe that the Head saw no reason why a few pleasure spins should not be indulged in, if anybody cared to accept Bertie's invita-



Buster knew well enough that he had been cut dead. And the jeers of Armstrong and Co. seared into him. But he shrugged his shoulders and strode indoors.

tion. But, of course, there was to be no stunting with passengers.

Capt. Glenthorne was about to climb back into the cockpit when Archie appeared, red and flustered. He had just succeeded in forcing his way through the crowd. Archie was not a fellow to use violent methods, and he had had a dashed bally time, as he afterwards remarked.

"What-ho! So there you are, Bertie, old companion!" greeted Archie, as he appeared. "Greetings, and all that! Absolutely!"

Bertie grinned.

"I was just wondering why you hadn't turned up, Archie," he said cheerfully. "Coming for a spin?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "That is, after Nipper has waltzed skywards for a time. But, really, Bertie, kindly allow me to voice a somewhat vigorous protest. What I mean is, all this diving and dipping stuff! You dashed near came to knocking holes in the ground ten minutes ago!"

"Nonsense!" laughed the captain. "It looked dangerous, but it wasn't."

"Well, kindly refrain," said Archie

stilly. "I mean to say, it may be all right for you, but what about the bally spectators? Here we are, expecting to see you push the school over, and every time you miss the dashed place by a dashed inch! I mean, it's dashed upsetting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you'd better dash away, and let me get on with the washing!" said Bertie, with a chuckle. "Sorry to disappoint you, Archie—but I've got far too much respect for the school to try to push it over. Besides, there's a remote possibility that I should get a few scratches in the process."

And Captain Glenthorne climbed into the cockpit, and requested everybody to get back into the playing fields. And, with the meadows left clear, the engine was restarted, and away went the aeroplane.

There was no dipping and twisting this time. Bertie took me for an exhilarating run over to Bannington and back, the whole flight occupying less than five minutes.

Captain Glenthorne brought his passenger flights to an end, and announced his intention of giving a final exhibition of trick flying before setting back to Croydon—for he kept his machine at that famous aerodrome.

The crowds stood by, watching for the stunting to begin. The red machine leapt off the ground in a very different style now. Bertie had no passengers on board, and he could do just as he pleased.

But suddenly, in the very middle of the turn, the machine dropped abruptly—slipping down sideways, perilously near to a tree. Everybody felt their hearts give a jump; but there were many laughs, too. This was just another of Captain Glenthorne's little jokes.

But it wasn't!

It all happened in a flash—so swiftly that many fellows who were turning away didn't even see it. What actually happened was simple. The biplane got into a minor air pocket—one of those strange atmospheric phenomena which all airmen dread.

The "pocket" consisted of a portion of air that was much more rarified than the surrounding atmosphere. Consequently, the machine dipped. At any ordinary flying height it wouldn't have mattered—the pilot would scarcely have noticed the pocket at all.

But now, in the middle of a banked turn, and quite near the ground, the effect was disastrous.

In a flash, the captain swung the plane round as he felt the dip. But, masterly as his effort was, one wing-tip touched the topmost branch of the tree. The machine spun round like a top, crashed through the branches, and hit the ground with a splintering crash.

In spite of all the captain's efforts, the accident had happened. Bertie succeeded in reducing the force of the impact, but

upon striking, the nose dug into the ground, the tail rose, and the machine turned a complete somersault. And Captain Glenthorne was imprisoned beneath the wreckage!

CHAPTER X.

WAS HE AFRAID?



"A H!"

It was a great, long drawn out gasp of horror.

The spectators were transfixed at first. Faces were pale, eyes were staring. And during those first few seconds one could almost have heard a pin drop. The dramatic suddenness of the accident was appalling.

In that first moment, which seemed an eternity, there was no sign of movement from the plane. And the same thought came to all of us. The daring airman had been killed!

But in a flash I realised that this was scarcely likely. The machine had been so near the ground that the crash was only slight—and the pilot's cockpit was well protected. The chances were that Bertie had been trapped in his seat—for, of course, he was strapped in.

Something else happened—something unexpected.

The machine had fallen on the far side of the meadow, fully a hundred yards from the playing fields. And John Busterfield Boots peered from a gap in the hedge.

He was much nearer to the wreck than we were. Obviously, Buster had been watching the proceedings from this point all the time. Instinctively, being nearest, he rushed towards the scene of the smash.

He was seen by scores of witnesses, and a great cheer went up as they realised that Buster might be in time. But the danger of approaching that petrol-soaked wreck was ghastly.

Buster had run half the distance when a big puff of smoke surged out of the debris—as though heralding something worse. Buster paused, hesitated, but ran forward again. Then he fell.

For no apparent reason he went headlong to the ground, and lay still in the grass.

And the spectators ceased to gaze upon him.

For other things were taking place. It must not be supposed that we were content to leave everything to John Busterfield Boots. While he was running forward from his side of the wreck, a number of us dashed along from our side.

I happened to be nearest, and I led the way, with Archie, Pitt, Handforth and two or three others at my heels. From still another direction Fenton and Morrow and some more seniors were rushing up.

Archie and I and the other juniors were the first to arrive.

The immediate neighbourhood of the wreck reeked with petrol fumes and oil smoke. The air was foul with it. But we didn't think of the danger then. Our only care was for Captain Glenthorne.

"Quick! Grab this!" I panted. "Come on, Archie—"

"Absolutely!" gasped Archie huskily.

We seized the tail of the machine, and, exerting our strength, lifted it clear of the ground. Thus, if Captain Glenthorne was still conscious, he would be able to wriggle out. Previously he had been imprisoned.

"Bertie!" shouted Archie, in anguish. "Dear old lad—"

"Cheer up, young 'un—I'm all right!" came a voice which filled us with gladness. "Thanks, boys—fine! That's the idea!"

Bertie's voice was cool and firm. In some extraordinary way, he had unstrapped himself, although pinned beneath the overturned machine. And now he wriggled out, jerked himself upright, and gave one swift look at the engine.

"Come on—too risky to stay here!" he said crisply.

Another dense puff of smoke and fumes surged out. We ran back—realising, now, the awful danger. Captain Glenthorne appeared to be absolutely unscratched—but as a matter of fact he was bruised, sprained, and had a gash in his arm two inches long.

But he made light of these injuries. Archie was so relieved that he could scarcely speak.

"We—we thought you were killed, sir!" panted Handforth.

"Not me!" grinned Bertie. "Don't look so scared, kids—this is only a picnic! I've been in many a worse crash than this. Confound that infernal air pocket? There goes the poor old bus!"

And the cheering had been tremendous as soon as it was found that everything was all right. Bertie merely tied a handkerchief round his cut arm, and leisurely walked up to the wreck.

His inspection was satisfactory.

"Why, bless my aunt and uncle!" said Bertie. "The good old ship's hardly touched! Smashed propeller, torn wing tip, dented nose and one or two minor breakages. A gang of mechanics can put her right in half a day. Good luck! Better than I expected."

And Bertie fairly danced with joy. This machine was a favourite of his, and he had dreaded the thought of it being destroyed.

Dr. Stafford, who was on the scene by this time, grave and concerned, offered Bertie the hospitality of St. Frank's. Needless to say, it was promptly accepted, much to Archie's delight.

Captain Glenthorne decided to remain until mechanics could be sent from the aerodrome, armed with all the necessary spare parts. He reckoned that he would be able to get away after a couple of days.



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In the meantime, Bertie decided to thoroughly enjoy himself at St. Frank's.

It was nearly tea-time now, so Archie triumphantly claimed his elder brother as a guest. The Head relinquished Captain Glenthorne in Archie's favour—but only for tea. Bertie would dine with Dr. Stafford.

The excitement was all over now, and it happened that Bob Christine and Yorke came upon John Busterfield Boots as the latter was about to enter the College House. Christine, with a cold look, caught his arm.

"I say, Buster, I'd forgotten about you until this minute. What's the matter? Why did you fail?"

"Fail?" repeated Buster, staring.

"Yes, you cad!" shouted Armstrong, who had certainly turned against his former leader. "You were nearest when the aeroplane crashed, and yet you were too funky to run up!"

"Why, you—you——"

Boots flushed deeply, and for an instant it seemed that he was about to fly at Armstrong. But, with an effort, he controlled himself.

"Well?" sneered Armstrong. "What's the good of denying it? Do you think we weren't watching? As soon as that puff of smoke came out of the wreck, you dropped to the ground like a log—and stayed there, too."

Buster bit his lip.

"I—I tripped!" he said quietly. "I hurt my ankle."

"That's a fine story!" shouted Hubbard. "Tripped, eh? You didn't do anything of the sort! You dropped to the ground because you thought it would be safer to lie flat when the explosion came."

And this, indeed, was the obvious explanation of Buster's action.

"I tell you I tripped!" repeated Boots harshly. "Don't you believe me? Do you think I was shamming?"

"Yes, we do!"

"Yah, funk!"

"College House coward!"

Bob Christine and the other Monks merely shrugged their shoulders, gazed contemptuously at Buster, and walked indoors. Buster knew well enough that he had been cut dead. And the jeers of Armstrong & Co. seared into him. But he shrugged his shoulders, and strode indoors.

"See that?" yelled Doyle. "He's not even limping!"

"Funk!"

John Busterfield Boots went to Study Q with his face burning. And when his rage died down, he bitterly told himself that the juniors were not to be blamed. Everything had gone against him to-day with a vengeance!

And his bitterness was not lessened by the fact that the juniors were unjust. They thought he was afraid to go up in an aeroplane—but he didn't like to explain that his parents had forbidden him to take any

such trip. He had wanted to go for a passenger flight, but could only have done so at the cost of breaking his word to his mother.

So Buster had thought it better to get away by himself, where he couldn't be questioned. And for the fellows to think that he had shammed! It was galling—it was a difficult pill to swallow.

His one idea had been to get to the wrecked aeroplane. He had tripped—he had hurt his ankle! So Buster mused to himself as he flung his big form into an easy-chair.

"Oh, they're all against me—all turned on me like a lot of wolves!" he muttered. "Can't they understand that a chap can hurt his ankle for five minutes, and walk straight afterwards? Oh, the rotters!"

Was it really true that he had hurt himself? Or had he faked? Quite a controversy went on about this in the Remove during tea-time. And the general verdict was overwhelmingly against Buster. During the course of this day he had lost every ounce of his power.

And, what was more to the point, he had lost his supporters.

Even the Monks repudiated him. At a general meeting, Bob Christine was restored to his former position as leader of the Monks. The only fellows who clung to Buster were those who had come to St. Frank's with him—the Faithful Five. And they only did so out of loyalty.

John Busterfield Boots was almost a changed being. His failure and his downfall left him utterly subdued. His nature was just of that kind which only sparkles in the limelight. Scorned and rejected, he almost ceased to take interest in life.

But there was plenty of good in J. B. B., after all—and now that his pride had received a fall, there was just a chance that the smouldering decency in him would find its way to the surface.

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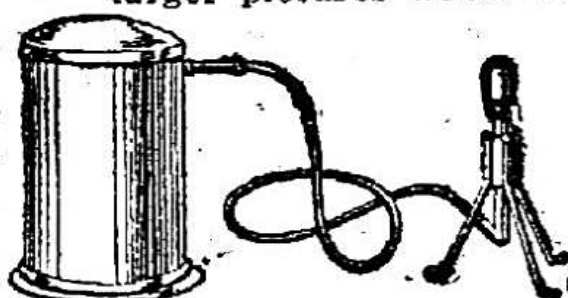
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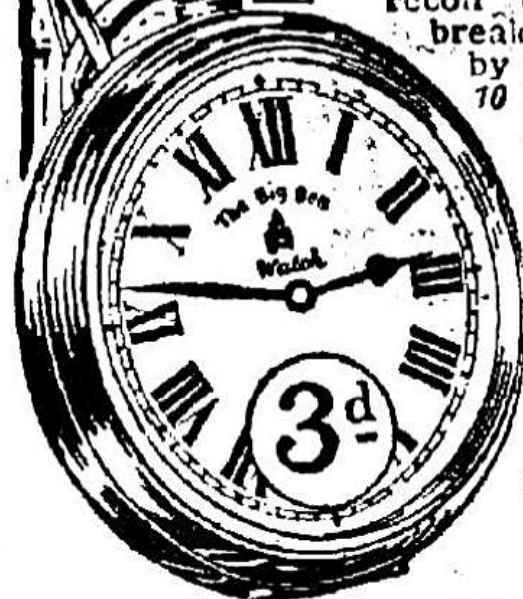
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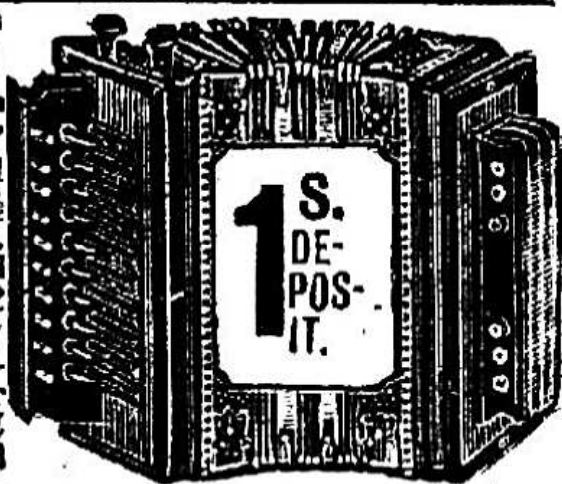
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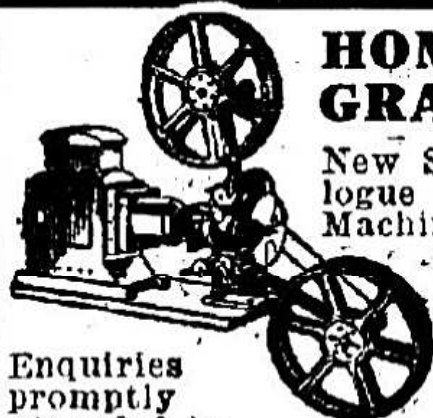
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