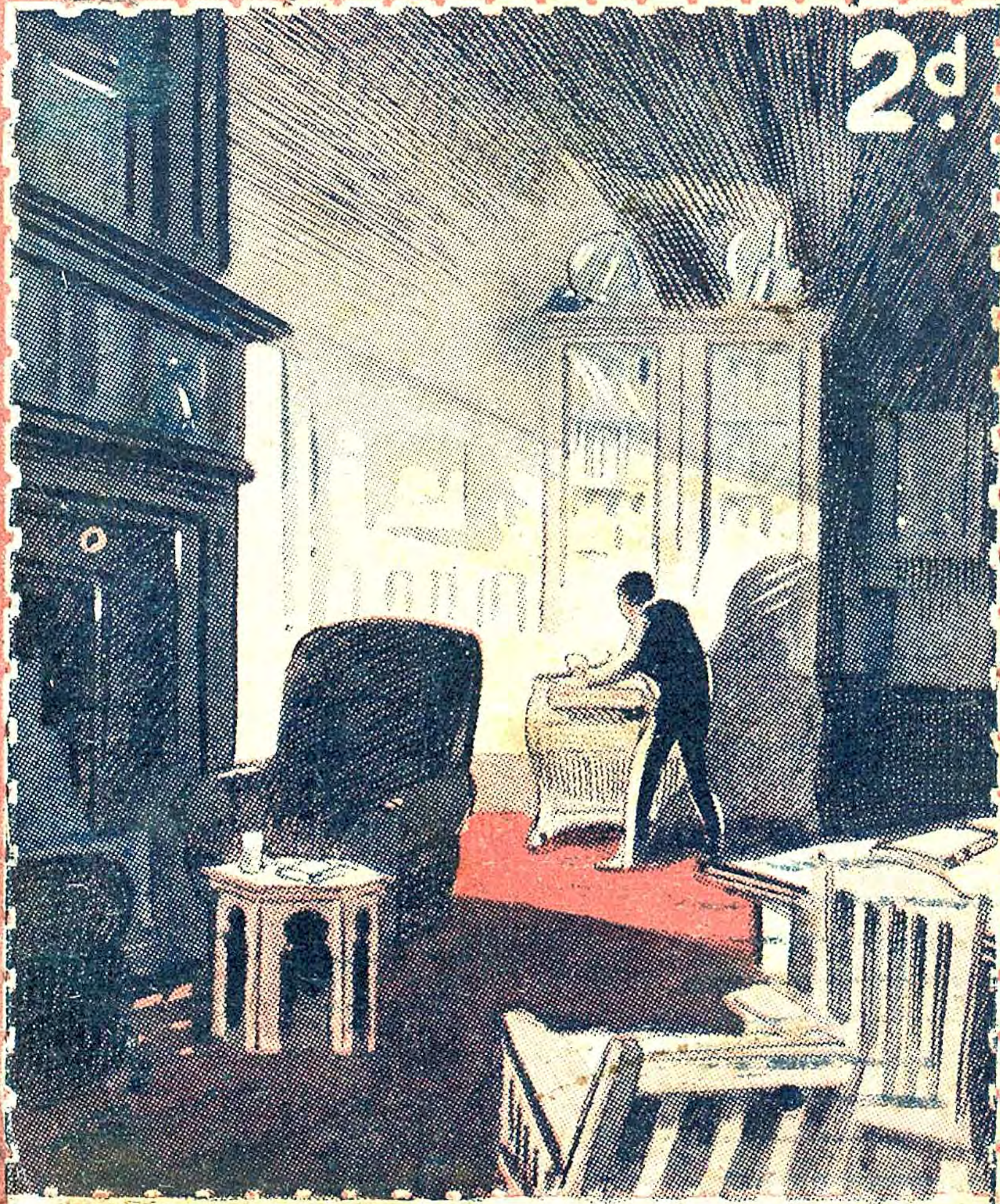


THE AMAZING THEFT AT ST. FRANK'S !

THE NELSON LEE

Library And St Frank's Magazine

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**"The ROBBER OF
The REMOVE"**

This Week's Great Mystery
Story of the Boys of St.
Frank's.

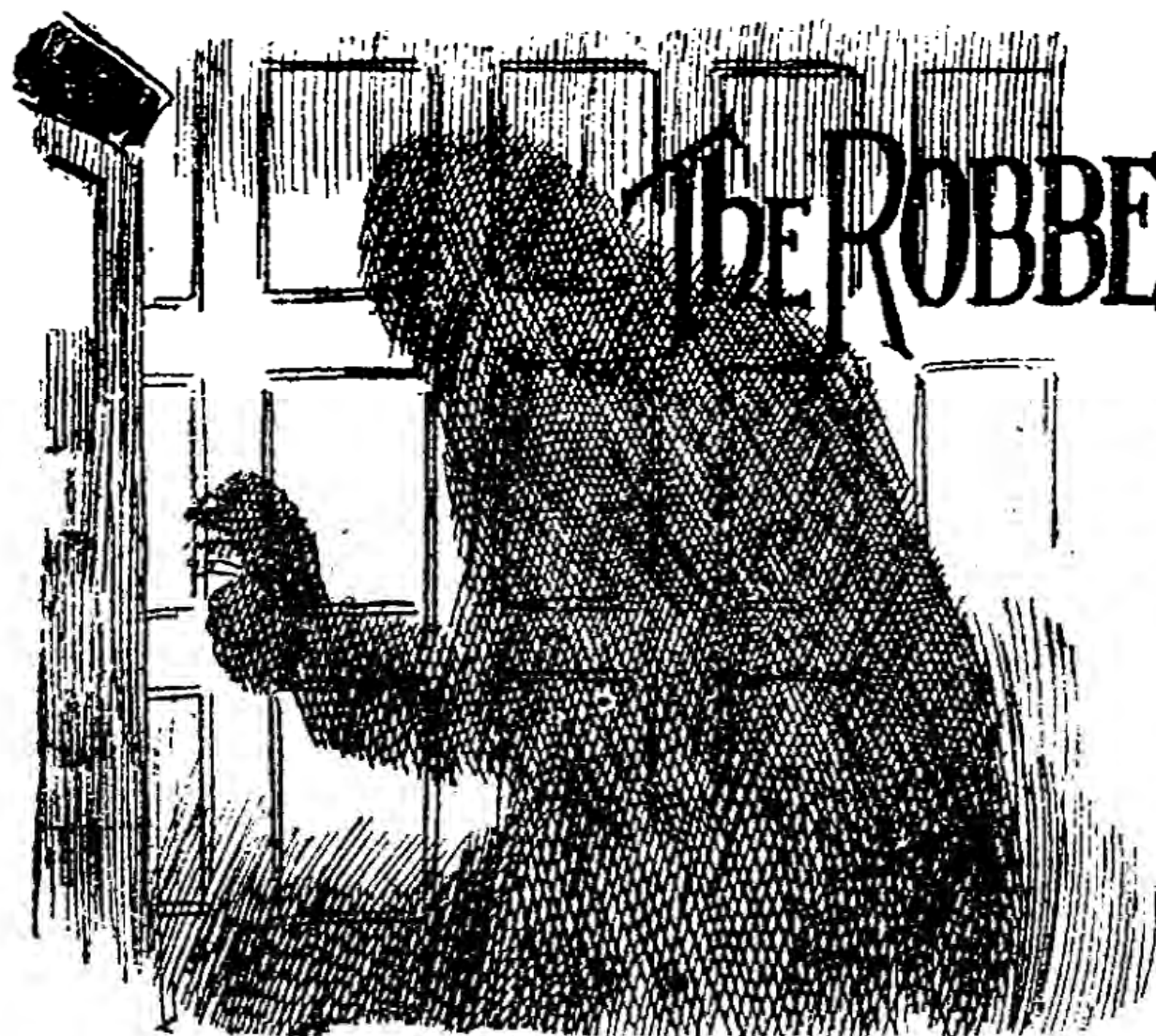
No. 475.

EVERY WEDNESDAY

July 12, 1924.



"I say, Miss Irene!" panted Handforth breathlessly. "What's the idea? You didn't say you were going— Great pip!" he added, in absolute dismay. "Is—is anything wrong?"



THE ROBBER OF THE REMOVE!

A CLEVER MYSTERY
STORY OF THE FAMOUS
BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S.

In the following story, Archie is the victim of a midnight robbery. Twenty pounds in Bank of England notes are stolen from his study, and suspicion is divided between Fullwood and Alf Brent, Archie's study chum.

But one would hesitate to accuse even Fullwood of a bare-faced robbery, rascal though he be. As for Brent, the circumstances appear very black against him, although it is hardly believable that a boy of his reputation at St. Frank's would descend to stealing money. Indeed, the mystery grows deeper as the story progresses, and it grips one from the first to the last page.

THE EDITOR.

Related Throughout by Nipper and Set Down by E. Searles Brooks

CHAPTER I.

THE PROWLER IN THE NIGHT.

MIDNIGHT!

The last echo of the booming notes died away on the still air. St. Frank's lay bathed in the radiance of the midsummer moon, and the night was peaceful and calm.

Scarcely a light showed in any of the windows of the famous old pile, for the school was asleep. It seemed, however, that there was one wakeful person, for the Remove passage in the Ancient House was not as barren and deserted as one might have supposed.

The passage was dark—the only light filtering down it from either end. On both sides were the doors of the junior studies, and as these were closed the corridor itself was pitchy.

A figure moved noiselessly and stealthily along towards the end. There was something strangely secretive and even sinister about this mysterious figure.

A board creaked slightly, and the figure stopped, with a sudden intake of breath. And for a full minute there was no sound—no movement. And then the prowler moved

forward again, evidently satisfied that all was quiet and undisturbed.

Reaching the end of the passage, the Unknown came to another halt—this time in front of a closed door. It was, in fact, the door of Archie Glenthorne's study.

Another pause, during which the marauder listened intently. And with exquisite caution the door-handle was slowly and deliberately turned. The door swung gently open, inch by inch, making no sound.

The interior of the study was fairly bright, for the curtains were drawn, and the full moonlight streamed in with a cold, pale brilliance. The various articles of furniture stood out boldly, in strong relief, with black, intense shadows where the moonlight failed to penetrate.

The prowler paused to close the door, and then padded silently across the luxurious carpet. The movement was definite, with no hesitation—proving that the Unknown was well acquainted with the study interior. The objective was an expensive mahogany bureau which stood in one of the corners, where the shadows were deep.

The prowler was clearly outlined for a brief flash as the bright moonbeam was passed, but was then swallowed up in the darkness of the corner angle. And then

came the soft, gentle opening of a drawer, the fumbling of quick, eager fingers, and the crisp rustle of paper.

A slight sound, a soft intake of breath, and then the drawer was closed again. Once more the figure flitted into the moonlight, reached the door, and stealthily passed outside. The door was closed with just the same slow, deliberate care. And then the mysterious prowler passed along the corridor, to be swallowed up in the blackness.

At just about this same time another individual was wakeful in the Ancient House. And this, curiously enough, was Archibald Winston Derek Glenthorne himself. He sat up in bed, yawned, and seemed to cogitate.

"It's no good, old lad, it's got to be done," he murmured, after a few moments. "Absolutely! Oddslife! What an absolutely priceless thirst! It must have been those dashed anchovies, dash them!"

Archie slowly climbed out of bed, and stood there in his elegant silken pyjamas. He had a bedroom to himself, being privileged in this way. The other members of the Remove were not jealous, because Archie was such a genuine, all-round good sort that he was excused.

"Some of those horrid people who drink a lot would positively give a fiver for a dashed thirst like this!" declared Archie, as he moved across to the washstand. "What-ho! A fairly decent night, as it were. Moonlight, balmy wafts of the good old cool breeze, and all that sort of thing!"

He only paused for a moment to gaze out upon the deserted Triangle. Then he seized the water-bottle and uttered a gasp.

"Gadzooks!" he said blankly. "Empty! This, dash it, is one of those periods when a chappie would be glad of a ripe and fruity vocabulary! I shall absolutely tick Phipps off pretty vigorously in the morning!"

Archie was annoyed—and with reason.

Here he was standing, at the mystic hour of midnight, with a forty horse-power thirst, and there wasn't a drop of water to quench it with! In some singular way, Phipps, his man, had forgotten to fill the bottle!

It wasn't often that Phipps neglected any duty. In fact, it was such an unusual event that when it did occur it was tantamount to a phenomenon. For Phipps was a wonderful man in his own way.

But it was no consolation to Archie at the moment. Against his better judgment he had partaken of some anchovy sandwiches just before coming to bed—having been tempted in this folly by Fatty Little. Archie hadn't really wanted the sandwiches, but he had been too polite to refuse them.

And now he was paying the penalty. He had awakened with a terrible thirst, and there wasn't a drop of water to quench it with. The genial ass of the Remove was absolutely dismayed.

"I can just imagine how ghastly it must be for those poor chappies who are lost in the good old desert," murmured Archie, with an expression of sympathy on his face.

"I mean, here we are, on the verge of pegging out, so to speak, and none of the good old life fluid available!"

He started suddenly, and his dismay vanished. For he remembered, with a brain wave, that the bath-room was situated only a short distance down the corridor. He donned his dressing-gown, and seized the water-bottle.

"What-ho! This is where we venture forth into the unknown!" he murmured. "And in the morning, by gad, Phipps will positively wilt and wither under the blast of the young master's wrath! Absolutely!"

He opened the door softly, not wishing to disturb any other sleepers, and was about to pass out into the corridor, when he paused. An expression of surprise crept into his face.

Somebody was moving in the blackness beyond!

He could hear soft, stealthy steps, and even the creak of a loose stair. And the next moment a dim figure came across, and made for the door of the Remove dormitory.

In order to reach it, the figure had to pass through the moonbeam which shone in from the end window. And Archie, standing like a statue, saw the features of the prowler for one flash. The other was Ralph Leslie Fullwood, of the Remove!

He entered the Remove dormitory, and closed the door.

"Well, I'm dashed!" breathed Archie, with some indignation. "The perfectly frightful rotter! Just home from one of those dashed card-parties, by gad! And the chappie was looking pleased, too!"

Archie regarded such behaviour as Fullwood's with complete scorn. The leader of Study A was well known as a "sport," and nobody held him in more contempt than Archie.

The elegant junior shrugged his shoulders, slipped down the passage, and obtained his water from the bath-room. Then he crept back to his bed-room, still thinking about Fullwood.

He was just about to move across the landing, near the head of the stairs, when he came to another abrupt halt. Distinctly he had heard the stairs creak!

Archie wasn't a nervous junior, but there was something rather eerie about the corridor, with the moonlight streaming in—and the very fact that the hour was just after midnight was significant. But Archie held himself firm, and remained stock still.

A figure, dim and shadowy, crept cautiously across the corridor, on tip-toe. His face was illuminated for a flash by the moonbeam—and the amazed Archie saw that this second prowler was none other than Alfred Brent, his own study mate!

And Alf, too, entered the Remove dormitory, and all was still.

"Well, I'm bothered!" breathed Archie blankly. "Alf! Absolutely! I can understand Fullwood, but——"

His thoughts seemed to halt, and all he could do was to return to his bed-room, puzzled, worried, and bewildered. There was a mystery here of some sort!

CHAPTER II.

TWENTY POUNDS!



"YOUR tea, sir," said Phipps deferentially. Archie Glenthorne sat up in bed, blinked, and took the tray from his manservant's hands. The warm, brilliant sunshine was streaming in through the window, and the singing of birds filled the air.

"Morning—what?" said Archie, yawning. "Another day, Phipps—another period of strife and trouble, as it were. What-ho! The good old brew! Dashed good, Phipps!"

He stirred his tea, and then paused, his face hardening.

"Oh, by the way!" he said grimly. "By the way. I absolutely hate talking to you like this, Phipps, but I feel strongly on the subject. In fact, it wouldn't be too much to say that the young master is wounded."

"Indeed, sir?" said Phipps questioningly.

"Yes, dash you!" said Archie. "Kindly proceed to explain, laddie, how it came about that my water-bottle was empty! Here I am, gasping for a good old drink of the crystal fluid in the middle of the night, and not a drop within yards of me!"

Phipps changed colour, and looked crest-fallen.

"I am indeed 'sorry, Master Archie," he said humbly. "I intended filling the bottle before bidding you good-night, but you referred to the new flannel suit, and the matter slipped my memory. I can only express my keen regret, and trust that you will overlook the unpardonable oversight."

Archie beamed.

"A dashed handsome way of putting it, old dear," he said genially. "I mean to say, no cove can absolutely say much after that—what? I intended ticking you off pretty severely, Phipps. But under the cires, we'll dismiss the old sub., and proceed with the chit chat regarding the clothing for the day."

Phipps looked obviously relieved. But whether he took his young master seriously or not was a question which nobody had ever been able to properly decide upon. It was certainly a fact that Phipps looked after Archie like a guardian angel.

Half an hour later the genial ass of the Remove sauntered downstairs in the full elegance of a new flannel suit, and he felt particularly bright and chirpy as he entered the lobby.

"Good morning, dear old gargoyles!" he observed chattily.

Handforth and Co. and a few other juniors were in the lobby, but Archie didn't pause

long—chiefly on account of the fact that a little unpleasantness started, Handforth biffing Church on the nose, and De Valerio joining in the fray. Archie departed rather hastily for his study.

Arriving there, he found the apartment spick-and-span, with the window wide open, admitting the gentle morning breeze. Phipps had been busy, as usual. Archie was about to sit down, when he remembered something, and crossed over to the mahogany bureau.

He pulled open one of the drawers, and put his hand inside mechanically. But his fingers only encountered empty space. A rather surprised look entered his face, and his monocle dropped from his eye.

"Well, this is somewhat rummy, as it were," he murmured.

He inspected the drawer, but discovered that it was quite empty. Without any particular anxiety, he opened the other drawers. Even while he was doing so, he knew that his quest would be futile.

"What-ho!" he exclaimed softly, sauntering to the centre of the study, and standing there with a puckered brow. "This, I mean to say, is where the old grey matter is required to function somewhat energetically! But, dash it, the good old attic appears to be vacant!"

Archie pondered deeply. He racked his brain with considerable persistence, trying to remember exactly what he had done with the four five-pound notes that he had left somewhere in the study overnight.

"Not a gudgeon pin in working order!" he muttered unhappily. "I mean, the brain department refuses to wobble! Not so much as a connecting rod or a cog will move! Now, just between ourselves, what the deuce did I do with that twenty quid?"

He turned, and gazed narrowly at the bureau.

"Absolutely!" he declared. "I shoved the old spending material in that drawer. Didn't Alf tell me that it was a frightfully risky thing to leave cash lying about? Didn't I say I'd shove it away safely? And didn't I forget—"

Archie paused, his expression growing alarmed.

Alf! It was Alf Brent who had told him to be careful! And just after midnight he had seen his study mate creeping upstairs in a most suspicious and sinister fashion! And he had seen Fullwood, too!

Archie sat down, and there was now an expression of positive consternation on his face. He knew positively that he had left twenty pounds in the bureau drawer—and it had gone!

To suspect Alf of having taken the money was not only utterly ridiculous, but treasonable to his own chum. Brent was hard up, he knew—but it was impossible—

"Absolutely!" exclaimed Archie, putting his thoughts into words. "Not only imposs. but ridic! But I'm not so dashed sure about Fullwood. That blighter has a somewhat

besmirched reputation, by gad! I mean to say, he's got a pretty lurid record, one way and another, and there's no telling what lengths such a poisonous cove would go to!"

But even Fullwood seemed quite beyond suspicion in regard to this particular affair. Even Fullwood was not a robber and a midnight burglar. And as for Alf Brent—

Archie's thoughts came to another standstill. He found himself gazing fixedly and fascinatedly at something on the carpet—something which lay just against the leg of the bureau, half concealed by the waste-paper basket. It was nothing excessively startling—merely a button.

But it was a button that instantly aroused Archie's attention.

He leapt to his feet with an alacrity that would have surprised the Remove fellows if they could have seen it. He picked up the button, sank into a chair again, and groaned.

There was absolute agony on Archie's face, and a great deal of the colour had fled. The button was a pearl one, with a kind of diamond pattern engraved upon it. Once seen, it was not likely to be forgotten. And the elegant junior had no difficulty in remembering that buttons of this type were sewn to Alfred Brent's pyjamas! And Alf had been wearing pyjamas when he crept upstairs soon after midnight.

The inference was so obvious, that even Archie saw it in a flash—and his wits were not nearly so dull as he generally tried to make out. The button was positive evidence that Alf had been in this study since the previous evening, attired in his pyjamas.

But Archie steadfastly refused to believe the monstrous suspicion that had crept into his mind. Alf must have come down for something else—it was a sheer coincidence his being there. He couldn't have any connection with the disappearance of that money.

And Archie rose to his feet resolutely, and paced up and down. He had left the button on the arm of the easy chair he had just vacated. He resolved to question Brent instantly—as soon as ever he came down. A matter of this kind couldn't be allowed to rest. The only way was to thresh it out and discover the truth.

For twenty pounds, after all, was a large sum. Even Archie, with all his wealth, seldom had so much money in one lump. It happened by sheer chance on this occasion.

The door opened, and Brent himself came in, cheerful and bright. He grinned amiably at Archie.

"Hallo, old son! What's wrong this morning?" he asked. "You look a bit white about the gills."

"Really?" said Archie. "I—I mean—The fact is—"

"Everything's all serene," went on Alf briskly. "I've had a letter from the pater, and all financial worries are at an end. What do you think of this?"

And Alf triumphantly produced a fiver.

Archie gazed at it fascinatedly, and made

no comment. And curiously enough, at the same moment Brent caught sight of that pyjama button lying on the arm of the chair. Archie saw him give a distinct start. And, without hesitation, Alf edged sideways to the chair, slipped the button into his pocket, and did it in a way that clearly proved his desire to perform the action unnoticed.

"I say, Alf—that is, look here!" said Archie huskily. "I—I think we ought to—"

"Can't stop now!" interrupted Alf, hurriedly. "I—I've just remembered something. Back soon, old man."

He stuffed the fiver into his pocket, and almost ran out of the study. And Archie stood for a full minute, motionless, gazing at the closed door. Then, with that suspicion finding a concrete foundation, he lowered himself into the nearest chair.

"Oddslife!" he breathed feebly.

His thoughts were in a state of chaos—and yet there were one or two things that stood out clearly amid all the confusion. Alf had tried to conceal that button—clearly proving by this very action that he didn't want Archie to know that he had been in this study during the night.

And there was that fiver that Brent had exhibited so openly. And Archie's money had been in fivers! As far as the bewildered junior knew, his study mate had never received a banknote before; his tips were generally of a pound or two, at the most.

It may have been coincidence—but the facts were terribly significant.

CHAPTER III.

BECOMING TANGLED.



RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD hurried out of the Ancient House,

and sped across the

Triangle. Breakfast was just

over, and in a few moments

the juniors would stream out

for a welcome spell in the open air before lessons.

Fullwood was looking eager and pleased.

Arriving in the lane, he came face to face with Dr. Beverley Stokes, the youthful Headmaster of St. Frank's. Fullwood raised his cap, and his pleased expression vanished.

"Just going for a trot before work?" asked the Head genially.

"Er—yes, sir," said Fullwood.

"That's the scheme!" said Dr. Stokes, nodding. "There's nothing like exercise. But don't be late for lessons, or you're liable to get a swishing."

He nodded again, and passed on. And Fullwood scowled, and continued his way towards the village. He had no particular reason to love the Head—since it was only recently that he had received a very drastic flogging at Dr. Stokes' hands.

But the Head never remembered these

things. Once he punished a boy, the matter was over and done with. And Dr. Stokes would be quite genial and chummy with the very fellow he had swished half an hour earlier.

It was owing to his thorough understanding of boys, and his habit of mixing with them and joining in their troubles and pleasures, that he was so amazingly popular.

And Mrs. Stokes, the Head's wife, was every bit as popular with the school. There had been a little mystery concerning the girl—for she was little more—and it was still unexplained. Some of the fellows believed that the Head and his wife were on bitter terms with one another, in spite of their

This man was a racing tout—a bookmaker in a small way himself—a gambler, and various other questionable callings.

“Well, I’ve come, Bradmore,” remarked Fullwood.

“So I see, young gent—so I see,” replied Mike. “Last night I told you as clear as could be that I wanted that three quid you owed me—and I give you until this morning. And if you ain’t got it, as I threatened last night, I’ll go straight up and tell your Head-master.”

“You miserable rotter!” said Fullwood contemptuously.

He had owed this man the money for about a week—having lost it during a game

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public friendliness. It had even been rumoured that the Head ill-treated her. But none of the decent fellows believed this libellous story.

Fullwood, continuing his hurried walk to the village, thought bitterly of the Head as he progressed. The cad of the Remove hated Dr. Stokes mainly because the other fellows liked him.

Fullwood had nearly reached the end of Bellton Lane, when a figure stepped out the Wood and confronted him. The man was a burly individual, loudly dressed, with a horsey suggestion about him.

“Well, young gent,” he said grimly.

Fullwood faced Mike Bradmore calmly.

of poker at the White Harp Inn. Failing to have the cash, he had given Mr. Bradmore an I.O.U.—and the man had pestered him ever since. Apparently, Fullwood had had very urgent need of money late the previous night.

“There’s no call to get personal, young shaver,” said Mike, frowning. “If you ain’t got the money—”

“Oh, here’s your rotten money!” interrupted Fullwood sourly.

He flashed out a number of notes from his pocket—and Mr. Bradmore stared. Fullwood carelessly detached a fiver, and held it out.

“Got two quid change?” he asked easily.

“Why, yes—you bet I have!” said Mr.

Bradmore, his tone changing to one of delighted surprise. "Thanks, young gent! I must say you're a real sportsman! If I've said anything a bit hasty like, I'm sure I apologise—"

"I'd like that I.O.U., if you don't mind," interrupted Fullwood tartly.

"To be sure! You've got a right to it, seein' as you're payin' up," agreed Mike with much heartiness. "Here you are, Master Fullwood—and 'ere's the two quid change, too."

Fullwood accepted the notes and delivered up the fiver. Mr. Bradmore gave the latter a careful scrutiny, smiled with delight, and stuffed it into his pocket.

"I hope I didn't offend you, Master Fullwood," he said anxiously. "Of course, I didn't mean none o' that talk about going to see your 'Eadmaster. Not likely, young gent! I'm a 'onest man—"

"It's very easy to be pleasant now, isn't it?" sneered Fullwood. "You see, I've got plenty of cash, so you've changed your tone! Sorry, Mike, but it won't work—I'm not quite as green as that!"

He turned on his heel and walked away, leaving Mr. Bradmore in a rather unsettled frame of mind. He was pleased to get his money, but it worried him to think that Fullwood had all that other cash. And the youngster had given him the cold shoulder! Mike cursed himself for having been so hasty and unpleasant.

He uttered a growl, and walked towards the village, passing Willy Handforth, who gave him a cold, disapproving stare. Willy had been some little distance down the lane, but his keen young eyes had not failed to observe the passing of money. The fag had, indeed, distinctly seen the fiver which Bradmore had changed. Not that the fag was surprised. He knew Fullwood's habits of old.

He hurried his pace as he continued towards St. Frank's. It was only by a chance that he had gone down to the village. Chubby Heath had declared that a new kind of toffee was available in Bell-ton—a toffee that was so sticky that it lasted twice as long as any other kind. So Willy had gone down to obtain a sample, deeming that it would come in handy to while away the weary hours of lessons.

But, judging from the way his jaws were moving, there would be precious little left by the time morning school started. Willy was still hard at it when he entered the Triangle.

He passed along the Ancient House, and paused outside the window of Study D.

"Toffee?" he asked, offering the bag.

"No fear—not after it's been in your beastly pocket!" said his major, from within the study. "Clear off, you disgusting young rotter!"

"What's the matter with my pocket?" asked Willy warmly.

"You ought to know!" put in Church.

"What did you show us yesterday?"

Willy grinned.

"Oh, those worms?" he replied. "And those beetles? My dear chaps, they're clean enough—only harmless insects! Besides, the toffee's in a bag. But if don't want it, you can go without it!"

He marched on, incensed, and paused again outside the window of Archie Glenthorne's study. Archie, who was standing abstractedly at the open window, was startled out of his reverie by a hand jutting into the region of his middle waistcoat button.

"Toffee?" said Willy briefly. "Good stuff!"

"My only sainted aunt!" ejaculated Archie. "My dear old tomato, kindly remove the good old fist! I'm worried! I'm feeling about as frightfully frightful as anybody frightfully can!"

"You have my sympathy," said Willy. "What is it—one of your waistcoats creased, or what? Or has a new lid failed to appear from the hatters?"

"Kindly remove your dashed earcase," said Archie stiffly.

"Oh, all right—anything to oblige," said Willy. "By the way, I saw that beast Fullwood down the lane—"

"Fullwood!" broke in Archie. "Oh, rather! What was he doing? Of course, I don't mean that!" he added hastily. "Fullwood's movements don't interest me—"

"No. I don't suppose so," agreed Willy. "The cad was paying some money to that beast Bradmore—fivers, too, by the look of it. Goodness knows where he gets his wealth!"

And Willy marched off, little realising the fresh chaos into which he had plunged Archie Glenthorne's mind. For that little piece of news—insignificant to Willy—had put Archie Glenthorne into a state of positive bewilderment.

CHAPTER IV.

A STAGGERER FOR MISS BOND.



"GOT any more of those ripping powders, Rennie?" asked Doris Berkeley. "My

head's just splitting, and if I don't have something quick, my brain will throw up the

sponge!"

Irene Manners frowned.

"Don't be so silly, Doris," she said severely. "Besides, you know well enough I haven't got any powders—I told you so days ago. Don't be such a bother!"

"Oh, all right, huffy!" said Doris, with a sniff. "I'm sure I don't want your nasty powders!"

She departed, leaving Irene alone in the study.

It was later in the day, and the Moor View School for Girls was taking things rather easily. For some few minutes Irene

Manners sat very thoughtful after Doris had gone. The pretty, fair-haired girl had a worried, troubled expression in her blue eyes.

"I wish I'd never seen the powders!" she murmured, with a sudden irritable toss of her bobbed hair. "It's too bad, all this fuss!"

A few days earlier there had been quite a commotion, indeed. Miss Charlotte Bond, the Headmistress, had seized some headache powders which Irene had supplied to the other girls, and had demanded to know Irene's source of supply. But the girl had refused to give it.

To Miss Bond's mind this seemed suspicious, coupled with the fact that these particular powders were startlingly efficacious, and eagerly sought after by the other girls. Miss Bond was not to know Irene had refused because she had been pledged to secrecy by somebody else. She had given her word of honour to no less a person than Mrs. Stokes!

As Irene sat there, she recalled the rather surprising incident—the meeting of a Chinaman named Professor Yen Chung, the brief time they had spent on his steam launch in a backwater of the River Stowe, and the startling way in which the Chinaman had cured Mrs. Stokes' illness.

For when the Head's wife had met Yen Chung she had been pale, haggard, and wild-eyed. Some special medicine administered by this quack had revived Mrs. Stokes in the most singular fashion.

And Irene had obtained those powders from Mr. Yen Chung. He had given them to her, in fact, smilingly declaring that they were excellent for headaches, although quite harmless. He had offered to supply many more—but they would be rather expensive.

And then, through the girls talking, the Headmistress had learned of the magic powders, and she had given one of them to Nelson Lee, requesting him to analyse it.

And Irene, who had been pledged to secrecy by Mrs. Stokes, had been unable to clear up this ridiculous little mystery. For the Head's wife had extracted a solemn promise from Irene that she would not mention to a soul that meeting with Professor Yen Chung.

In all fairness to the Head's wife, it must be explained that she knew nothing of these powders, and Irene's absurdly trivial dilemma—as it seemed at the moment. The girl did not realise that it would soon cease to be trivial, and become a problem of magnitude.

When Mrs. Stokes had extracted that promise from Irene she had thought that merely her own affair was involved. Otherwise, perhaps, she would not have bound the girl down so rigidly.

While Irene was still sitting in her study, thinking of the matter, a visitor arrived—and the next step was taken to-



"Oh, here's your rotten money!" interrupted Fullwood sourly. He flashed out a number of notes from his pocket, and Mr. Bradmore stared.

wards exploding the bombshell that would soon shatter Irene's immediate happiness.

The distinguished visitor was no other than Mr. Nelson Lee, the famous school-master detective, of St. Frank's. Lee was shown at once into Miss Bond's sanctum. He was grave, calm, and brisk. Nothing could be judged from his manner.

"I have called to see you, Miss Bond, with reference to the powder you asked me to analyse a few days ago," he said, coming straight to the point.

"I am sure it's very good of you, Mr. Lee," said the Headmistress. "I hope you haven't been troubled too much, and you must forgive me for imposing on your good nature like this. I ought to have taken the powder to the chemist, instead of putting you to the trouble—"

"I am extremely thankful you gave the powder to me—and not to the chemist," put in Nelson Lee quietly.

"Why?" she asked, struck by his tone.

"Because the chemist would probably have communicated with the police!"

Miss Charlotte Bond nearly fainted.

"The—the police?" she gasped breathlessly, turning as pale as a sheet. "You—you must be joking, Mr. Lee—"

"My dear Miss Bond, I must apologise for upsetting you like this!" said Lee hastily. "I was somewhat too blunt, perhaps. I am glad you gave me the powder, because we can keep the whole matter perfectly private, with no fear of —"

"But—but I am amazed—I am well nigh stunned!" breathed Miss Bond. "What—what did you mean about the police, Mr. Lee? Why should any chemist take a mere headache powder to the police?"

Nelson Lee leaned forward.

"There is no reason why any chemist should take a mere headache powder to the police," he replied. "But the powder you gave me, Miss Bond, was of a very different nature."

"Good gracious!" panted Miss Bond. "You frighten me, Mr. Lee!"

"It is not my desire or intention to dictate any course of action to you, Miss Bond, but I strongly urge you to make a strict investigation into this unfortunate affair," said Nelson Lee quietly. "Neither do I want to alarm you—although it will be as well to explain at once that the powder you gave me is of a very dangerous nature."

"Dangerous?" repeated the Headmistress, staring in horror.

"Yes. It contains a drug preparation of the most noxious kind," said Nelson Lee. "I will not go into details. Such headache powders are extraordinarily effective, producing an immediate cure, and a sense of exhilarating lightness. I am not at all surprised by your statement that these powders have been in great demand by the girls."

"And—and are they so terribly harmful?" asked Miss Bond, in despair. "Oh, dear! You have frightened me, Mr. Lee—"

"Then let me comfort you, by way of recompense," smiled the detective. "One or two such powders, taken at intervals, are not likely to do any damage. On the contrary, their effect is possibly beneficial. But to continue the use of them would be disastrous."

"In what way?"

"The drug is of the habit-forming variety, and when a certain amount has been taken the desire for the drug becomes a craving," replied Lee gravely. "And the only way of satisfying that craving is to obtain more drug—at any cost. The person unfortunate enough to fall under its spell loses all sense of right or wrong, and slowly but surely becomes a dope slave. And then the end is either fatal, or a long, uphill fight commences until health and strength are restored."

Miss Bond was quite shaken.

"Dope!" she murmured, in a dreadful voice. "Dope—in my school! And—and the girls have been actually taking those powders—and asking for more. I am terrified, Mr. Lee."

"If so, your terror is unnecessary," said the detective, rising to his feet. "None of the girls have come to any harm, and if the source of supply is stopped there can be no further demand. Your pupils will soon forget the entire episode, Miss Bond. I appreciate that you would like this matter to be kept strictly private, and so I will use the utmost discretion."

"I am deeply grateful to you, Mr. Lee, for your kindness," said Miss Bond fervently. "I will deal with the culprit firmly—with an iron hand. I thank Heaven that the terrible matter has gone no further. A word

of this breathed abroad would ruin my school for ever, and my reputation would be in shreds. Thank you again, Mr. Lee! I can never express my deep gratitude."

The Headmistress was really quite touched, and Nelson Lee was thankful when he managed to make his escape.

CHAPTER V.

IRENE'S ORDEAL.



MISS BOND sat for some time after Nelson Lee had gone.

She was trying to calm her racing pulse. For she had been thoroughly alarmed and frightened by what her visitor had informed her—and also by what he had not informed her of.

Nelson Lee had been vague about the drug, but Miss Bond shrewdly suspected that he had purposely refrained from telling her the worst. He had made it quite clear, however, the popular headache powders were not only pernicious, but positively dangerous.

"Thank Heaven I didn't take the terrible powder to the village chemist!" murmured Miss Bond. "I am sure the man would have gone to the police. And that would have meant ruin for me! I shall never be able to thank Mr. Lee sufficiently for his tact and generosity."

And then Miss Bond became rather grim. This affair had to be settled at once. It was no good beating about the bush. She knew, happily, where the girls had obtained their powders from—and Miss Bond was determined to make Irene Manners tell the truth. Once the girl knew the nature of those powders, she would certainly not hesitate to reveal her source of supply.

The Headmistress touched her bell, and a maid soon appeared in response. And Irene was at once fetched. She came in smiling, obviously unconscious of the trial that awaited her.

"Close the door, Miss Manners," said the Headmistress. "Thank you! Now, I want to speak to you seriously."

Irene was surprised, and looked at Miss Bond with some little apprehension. She remembered the powders, and the unnecessary fuss that had been made. She was inwardly wrathful. She had given the Headmistress credit for more sense than to make a bother over such a triviality.

"No doubt you remember the headache powders that I forbade the use of a few days ago?" asked Miss Bond. "I want to know the truth concerning them, child. You must tell me where you obtained them—"

"I am very sorry, Miss Bond, but that is impossible," interrupted Irene quietly.

"Impossible? Stuff and nonsense!" snapped the Headmistress sharply. Then she checked herself, and her expression

softened. "Come, Irene!" she added, in her best motherly manner. "Why all this mystery? I have always regarded you as one of the most sensible, practical girls in the school. I am sure you do not realise the appalling nature of those powders you so carelessly distributed among your friends."

Irene laughed.

"I think somebody must have been alarming you, Miss Bond," she said. "The powders are quite harmless—even safer to take than ordinary aspirin tablets. I am sure I don't see why you should make a mountain out of a molehill."

Miss Bond's expression hardened.

It was obvious to her that Irene was deceived—completely and utterly. The girl had not the remotest idea of what she had been doing. And because of this conviction, Miss Bond was gentle.

"My dear child, I am afraid I am going to give you a shock," she said. "I have had one of those powders analysed by an expert, and I discover that they contain dangerous drugs of the most horrible kind—drugs that will ultimately bring their victims to degradation and possibly death!"

Irene started back, amazed.

"Oh, Miss Bond!" she cried. "There must be some mistake——"

"There is no mistake."

"Those powders are harmless—I was told so!" insisted Irene, her eyes alight with alarm and dismay. "Oh, Miss Bond, I am sure you must be wrong!"

The Headmistress shook her head.

"Come here, Irene," she said quietly. "Come and sit in this chair, close against me. Now, I am convinced that you are quite innocent of any deliberate wrongdoing; and if you will tell me the name of the person who supplied you with those powders, all may yet be well."

"But I can't, Miss Bond—I can't!" said the girl quickly.

"You cannot? And why not, indeed?"

"Oh, please don't question me——"

"Don't question you! What next, child?" snapped the Headmistress, losing some of her patience. "I have told you that those powders are filled with—ahem!—dope. I have told you that they are utterly horrible and deadly. And yet, in spite of that knowledge, you still persist in remaining silent?"

Irene was pale, but she shook her head.

"I am sorry, Miss Bond, but I can say nothing," she said quietly.

"My forbearance will not stand very much more strain, young lady!" said the Headmistress, with rising anger. "This obstinacy is ridiculous! I have no patience with such nonsense! Do you realise that you have been made the tool of a dangerous criminal? And are you willing to shield this villain by your refusal to speak?"

"Oh, but, Miss Bond, you don't understand!" began Irene wretchedly.

"I understand that you are adopting an attitude that fills me with suspicion!" interrupted Miss Bond curtly. "Your very

refusal to speak is significant. I have dealt with you leniently long enough. I now demand an answer, Miss Manners! Let this absurdity cease. I command you to give me the name of the person who supplied you with those powders!"

Irene was in a terrible dilemma. She had never imagined such a predicament as this in her most pessimistic moments. It had shocked her to learn that the powders contained dope—but, at the same time, a flood of daylight came upon her, and she wondered how she had previously been so dense.

Professor Yen Chung had been suave and convincing—and he had given her the original packet of powders. But the gift was something in the nature of a sprat to catch a mackerel. The wily Chinese had expected to gain a host of customers by his gift—customers who would ultimately become slaves to the drug, and who would spend every penny of their liberal pocket-money on this dreadful, secret dope.

No wonder the Oriental had told Irene to keep everything quiet; no wonder he had urged her to impress the need for secrecy upon the other girls. Irene was filled with an intense, burning rage.

But she was helpless!

Much as she wanted to expose this yellow demon in his true colours, she was unable to do so. For she had given her word of honour to Mrs. Stokes that she would not mention that meeting with Professor Yen Chung to a soul! To tell Miss Bond now would be to break her word—and the consequences for Mrs. Stokes might be grave indeed. For Irene was now becoming more and more suspicious of the Head's wife herself. Her association with this Chinaman; her amazingly rapid cure; her desire for secrecy; all these things pointed to one obvious conclusion. And Irene was stupefied by the horror of it.

To tell Miss Bond of her meeting with the Chinaman would be fatal. For the matter could not stop there. The rest of the story was bound to come out, and Mrs. Stokes would be implicated. And so the whole story would get abroad, and Dr. Beverley Stokes himself would be involved in the scandal and disgrace.

Apart from all this, Irene had given her word—and she was a girl who believed in keeping faithfully to her promise. No matter what the consequences for herself, her lips were sealed.

"Well, Miss Manners?" came Miss Bond's cold voice, cutting into her thoughts. "Are you still considering? I am waiting for the name of the person who supplied you with those powders."

"I—I can say nothing else!" muttered Irene wretchedly.

"Do you mean that you refuse to obey me?" asked the Headmistress, her anger increasing rapidly. "How dare you?"

"I—I promised——"

"Stuff and nonsense!" snapped Miss Bond. "Rubbish, child! Whatever promise you

made is rendered void by the absolute seriousness of this position. I will hear no excuses. And the only possible chance for you to retain my favour is to give me the name."

"I give you my word, Miss Bond, that I will get no more powders, and that the whole matter will drop!" said Irene desperately. "But please—oh, please don't ask me—"

"You have tried my patience too long!" shouted the Headmistress furiously. "I am convinced that my first impression was wrong. You were not so ignorant regarding this drug as you would have me believe! And you are no fit companion for the young ladies in this school!"

Irene stared, fascinated.

"Your refusal to speak can mean only one thing," went on Miss Bond curtly. "You are anxious to shield your accomplice! Give me the name, and I may be inclined to hush the matter up, and let you remain. But if you persist in this attitude, young lady, you shall leave the school this very day!"

"You—you mean I shall be expelled?" asked Irene, in a husky whisper.

"Yes, I mean you will be expelled!"

The girl was white, but she drew herself up.

"I am sorry, Miss Bond, but I have said all that I can say," she exclaimed, her voice tremulous and unsteady.

And those words, as she knew, sealed her own fate!

CHAPTER VI.

PHIPPS, INVESTIGATOR.



ARCHIE GLENTHORNE was restless.

He walked up and down his study in a wretched frame of mind, and he was more worried than he had ever been in his young life before. The strain was beginning to tell, and his usually serene countenance was lined and furrowed. He could not even find comfort on the lounge, or in one of the easy-chairs. His frame of mind was such that he felt compelled to move about. And this clearly proved his agitation.

He had scarcely eaten a bite of dinner—and this had caused a good deal of comment among the other fellows. But Archie was too worried to care. It would soon be time for afternoon lessons, and he was trembling at the thought.

"Something, of course, has got to be done," he told himself, for the fiftieth time. "But what, dash it, can a chappie do? The old box of tricks in the attic refuses to bally well budge! Not a dashed movement in the works! Phipps is the lad for this job—but Phipps must not be brought into the dread secret."

For about the first time in his career, Archie was compelled to deal with an im-

portant matter himself. And he felt that it was too much for him. His brain staggered under the load.

He had thought over the problem until he was confused.

Four fivers of his were missing—twenty good, honest pounds. And the evidence pointed clearly to Alf Brent as the thief! His guilt seemed absolutely conclusive.

And yet, extraordinarily enough, the evidence also pointed to Ralph Leslie Fullwood as the thief! And the proof was almost as conclusive in his case! It was hardly surprising that Archie was bemused.

He had seen both the juniors creeping stealthily upstairs after midnight—one a short while after the other. There was no indication that they were associated in this robbery, and Archie wouldn't even consider the possibility.

Of the two suspects, Fullwood seemed the most probable. He was known to be unscrupulous, although his worst enemies would not accuse him of downright, deliberate theft. The previous day he had been stony, and this morning he had been seen to flash fivers about! That, alone, seemed positive enough.

But what of Brent?

Brent had been broke, too—yet he had shown Archie a fiver! And Alf's pyjama button had been found by Archie near the fatal bureau! It was all terribly complicated and alarming.

But Archie was determined on one thing.

He would say nothing! Rather than create a scandal, he would lose the twenty pounds and let the culprit go. He had such a horror of commotions and scandals that he would cheerfully lose the money in preference to starting an inquiry that would lead to the culprit's exposure and expulsion. For there could only be one punishment for such a terrible crime.

And perhaps Alf Brent would be the one to get the sack! And Archie was very fond of Alf—the pair had been chums for so long that they were inseparable.

And Archie made up his mind, and sank down upon the lounge with a smile of serene happiness and glorious relief. Anything was better than that anxiety; better than that dreadful suspense. He had decided!

"How absolutely topping!" he murmured dreamily. "Now, why didn't I think of this before? All I've got to do is to get another twenty quid out of the good old bank and the thing's finished! So dashed simple, by gad!"

He realised, of course, that this decision was a wrong one. For by keeping silent about his loss he was indirectly encouraging the thief and condoning the grave offence. But Archie was as soft as putty—his heart was as tender as a baby's—and if there was any possible way of avoiding trouble, he chose it.

And he consoled himself with a little quaint philosophy of his own. If Alf was the thief he must have acted in a dotty

moment, and would ultimately repent and confess. And if Fullwood was the thief—well, he was such a dashed rotter that a chappie couldn't expect anything else!

So Archie languidly reached out for the bell push and jabbed it. And in a few moments Phipps glided silently in.

"You rang, sir?"

"Yes, old shadow, the young master did!" observed Archie. "The fact is I want you to dash into Bannington."

"Very good, sir."

"Yes, Phipps. I want you to go to the bank," went on Archie carelessly. "Just a matter of twenty quid. I want you to cash a cheque for me at the bank, and kindly be good enough to bring the priceless stuff in the shape of four fivers."

Phipps allowed himself to elevate his eyebrows.

"Begging your pardon, sir, but I think you must have overlooked the fact that I withdrew the twenty pounds the day before yesterday, sir. No doubt the matter has slipped your memory——"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie hastily. "Kindly refrain from being an absolute jackass, Phipps! I want you to get twenty quid, and there, if I may say so, the matter ends. So cease these dashed ridiculous comments, laddie!"

"Very good, sir. I will do as you wish," said Phipps coldly. "But it is hardly your habit, Master Archie, to require as much as forty pounds in one week. You have, if I may say so, spent the first twenty pounds with startling speed, sir."

Archie rose to his feet.

"This, dash it, is the limit," he said severely, jamming his monocle into his eye and surveying Phipps from his toes to his head. "Gads! and Oddzooks! What next? I mean to say, what next? Allow me to inform you, Phipps, that you are getting too bally cheeky! Absolutely! Take the cheque and get the cash, and cease this inquisitive stuff!"

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

He waited without further comment while Archie drafted the cheque—for this elegant junior had his own banking account in Bannington. Phipps was rather hurt. He didn't say so, but he took such verbal chastisement to heart.

Moreover, he was suspicious. There was something very peculiar in Archie's manner. And Phipps was a pretty shrewd fellow. He had a little habit of putting two and two together with great precision and accuracy.

His young master had been intensely worried all the morning—although he had refused to enlighten Phipps on the subject. He had been literally over-wrought. And this sudden calmness, therefore, accompanied by an order to fetch twenty pounds from the bank, struck Phipps as being singularly significant.

He knew for a fact that Archie had had twenty pounds intact the previous evening. And it occurred to the valet that the money was missing. Hence Archie's agitation.

And hence his desire for a new and similar amount. But it was by no means satisfactory.

However, Phipps said no more. He knew Archie well, and he was certain that further comment would be fatal. Phipps took the cheque, bowed, and departed.

He was annoyed with Archie because the latter had not taken him into his confidence. Generally, Archie was only too ready to turn to his man for advice and help. And his present attitude was something in the nature of a slight—which Phipps resented.

But he knew his duty, and he resolved, then and there, to look into this matter and to investigate. First of all, he would get the money through. The bank closed at three, and he would have heaps of time for his inquiries on his return.

Phipps went to Bannington by train, and entered the bank and produced his cheque. He was greeted cheerily by the cashier.

For Phipps, of course, was well known at the bank. He always came on his young master's business, and he was known to be Archie's trusted servant and adviser.

"The same as before, Mr. Phipps?" asked the cashier. "I think you like five-pound notes, don't you?"

"Yes—four fivers, please," said Phipps.

The swing door opened, and Phipps turned his head. Then he stood respectfully at attention and doffed his hat. The newcomer was Mrs. Stokes—looking very pretty and dainty in silky, summery attire.

Phipps turned away at once, and became very interested in a notice respecting bonds and saving certificates. But he had not failed to observe the start which Mrs. Stokes had given, and the strange way in which the colour had fled from her cheeks.

And Phipps was puzzled. He could see no earthly reason why the Head's wife should be taken aback at seeing him in the bank—or at him seeing her. There was nothing particularly guilty in being in such an establishment.

Mrs. Stokes appeared anxious to waste a little time, for she was fumbling nervously in her bag. Perhaps she wanted Phipps to go before she stated her business. But a second cashier came briskly up and smilingly inquired her pleasure.

"I just want you to do me a little favour, if you don't mind," said Mrs. Stokes, with a charming look. "Do you mind changing these five-pound notes into ordinary ten-shilling and pound currency notes?"

"Certainly—with pleasure, madam," said the cashier agreeably.

He took the notes and briskly manipulated them.

"Four," he remarked. "How would you like the currency notes, madam?"

Mrs. Stokes explained that she wanted fifteen pound notes and ten ten-shilling, and after the cashier had scrutinised the fivers once again, he counted out the money, and passed it over the counter.

"Thank you so much," said Mrs. Stokes gratefully.

"Not at all, madam—a pleasure, I assure you."

She tucked them into her bag and departed. Phipps, in the meantime, had been writing industriously on a pad at the other end of the counter. But now he looked up, and there was rather a curious expression on his usually immobile face.

"I wonder!" he murmured softly.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STARTLING TRUTH.



PHIPPS screwed up the piece of paper he had scribbled upon, and placed it in his pocket. He had been merely writing as an excuse for staying in the bank—not because he had anything to set down.

And on the top of his previous suspicions this new revelation was something in the nature of a shock. His young master had mysteriously squandered twenty pounds since the previous evening, and had refused to discuss the matter with him. And here was Mrs. Stokes changing four fivers into smaller money.

It may have been a coincidence, but it was significant. Particularly so as the Head's wife had been distinctly taken aback at finding Phipps in the bank. If everything was as it should be Mrs. Stokes would not have been startled at this chance meeting.

So the valet thought it as well to make a tactful inquiry.

"Quite a charming lady, isn't she?" he smiled, nodding towards the exit.

"Yes—smart, too," said the cashier. "Isn't she Mrs. Stokes, the wife of your new Headmaster at St. Frank's?"

"Yes," replied Phipps. "Very popular, too—which isn't at all surprising. By the way, do you happen to know if those fivers she brought in are the ones you gave me a day or two back for young Master Glenthorne?"

The cashier hesitated a moment.

"I couldn't say off-hand—but I'll soon see," he replied.

Perhaps it wasn't strictly formal to give information of this nature, but there was nothing private about it after all, and the bank was only a small branch, where business was done in a friendly, free-and-easy manner. Moreover, Phipps was Archie's man, and both he and Mrs. Stokes came from St. Frank's.

The cashier turned to a big book, opened it, and then looked up.

"Yes, they're the same four I issued to you on Master Glenthorne's last cheque," he said amiably. "I wonder how Mrs. Stokes got them."

"Oh, the boys generally change their

big money with the Head," replied Phipps. "I often advise Master Archie to let me bring small cash, but he insists upon fivers. I think he has an idea that it feels more like real money," he added, with a smile.

He wished the cashier "good afternoon," and walked out. But when he got into the roadway his eyes were rather grim. So that was where Archie's twenty pounds had mysteriously vanished to!

Phipps was surprised—and shocked.

Not that he had tumbled upon the correct answer to the problem. He had come to quite a different conclusion, but it was startling enough, all the same. And he decided that the matter shouldn't end here.

In the meantime Archie was at lessons.

And he was in a fairly contented frame of mind. After his great worry of the morning, it was a distinct relief to have the whole unfortunate matter settled.

He was still convinced that Fullwood was the culprit, although there was a lingering doubt regarding Alf Brent. That incident of the pyjama button kept cropping up in Archie's mind rather awkwardly.

But he daren't speak to Alf on the subject. If Brent was innocent—and Archie wouldn't consider any other possibility—he would probably be fearfully indignant at the insinuation. And then there would be an argument—words—and perhaps a quarrel. And Archie had an absolute horror of such things.

Phipps was getting a fresh twenty quid, so the matter was finished with. It was far better to let it drop. Twenty pounds was a large sum, but friendship was more valuable.

"What's wrong with you to-day, Archie?" whispered Alf, while the Form-master's back was turned. "You've been looking as solemn as a boiled owl ever since this morning!"

Archie started.

"Good gad! Not really?" he asked, adjusting his monocle.

"Yes, really."

"My dear old tea-cup, you're dreaming," murmured Archie. "I'm feeling as happy as anything. I'll admit I was somewhat moody this morning, but the spasm has passed. The sun shines again, and the old gears have got into working order. Eh? What ho! Speaking to me, sir?"

"Yes, Glenthorne, I am!" snapped Mr. Crowell. "You were talking!"

"Was I, sir?" asked Archie, confused. "Oh, well, now you mention it I suppose I absolutely was. Just a little chat concerning moods and so forth, sir."

"This is no time for talking of such matters, Glenthorne."

"No, sir. Absolutely not!" agreed Archie heartily. "In fact, between you and me and the old blackboard, sir, I've committed an offence against discipline, what? Kindly trot out the good old fifty lines, laddie, and we'll proceed with the afternoon's doings!"

The Form chuckled, and Mr. Crowell frowned.

"I don't think you deliberately intend to be impertinent, Glenthorne, and so I will overlook the offence," said Mr. Crowell coldly.

"Bally good!" said Archie. "A large assortment of thanks, sir. I'm dashed if this isn't a pleasant surprise——"

"If you insist upon talking, Glenthorne, I shall have no alternative but to reconsider my decision," broke in the Form-master. "I can only conclude that you are more than usually foolish this afternoon."

Archie started.

"Well, I mean, that's rather a priceless sort of insinuation, what?" he exclaimed firmly. "What I mean is, you absolutely implied that I'm a foolish sort of cove. Kindly allow me to observe, sir, that you're positively off the old track. That is to say——"

"Another word, Glenthorne, and I shall cane you!" snapped Mr. Crowell.

"Oddslife!" murmured Archie. "That, as it were, has somewhat closed up the good old flow!"

And lessons proceeded, the Form coming to the conclusion that Archie had been very lucky to escape punishment. Fortunately, Mr. Crowell knew Archie's little ways, and acted accordingly.

As soon as lessons were over, Alf Brent caught hold of Archie's arm and drew him aside.

"I'm not coming along to the study just yet," he said. "I want to pop to the village to buy some stamps and things. By the way, I think you want one of your fivers changed, don't you?"

"Fivers?" repeated Archie blankly.

"Yes—you mentioned something about it last night——"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie with haste. "But—but the fact is, I—— That is to say, the old mind has changed, Alf. Thanks all the same, but there's positively nothing doing."

Alf looked at him curiously.

"I can't understand you to-day, old son," he said bluntly. "You've been queer ever since this morning."

"This morning?"

"Yes."

"Who—me?"

"My only hat! Of course I mean you!" said Alf. "Don't look so dazed! You had just that same expression on your face when I came in the study, and found that pyjama button of mine."

"Oh, rather!" gasped Archie. "That ripping pyjama button, what? Bally good, old laddie! I—I mean——"

"I wasn't going to tell you anything about it, but I've got an idea that you've been secretly worrying," said Alf shrewdly. "Did you find that button of mine on the floor this morning?"

"Absolutely! Or, to be more exact, absolutely not!" said Archie, confused. "I

mean, to be precise, the old button sort of leered at me, as it were. There it was, don't you know, squatting on the good old carpet, glinting in the sunlight. Absolutely glinting!"

"Well, you needn't be mystified about it—it was mine!" said Alf. "It probably fell off my pyjamas last night. I remember butting against the table in the moonlight."

"Moonlight?" repeated Archie, fascinated.

"Yes—I slipped down to the study, just after midnight."

Archie clung to his chum desperately.

"But, dash it, you don't mean——"

"I mean that I dreamed about your giddy fivers!" grinned Alf. "I know what a careless fathead you are, and I remembered that you'd left twenty quid lying loose in your bureau. I couldn't sleep because of 'em, so I slipped down to ease my mind."

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie. "Then—then you—— That is, it was you who absolutely——"

He paused, unable to express himself.

"Of course it was me," nodded Alf, misunderstanding. "I had a look at that bureau, and was a bit surprised to find the notes gone——"

"Gone?" repeated Archie mechanically.

"Yes, and I was jolly glad to find that you'd learned sense at last," replied Alf.

"Of course, you put the notes in your pocket-book before going to bed, I suppose? A good thing, too. I don't like the way you leave your money lying about loose! Supposing I'd been dishonest? I might have pinched that twenty quid, and you couldn't have proved a thing!"

And Alf went off, leaving Archie feeling feeble and shaky. He knew that Alf had been speaking the absolute truth. And here was something that needed careful thought.

Archie tottered to his study in a kind of daze.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REAL ROBBER.



ONCE in his study, Archie Glenthorne sank into an easy-chair, and assured himself that this was too much for the old brain department. As a matter of fact, his mind was perfectly clear, and he could now see the position with the utmost distinctness.

Alf had given an explanation of his own nocturnal wanderings. And Archie felt mightily glad that he had refrained from mentioning the subject earlier. Alf's seemingly suspicious conduct had been perfectly open and above board. He had probably said nothing about it in the morning because he hadn't wanted to feel silly.

But Alf had merely gone downstairs to see if his study chum had put these

infernal notes in a safe place. And Alf had found the notes gone!

That was the significant point.

The notes had gone—and Archie himself had seen Fullwood mount the stairs a few minutes in advance of Alf! The evidence now pointed with absolute certainty to Ralph Leslie as the thief!

"Well, dash it, I'm not surprised," murmured Archie, with some relief. "I mean, Alf, the dear old bean, is positively cleared of all suspicious. As for Fullwood, he's a frightfully frightful blighter, so it doesn't frightfully matter!"

But Archie was puzzled, nevertheless. There was one point that worried him. If Fullwood had taken the money, how was it that Alf hadn't met him coming away with the spoils? For Archie didn't forget that both juniors had come upstairs within the space of a few minutes. There was a discrepancy here which couldn't be lightly dismissed.

Archie did dismiss it, but it still lingered in his mind. But it was a great relief to find out that Fullwood was guilty. The genial ass of the Remove finally concluded that he would take no steps. Fullwood deserved the sack, but to expose him would mean a fuss.

A discreet tap sounded on the door, and Phipps came in.

"What-ho!" exclaimed Archie pleasantly. "The good old priceless brew, what? The absolute stuff, Phipps—Hullo, hallo! What's this? To be more exact, what, Phipps, is this?"

He screwed his monocle into his eye, and looked severe.

"Where," he demanded, "is the tea?"

"I wasn't aware that you were quite ready, sir—"

"Rubbish, Phipps!" broke in Archie firmly. "I don't want to be impolite, and I wouldn't dream of hurting your feelings, but I must repeat—rubbish! I'll even go so far as to say rubbish with knobs on! The young master is always ready for tea!"

"I will attend to it at once, sir," said Phipps respectfully.

"Now that, of course, is a somewhat brainy observation," said Archie. "I mean, it cheers the old heart, and all that sort of stuff. Ah, the crisp and crinkly fivers, what? Good! The young master is pleased with you, Phipps."

Phipps coughed, and Archie dropped his monocle. He knew that cough of old. Phipps only used it as a kind of preliminary to something unpleasant. It generally pre-

pared a severe criticism of a necktie, or a pair of socks, or some such article of apparel that offended Phipps' tasteful eye.

"Oh, come!" protested Archie. "I mean, come! You don't absolutely mean to assure me, laddie, that the necktie fails to meet with your approval?"

"The necktie is in perfect taste, sir."

"I breathe again, Phipps," said Archie with relief. "The old heart absolutely resumes its normal clockwork-like speed. What-ho! The shoes, what?" I'll admit they're a trifle showy, but—"

"As it happens, sir, I have no wish to make any remarks concerning your appearance," said Phipps. "But if I may say so, sir, I think you have been somewhat indiscreet."

"Good gad! Not really?" asked Archie, horrified. "Indiscreet, Phipps? But, my dear old turnip-top, I'm the most careful bloke under the sun! Kindly spout forth, and relieve the young master of this ghastly chunk of anxiety! I tremble, Phipps—I literally shiver at the good old hocks!"

"I hope you will not be offended, sir, and I can only trust that you will take my remarks in the right spirit," said the valet quietly. "But I wish to refer to your unfortunate lapse from the path of discretion regarding Mrs. Stokes."

Archie leapt as though a wasp had stung him.

"Mrs. Stokes?" he repeated. "Oddslife! What's this, Phipps? What frightful piffle is this that proceeds from the old face gap? I must be allowed to remark, laddie, that you have wandered on to the wrong track! In some surprising way, you have taken the wrong turning! In other words, Phipps, several cogs have apparently stripped their bally threads!"

"I fear not, sir," said Phipps firmly. "I will admit that Mrs. Stokes is an eminently likeable lady—and, as the wife of our Headmaster, she is entitled to every courtesy and respect. But this, I imagine, hardly makes it advisable for you to advance her large sums of money."

Archie stared at Phipps blankly.

"Money?" he said, in a kind of whisper.

"Yes, sir. Twenty pounds."

"Twenty pounds?"

"I cannot possibly approve of this, sir—"

"No, of course not! Oh, absolutely not!" said Archie firmly. "You don't approve, Phipps. But, you priceless piece of cheddar, you're absolutely off the rails! I might even say that you have dashed headlong into a siding. Allow me to inform you, Phipps, that it is not my habit to lend doubloons to the wife of our respected headmaster."

Phipps looked at Archie closely.

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"Are you assuring me, sir, that you have not lent twenty pounds to Mrs. Stokes?"

"Yes, dash it, I am!"

"Then, Master Archie, I must respectfully express my strong disapproval of your attitude," said Phipps severely. "I never suspected you of calculated and deliberate falsehood!"

"Falsehood!" gurgled Archie, sliding off the lounge and leaping to his feet. "Why, dash it, what's the meaning of this, Phipps? How dare you? Gadzooks! You're becoming positively rude to the young master! I hate quarrels, Phipps, but unless you withdraw that poisonous remark, I shall be compelled to tick you off with no uncertain vim!"

Phipps remained unmoved.

"I may as well point out, sir, that it is quite futile to deny this misplaced generosity of yours," he said quietly. "While I was in the bank this afternoon, Mrs. Stokes came in. She asked the cashier to oblige her with small change for four five-pound notes. And I made it my duty to ascertain that those four notes were the very identical fivers that were in your own possession yesterday. So, you see, sir, I am fully aware of the exact position."

Archie stared at Phipps as though he were looking at a ghost. He turned quite pale, and his eyes became filled with alarm and bewilderment. But Archie Glenthorne was not in the least befuddled. The words he had just heard sank into his brain clearly and deeply.

"Laddie, remove the old carcass!" he panted faintly. "We will resume this discussion later. Trickle forth, Phipps, and vanish from sight. The young master would be alone!"

"I feel it is my duty to point out——"

"It is your duty, Phipps, not to point out, but to get out!" interrupted Archie hoarsely. "Dash it, you exasperating blighter, kindly proceed to travel! I insist, Phipps—I absolutely and positively insist! The young master has spoken!"

Phipps bowed, and departed.

And Archie sank upon the lounge with a hollow groan. There was no pretence about his sheer dismay and horror. For he knew the full and terrible truth.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood was not the thief! Mrs. Stokes—the wife of the headmaster himself—was the mysterious robber who had taken the twenty pounds from the bureau!

There was no room for doubt—no possibility of any other explanation. Mrs. Stokes had known of those notes, for Archie remembered that she had tripped into his study the previous day while he was carelessly dropping them in the drawer. And the fact that they had been in her possession this afternoon was proof enough of her guilt.

Archie was absolutely stunned.



Archie was startled out of his reverie by a hand jutting into the region of his middle waistcoat button. "Toffee?" said Willy briefly. "Good stuff!"

CHAPTER IX.

A SHOCK FOR HANDFORTH.



HANDFORTH waved his hand impatiently.

"If you chaps want to jaw about cricket, get behind me!" he said curtly. "I can't be bothered with your silly chatter! I've just had an inspiration, and I've got to develop it!"

Church and McClure were inclined to be indignant.

"Why, you started the cricket argument yourself!" said Church. "You were saying that Christine is improving his form——"

"Blow Christine!" snapped Handforth.

"Oh, all right——"

"And blow you!" added Edward Oswald gruffly. "Go away, and don't bother me! If either of you say a word, I'll knock you flat! Understand? One word—one syllable—and you'll be biffed into pulp!"

Church and McClure discreetly remained silent.

"I've just thought of an idea for the next Trackett Grim story," went on Handforth dreamily. "It's about the best stunt that any author ever invented. So don't interrupt me—let the idea develop in my inventive brain!"

The chums of Study D were coming up the lane in the evening twilight, having been to the village for a stroll. Handforth gazed into the sky with a far-away expression in his eyes.

"Good!" he murmured. "Tracket Grim is called upon to recover the earl's heirlooms! He finds them tucked away in a chimney, and the thief turns out to be—who do you think?"

Church and McClure remained silent.

"The household cat!" said Handforth triumphantly. "The cat's been trained to carry parcels, and it was butting across the room with the heirlooms when a dog appeared, and the cat bunked up the chimney for safety, leaving the heirlooms in a niche by accident. How's that?"

"Out!" said Church absently.

"Eh?"

Church started, and closed his mouth like a trap. McClure appeared greatly interested in a couple of wispy clouds. And Handforth glared at his chums ferociously.

"Are you fatheads dumb?" he roared. "Can't you speak? If you don't tell me that that Trackett Grim idea is marvellous, I'll smash you!"

"Look here, it's a bit too thick!" protested McClure, bursting out indignantly. "Two minutes ago you threatened to biff us into pulp if we spoke, and now you say you'll smash us if we don't! Go to the dickens! You and your rotten Trackett Grim, too!"

"Hear, hear!" said Church heartily. "Of all the rotten, mouldy ideas, that one of yours is the mouldiest! Why, if a story like that was printed in the Mag. there'd be a riot!"

Although Church and McClure were prepared to bolt, it is to be feared that there would have been gory work, but for the timely arrival of the station growler. This dilapidated old vehicle came creaking down the lane in the rear of an animated bunch of skin and bone that was honoured by the name of horse.

On the roof of the growler was a large trunk, and two or three articles of smaller baggage. Handforth paused in his work of pushing up his sleeves, and gazed at the hack.

"Hallo!" he said curiously. "Who's going away?"

The three juniors stood aside for the cab to pass, and they gazed into the interior with mild curiosity. And Handforth gave a gasp as he recognised the slim form of Irene Manners. The girl crouched back, obviously trying to conceal herself. But it was useless.

"Hi!" roared Handforth. "Pull up a minute!"

The cabman, peacefully dozing, nearly fell off the box, and he gave the reins such a jerk that the horse revealed a touch of animation. It actually reared up on its hind legs.

Handforth rushed to the nearest door, jerked it open, and leapt on the step—thereby causing the old cab to give such a list to starboard that the whole contraption nearly collapsed.

"I say, Miss Irene!" panted Handforth breathlessly. "What's the idea? You didn't say you were going—Great pip!" he added, in absolute dismay. "Is—is anything wrong?"

Handforth was horrified to see that Irene was in tears. The girl was confused and bewildered at being faced in this abrupt and unexpected fashion. She had had no time to compose herself. And so Handforth had caught her with red, tear-stained eyes and a sadly drooping mouth. Yet Irene looked just as pretty as ever, in spite of her obvious distress. Her very confusion was charming in a way, and Handforth's big, blundering heart gave a kind of double somersault.

"I—I say!" he blurted out. "What's wrong, Miss Irene? You—you ain't leaving?"

By this time the cab had come to a halt, and Church and McClure were at the other door. The unhappy Irene was exposed to the full scrutiny of six anxious eyes.

"I—I'm going away," she faltered, in a small voice. "I'm leaving the Moor View School for—for good."

"For good!" repeated the three juniors, in one startled voice.

She nodded silently and tearfully.

"And—and you didn't tell us anything about it?" asked Handforth, his tone expressing his wounded feelings. "Oh, I say, Miss Irene! But why? You didn't say a word about this yesterday!"

"I—I didn't know—yesterday," murmured the girl.

"Didn't know! Then your people have—"

"My people don't know anything—yet," said Irene miserably. "Oh, please! I—I can't stay—I'll miss the train! Good-bye, Ted—good-bye, all of you! And please—please don't question me any more."

Her distress was so acute that Church and McClure instinctively stepped away from the door. But Handforth was so startled and dismayed that he allowed his finer feelings to succumb to his anxiety.

"I—I say!" he blurted out, a great light bursting upon him. "You haven't been expelled, have you? You haven't got the sack?"

Irene had lowered her head, and only gave a little sob.

"Have you been sacked?" persisted Handforth hoarsely.

She gave her fair head a gentle inclination, not trusting herself to speak. And Handforth set his jaw like a rap, and his eyes blazed with tremendous fury.

"Sacked!" he muttered. "By George!"

He got down from the step, closed the door with a slam, and rushed to the box.

He glared up at the startled driver with such ferocity that the old fellow became scared.

"Turn round and drive back to the school!" ordered Handforth fiercely.

"My orders is to take the young leddy——"

"Blow your orders!" roared Handforth.

"Here! I'm not going to waste my time on you! Get off that box!"

"Mercy on us!" gasped the driver.

"What next?"

He was not left long in doubt as to what came next. Handforth leapt upon the box, and he gave the driver a push that sent him slithering to the side. The man scrambled down into the road with haste, firmly convinced that he had to deal with a lunatic.

Handforth seized the whip, cracked it through the air, and gave the horse the biggest fright of its life. By sheer luck, Handforth got the cab round, and the next moment it was careering up the lane at a positively dangerous speed.

CHAPTER X.

JUST LIKE HANDY.



IRENE MANNERS was startled and scared.

To find herself being galloped back towards the Moor View School was a bit of a shock, but she was helpless. She certainly shouted, but her voice was drowned by the rattle of the wheels, and the creaking of the old vehicle.

Handforth was standing on the box, urging the old nag to do its utmost, and the animal was so surprised that it showed a remarkable turn of speed. The situation was rather interesting.

Handforth had not paused to think of the why and the wherefore of this business. It didn't occur to him that he was acting in a high-handed fashion by whirling Irene back without consulting her on the subject. It was of no interest to him why the girl was leaving, or what she had done to warrant such a drastic punishment.

One fact—and one fact alone—penetrated to his brain.

Irene had been expelled! And as the thing was ridiculous—as the very thought of her leaving the Moor View School in disgrace was unthinkable—Handforth took the most direct means to get the girl back. It was characteristic of him to act in this blundering, bull-headed fashion. This was essentially a time for tact, but Handforth didn't even know the meaning of the word.

And sometimes direct action pays.

Disaster was averted by the narrowest of margins as the old cab swung through the gateway of the Moor View School and tore up the drive. Handforth brought the groan-

ing growler to a halt in front of the door, and he leapt down in one jump from the box. He was so excited that he would have faced the Prime Minister himself at this moment without the slightest compunction.

Bang! Crash! Thud!

He hammered on the door with enough force to break it in. Irene, in the cab, looked out of the window with startled dismay. She was too bewildered by the mad ride, and Handforth's drastic action, to make any move, or to offer any comment.

The door opened, and a maidservant appeared.

"Where's Miss Bond?" roared Handforth.

The girl staggered.

"Please, Master Handforth, I—I——"

The visitor's attitude so startled her that she couldn't finish her sentence. And at this same moment, too, a door opened on the other side of the hall, and Handforth caught sight of Miss Charlotte Bond standing there, with an expression of outraged dignity upon her face.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "What is this——"

"Look here, Miss Bond, what have you sacked Miss Irene for?" demanded Handforth aggressively, crossing the hall in three strides, and literally forcing the Headmistress before him into her sanctum. "It's all a mistake! She's got to stay here!"

Miss Bond was staggered.

"You—you must be mad!" she said faintly. "What is the matter with you, child? Calm yourself——"

"Child!" bellowed Handforth ferociously. "Who's a child?"

"Oh, dear! This—this is dreadful——"

"Of course it's dreadful!" said Handforth fiercely. "I'm surprised at you, Miss Bond! Sacking Miss Irene like this—and packing her off at a moment's notice! I've brought her back, and she's going to stay!"

Handforth took a deep breath, and stood there with his face flushed, his eyes gleaming, and his jaw set. Miss Bond recovered some of her composure, and her dignity.

"How dare you force your way into my private room in this fashion?" she asked angrily. "I shall report you to your Headmaster, and have you flogged for this outrageous behaviour——"

"I don't care if I get a dozen floggings!" interrupted Handforth recklessly. "But I'm not going to leave this place until you promise me that Miss Irene stays! That's flat!"

"Flat?" ejaculated Miss Bond faintly.

"Absolutely final!" said Handforth.

There was no mistake that the Headmistress was nonplussed. She was accustomed to dealing with schoolgirls, but in Handforth she was up against a serious problem.

In his present mood the leader of Study D was extremely difficult to handle. Even a stern schoolmaster would have had his hands full. For when Edward Oswald became fairly aroused he blundered on relentlessly, without fear, and without counting the odds.

Miss Bond dimly realised that the situation was an impossible one. Somehow or other it would have to be brought to a swift end. Here was a schoolboy—a mere junior—ordering her to take back a pupil who had been expelled in disgrace!

And the most astounding thing of all was that Miss Bond hadn't got the faintest idea as to how she should deal with the problem. There was something about Handforth's attitude which clearly told her that the slightest resistance would be fatal.

"Well?" asked Edward Oswald grimly. "I don't want to hurt your feelings, Miss Bond, and if I've been rude, I apologise! But while I'm alive you're not going to expel Miss Irene for nothing!"

The Headmistress displayed great tact. Instead of giving way to her anger, she curbed it, and tried to reason.

"But, my dear boy, you don't understand," she said gently. "It is very wrong of you to act like this. I am sure I don't know why I should explain to you; but the girl has been expelled for a gross and unforgivable offence!"

"What offence?" demanded Handforth, staring.

"I cannot tell you—and I am thoroughly tired of this preposterous situation," said Miss Bond acidly. "Unless you go at once, young man, I shall call some of my men-servants and have you ejected!"

Handforth bristled.

"All right—try it!" he said grimly. "If anybody tries to sling me out, I'll slaughter them! I know jolly well that Miss Irene hasn't done anything wrong—she couldn't! It isn't in her! She's as sweet as—as anything! You've made a mistake, Miss Bond, and you've got to take Miss Irene back——"

"The girl has been expelled," interrupted the Headmistress curtly. "She has already gone, and will never return——"

"She's outside now!" broke in Handforth, breathing hard. "I tell you, I won't stand by and see her expelled like this——"

"Handforth!" rapped out a sharp, curt voice.

Edward Oswald turned, and gasped. Nelson Lee stood in the doorway, and the House-master-detective's expression was grim. For an instant Handforth wavered, and then he squared his shoulders.

"Yes, sir?" he said gruffly.

"Leave these premises at once; I will deal with you later," said Nelson Lee. "Pardon my intrusion, Miss Bond, but I heard the boy's voice, and thought perhaps my presence would be opportune."

"I am grateful to you, Mr. Lee!" said the Headmistress, with intense relief. "Thank you for coming, sir! This boy has nearly driven me off my head! His impertinence has been atrocious!"

Handforth turned desperately to Nelson Lee.

"I didn't mean to be impertinent, sir; I hardly knew what I was saying!" he ex-

claimed passionately. "Miss Bond has expelled Irene Masters, and I know it's a mistake—I know she hasn't done anything wrong! And so I brought her back, and I've been trying to get Miss Bond to——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Nelson Lee gently. "If you will go, Handforth, there is a possibility that this matter can be adjusted. Obey me, my boy, and I may bring you good news."

Handforth's eyes lit up with eagerness.

"You—you mean——"

But Nelson Lee would explain no further, and Handforth was forced to depart. He went out in a fever of anxiety, hoping to see Irene. But the girl had gone indoors. Church and McClure were waiting in the lane, both of them excited and a bit scared.

Handforth soon learned that his chums had met Nelson Lee near the gates, and had informed him of Handforth's extraordinary conduct. The detective had lost no time in hurrying to the scene. It had really seemed that Lee was interested in Irene's fate more than he was concerned about Handforth's high-handed escapade.

For half an hour Handforth & Co. haunted the lane, Handy being inconsolable. His chums tried to cheer him up once, but the result was so painful that they forebore any further attempt.

And then Nelson Lee appeared—grave, thoughtful, and preoccupied. Handforth & Co. rushed up to him in a body; and Edward Oswald clutched at his sleeve.

"Is—is it all right, sir?" he asked breathlessly.

"Upon my soul, Handforth, you appear to take an extraordinary interest in this young lady," smiled Lee. "It appears that Miss Bond acted upon unreliable information, and she has now cancelled the sentence on Miss Manners, and the latter will remain at the Moor View School."

"Oh, fine!" gasped Handforth delightedly. "I knew there was a bloomer, sir—I told Miss Bond so, only she wouldn't believe me. If I hadn't acted like that, Miss Irene would have been sacked!"

"Possibly, Handforth—but she would have soon returned," smiled Lee. "And I cannot condone your gross conduct in forcing your way into Miss Bond's establishment. You will write me one hundred lines."

"Yes, sir," said Handforth faintly.

He stood there, staring, after Nelson Lee had walked away. Only a hundred lines! It was clear enough that Nelson Lee considered the offence a mere triviality.

And Irene was saved! She hadn't been sacked, and everything was all serene! Handforth was jubilant and happy. He didn't know how the miracle had been wrought, and didn't care.

But Nelson Lee knew a great deal more about this business than anybody suspected—and it had only taken him a short while to convince Miss Charlotte Bond that Irene was a victim, and not a plotter.

And so everything was made right in that direction. But in another direction, affairs were gathering up for a veritable storm.

CHAPTER XI.

PHIPPS PUTS HIS FOOT IN IT!



ARCHIE GLENTHORNE sat in his study with a kind of dull, pained look on his face. He had forgotten all about tea, his hair was untidy, and he looked something of a wreck.

For a considerable time he had been pacing up and down, throwing himself on the lounge, and generally behaving in a manner totally foreign to his usual habits.

But at last he had sifted the whole thing out, and although he was by no means satisfied, he had come to a definite and positive decision.

Without any question of doubt, the four five-pound notes had been taken from his bureau by Mrs. Stokes. Phipps' evidence was quite sufficient to prove this, without anything else.

Archie's original horrified amazement was now toned down a bit. It was a ghastly discovery, of course—a terrible thing to find that the Headmaster's wife had descended to such a terrible extremity.

Another fellow would possibly have got very excited, and spread the story abroad. But Archie's one overwhelming desire was to keep the secret. He couldn't possibly get Mrs. Stokes into trouble with her husband. That wasn't to be thought of. And the only course for him to pursue was to forget the matter and be more careful with his money in future.

"Perhaps the poor old thing was in a frightful stew about a bally drapery bill, or something," Archie told himself. "It's perfectly frightful, the way these ladies run up the old accounts. They don't mean to do it, but, dash it all, the good old bill roars up before a cove can look over his dashed shoulder! I mean to say, I know all about it! So that, as it were, is that!"

And Archie lightly dismissed the matter like this. It never occurred to him that Mrs. Stokes ought to have obtained all money for personal use from the Head; it didn't strike him that the theft indicated that the Head's wife was engaged in some mysterious, sinister adventure that was too dangerous for her husband's knowledge.

Neither did Archie appreciate that by hushing the affair up, he was condoning the offence, and encouraging a similar one. In the largeness of his heart, Archie found any amount of excuses for the lady—and even sympathised with her.

"If it wasn't so bally awkward, I'd ask her to let me step into the good old breach, as it were," he told himself. "But if I

say a word, the cat, so to speak, will be out of the good old bag. So, laddie, kindly efface the poisonous incident from the old plates of memory, and start with a fresh slate."

But at this moment Phipps glided into the room.

"I have not disturbed you earlier, sir, as I imagined that you would prefer to be alone," said Phipps.

"A bally brainy scheme, old teapot," said Archie. "Oddslife! That reminds me! I actually believe, Phipps, that the young master has been without his daily cup that cheers! Tea, Phipps—proceed to make the brew, and bring it before me."

"Certainly, sir," said Phipps, without moving an inch. "But if you'll pardon me, Master Archie, there's just one little subject I would like to mention."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Let the flood flow forth."

"Concerning the sum of twenty pounds that we discussed earlier, sir," said Phipps. "Might I respectfully suggest that it is most unwise on your part to lend such heavy sums to the Headmaster's wife?"

Archie started, and looked rather blank.

"Good gad! Lend such sums to— Why, dash it, Phipps, what are you saying? Do I hear aright? Do the old ear-drums catch the correct flow of language?"

Phipps came forward, and lowered his voice.

"Perhaps I had better inform you, sir, that the whole matter is clear to me," he said softly. "With your usual generosity, you loaned Mrs. Stokes twenty pounds. The fact that those four notes were in her possession prove it quite clearly."

"Oh, rather!" exclaimed Archie. "Or, I should say, what ho! Deucedly brainy of you, Phipps. It appears that the good old grey matter is circulating somewhat lavishly."

Archie was relieved. Phipps, in spite of his extraordinary shrewdness—and Archie was sometimes quite scared at the fellow's priceless braininess—had come to the conclusion that the money had been loaned! This was splendid hearing. So, although Phipps knew about the notes, he still had no suspicion as to the actual truth.

"Well, Phipps?" said Archie, as the valet remained silent. "What, as it were, is glueing you to the old carpet? I may be wrong, but I have a hazy recollection that I instructed you to dash about in chase of tea. Kindly trail the good old brew to its lair!"

"In one moment, sir," said Phipps. "I am sure it is not my intention to be presumptuous, and your financial matters are, of course, entirely your own concern. But may I be allowed to point out the folly of this rash behaviour of yours?"

"No, you may not!" said Archie stiffly. "Absolutely not! Dash you, Phipps, this is a bit too thick! In fact, it's absolutely

congealed! And what the deuce do you mean by calling my behaviour rash?"

"Well, sir, it is hardly the correct thing for a young gentleman in your position to make secret monetary advances to a lady of Mrs. Stokes' high standing," said Phipps firmly. "If the Head were to discover your generosity I am afraid there would be grave trouble."

"I say! Look here! Absolutely!" ejaculated Archie, rising to his feet and frowning heavily. "Cease the current, dash you! The young master dislikes your tone, Phipps!"

"You hardly appreciate, sir, that the grave trouble I hinted at would not be for yourself, but for Mrs. Stokes," went on Phipps, unmoved. "I therefore beseech you to completely finish with this unhappy intrigue—"

"What ho!" said Archie grimly. "One more word, Phipps, and the young master will be reluctantly compelled to absolutely give you the order of the boot! I regard your interference as not merely foul, but absolutely mouldy! Another word, laddie, and I'll dashed well sack you!"

"I am only speaking for your own good, sir—"

"Rubbish!" interrupted Archie indignantly. "Rubbish! In fact, rubbish, dash you, in cart loads! I am annoyed, Phipps. More than that, I am incensed. Observe the frightful flush of fury arising to the young master's countenance! Buzz off, and obey orders—and never speak of this matter again! I am firm, Phipps—I am concrete!"

Phipps made one last effort.

"I have no wish to displease you, Master Archibald, but I feel that it is my duty to insist—" he began.

"Insist?" interrupted Archie furiously. "You insist, dash you?"

"In your own interests, sir—yes!"

"Well this, of course, has done it!" said Archie, his eyes blazing. "I will admit, Phipps, that you are a pretty useful cove. You are one of those fellows who rally round with large assortments of priceless advice, and all that sort of thing. But there comes a time when the old limit is reached. And I might add that my limit has not only been reached, but I've positively lost sight of it in the distance! I am furious, Phipps. I am so dashed furious, in fact, that your form appears repulsive in my gaze!"

"I am very sorry, sir—"

"No! Certainly not! I refuse to be talked over by your bally tongue, Phipps!" said Archie sternly. "Usually, your appearance soothes and comforts me. But just now the sight of you gives me horrid pains up and down the old spinal cord. Go, Phipps! Depart from this door and never darken it again! To be absolutely brief, you're sacked!"

"Sacked, sir?" ejaculated Phipps, dumb-founded.

"Absolutely!" roared Archie. "At last

the blood of the Glenthornes is up! I can stand a lot, Phipps, but when it comes in two lots, I explode! And you are sacked—absolutely dismissed! Buzz off, and I will see my dashed solicitors about settling your poisonous wages! From this moment, Phipps, I cease to have anything whatever to do with you! I regard you as the most noxious slice of rank vegetation under the sun. You are a blot on the landscape—an absolute smudge in my life! In a nutshell, Phipps, you are an excrescence! Go, dash you! I've absolutely come to the end of my good old vocabulary!"

Archie pointed dramatically to the door, his eyes flashing, his chest heaving with emotion. Phipps, with alarm in his eyes, attempted to speak, but a hard look crept into his expression.

Without a word he turned and strode out.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE CARPET!



DR. BEVERLEY STOKES looked up in some surprise.

"Come in, Phipps—don't stand in the doorway," he said cheerily. "How are you getting on? How's that lazy young beggar of a Glenthorne? Everything all serene?"

The Headmaster was always free and easy like this. He was the same to everybody, and, as a consequence, the entire school regarded him with genuine affection.

"I regret, sir, that my mission is somewhat unpleasant," said Phipps gravely. "Indeed, I might even say that it is of an extremely delicate nature, and I can only trust that you will understand my good motives and appreciate the nature of the very thin ice upon which I am treading."

Dr. Stokes looked at the man curiously.

"A mystery, eh?" he said lightly. "Sit down, Phipps. Don't be afraid—let's talk this over quietly. Do I understand that Glenthorne is connected with this—er—thin ice?"

"Yes, sir," replied Phipps. "Quite by accident, it has come to my knowledge that Master Glenthorne loaned the sum of twenty pounds to a certain party in the school—"

"Twenty pounds!" ejaculated the Head. "Ye gods! I suppose you mean twenty shillings?"

"No, sir—twenty pounds."

"But good heavens, you don't mean to tell me that Glenthorne can play fast and loose with such enormous sums of money?" asked the Head, in astonishment. "He's only a junior boy."

"His father, Colonel Glenthorne, is extremely generous, sir," said Phipps. "But I must say that the colonel is wise in allowing Master Archie so much rope. For

the young gentleman is consistently judicious in the manner of his expenditure, and careful to a degree. At least, he has been so until this present occasion."

"And he has lent somebody twenty pounds?"

"Yes, sir," said Phipps, shifting rather nervously in his seat. "I hardly like to continue, but my anxiety for Master Archie is keen, and I wish to inform you of this matter, so that there can be no possibility of its recurrence. Indeed, sir, I feel that it is my plain duty to inform you of the unfortunate facts."

"Well, go ahead," said Dr. Stokes. "I must confess I don't see anything particularly alarming yet."

"I may say, sir, that I have just had a bitter quarrel with Master Glenthorne, and I have been formally dismissed from his service," went on Phipps. "Naturally, sir, I do not take such a dismissal seriously. But in order to settle this grave matter, I have come to you. And I fear I shall shock you when I give you the name of the party who borrowed this sum of twenty pounds from Master Glenthorne."

Dr. Stokes laughed.

"I am strong," he said calmly. "Go ahead!"

"It was Mrs. Stokes, sir," said Phipps gravely.

The Head acted rather differently to what Phipps had anticipated. Instead of jumping up, he sat perfectly still. Phipps saw his lips tighten, and he turned his head and gazed long and steadily at the valet.

"Mrs. Stokes?" he repeated slowly.

"Yes, sir."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Unfortunately I am."

"I should like to hear your evidence on the point, Phipps."

Dr. Stokes rose to his feet and paced slowly up and down. This was the only indication he gave of the tumultuous agitation which throbbed beneath his calm exterior. Phipps, being a shrewd man and a keen observer, did not fail to notice the signs, and he secretly admired the Head for his splendid control.

As briefly as possible, Phipps explained how he had been in the bank that afternoon, and how Mrs. Stokes had come in to change four fivers into smaller money. Phipps added the other details of the case, and there was no room for the slightest doubt. Dr. Stokes sat down at last, his cheerful, youthful face haggard and drawn.

He was under no misapprehension as to why his wife had borrowed the money. In fact, it did not surprise him a great deal to learn of this—but it staggered him. And he realised, at the same time, that he was greatly indebted to Phipps for bringing the affair to his notice so promptly and so delicately.

Phipps himself had carefully considered the matter before taking this step. He had not acted in any vindictive spirit. His



"I just want you to do me a little favour, if you don't mind," said Mrs. Stokes, with a charming look.

sole interest was in his young master, and he had concluded that the whole business was opposed to reason and common sense. And since Archie would not discuss the matter, Phipps had had no alternative but to go to the Headmaster himself. Phipps wanted to see Archie put straight. He feared that the genial junior was being imposed upon by Mrs. Stokes. And it was in the interests of all concerned that her husband should know.

Phipps was no tale-bearer. He was a sportsman through and through. But in such a grave affair as this he found it impossible to shoulder the responsibility alone.

"I am glad you came to me, Phipps," said the Head slowly. "I certainly do not regard your action as presumptuous. On the contrary, I admire your courage and your loyalty to Glenthorne. You may be quite certain that this unfortunate business will be settled. I am convinced that I can rely fully and safely on your discretion."

Phipps was light-hearted with relief.

"Absolutely, sir," he said quietly. "Not another soul shall know a word—and I can safely re-assure you regarding Master Archie's discretion. He is looked upon as something of a simpleton by the other boys, but I can give you my word, sir, that he is surprisingly shrewd, and his tact is positively astonishing."

Phipps departed, feeling that he had done a great deal to assist his young master in this trouble. He little realised that his intervention was to have exactly the opposite effect.

Left alone, the Head paced up and down for some time, and was about to ring the bell, when the door opened and Mrs. Stokes entered. She was looking unusually charming, her deep, brown eyes merry and laughing, her slim figure perfectly gowned.

"Why, dear, you're looking quite ferocious!" she laughed.

"I am glad you have come, Joyce," said Dr. Stokes quietly. "I was just about to ring for the page-boy so that he could take a message from me. I am afraid I have something very serious to discuss."

Mrs. Stokes looked alarmed. Some of the colour fled from her cheeks, but she held herself well in hand. She was only a girl of just over twenty, and as pretty as she had been in her teens.

"I—I don't understand what you mean, Barry," she faltered.

"Joyce, dear, it hurts me to talk like this, but it must be done," said the Head gently. "And it won't help matters to beat about the bush. Why did you borrow twenty pounds from Glenthorne of the Remove?"

Mrs. Stokes uttered a little cry and sank into a chair.

"Recently, I have closed your banking account, and refused to allow you the handling of any cash—for reasons which I need not remind you of," went on the Head, his distress quite obvious. "But, my dear little girl, it was madness for you to humiliate yourself by borrowing money—big money—from a junior schoolboy! And I am horrified when I realise what the money was for!"

Mrs. Stokes was breathing quickly.

"There—there's a mistake!" she said, with a catch in her voice. "Oh, Barry! I didn't borrow the money——"

"It will not help matters to deny it, Joyce—I have clear evidence," said her husband gravely. "I shall, of course, repay this sum to the boy at once."

In a few brief words, he explained how the proof had come into his possession. And by this time Mrs. Stokes was sobbing brokenly—with a kind of wild anguish in her expression.

And before the Head could even try to comfort her, she suddenly rose to her feet, swayed to the door, and passed out, sobbing more bitterly than ever.

The Head shrugged his shoulders, and touched the bell-push.

CHAPTER XIII.

ROUGH ON ARCHIE.



DR. STOKES sat in his chair with a new calmness upon him.

Ten minutes had elapsed, and during this brief time he had decided upon his course of action. More than once he had been tempted to go in search

of his wife to comfort her—for he cared for her a great deal more than most people imagined. But the Head was a believer in "first things first," and it was essential that he should have Archie Glenthorne brought before him at once.

There was a tap at the door, and Archie entered.

"I am glad you have come at once, Glenthorne—come in, my boy, and sit down," said Dr. Stokes quietly. "That's right—close the door. I have something rather serious to talk to you about."

Archie was full of misgiving.

"Nothing very frayed at the edge, I hope, sir?" he asked.

"I fear it is quite as bad as that," said the Head, opening a drawer and taking out a cheque-book. "I regret I have insufficient cash at the moment, but as you have a banking account, a cheque will probably serve the same purpose."

Archie's monocle dropped, and he gave a gulp.

"A—a cheque, sir?" he repeated. "Oh, but, I say! I mean, the old brain-box doesn't absolutely grasp the scheme——"

"I owe you the sum of twenty pounds, Glenthorne," said Dr. Stokes. "This sum, you will remember, was advanced by you to Mrs. Stokes——"

"One moment, sir!" gasped Archie. "Just one moment! Has Phipps been here? Has Phipps been pouring sundry words into your ear?"

"Phipps has been here, yes——"

"The poisonous blighter!" said Archie indignantly. "The absolute traitor, by gad!"

"You are accusing Phipps unjustly," said the Head sternly. "Let me tell you, Glenthorne, that your man is not only an invaluable servant, but a trustworthy companion and a genuine friend. It is my intention to repay you this sum of twenty pounds——"

"Just another moment, sir—in fact, two moments!" broke in Archie. "Of course, there's been a foul mistake. This is what comes of Phipps dashing about here and there, and hurling himself at conclusions. I mean to say, the chappie is getting too agile with his dashed jumping! Let me repeat, sir, there's been a foul mistake."

"In what way, Glenthorne?"

"I absolutely deny that I lent Mrs. Stokes a bally farthing!" said Archie grimly. "Why, dash it, the whole thing is ridiculous! Just think of the frightfully humiliating position for the dear lady! Borrowing cash from a bally junior! I'm surprised, sir, that you should take any notice of these pestiferous rumours!"

"If it were only a rumour, Glenthorne, I should be a happier man than I am," said the Head quietly. "Do you absolutely deny advancing this sum to Mrs. Stokes?"

"Yes, sir—absolutely!" retorted Archie firmly.

He could do this with a clear conscience, for he knew well enough that Mrs. Stokes had taken the money like a thief in the night. And he fondly believed that his denial would have the desired effect. It didn't. The Head quietly told him of the positive proof. Indeed, he frankly informed Archie that Mrs. Stokes had acknowledged the loan. And this was true, although she had not said so in so many words.

It was a staggerer for Archie. But having taken up his position, it was impossible to retract—without revealing the full, ghastly truth. It was bad enough for the Head to believe that his wife had borrowed the twenty pounds. What would his anguish be when he learned that she had stolen it? Archie's one thought, now, was to shield the unfortunate girl.

"I'm frightfully sorry, sir, but it makes no difference," he said, drawing himself up. "It seems dashed conclusive, but it isn't. I didn't lend Mrs. Stokes a penny."

The Head frowned with sudden anger.

"Come, Glenthorne, I shall lose my patience if you remain so foolish," he said sharply. "I shall not punish you for admitting the obvious. I don't blame you in the least—I merely wish to have this thing settled."

"There's nothing to settle, sir," persisted Archie. "Absolutely nothing. Mrs. Stokes didn't borrow anything from me. We didn't discuss the matter, and I give you my solemn word of honour that I'm speaking the truth. I haven't lent Mrs. Stokes any money of any kind whatever."

Archie spoke firmly, and with a ring of conviction. But this only made Dr. Stokes the more angry. And the junior dimly realised that he might be doing wrong by taking this course—that it might have been better to acknowledge that he had lent the money—but he refrained.

For it would have entailed a deliberate falsehood, and Archie had a horror of lying. Perhaps he didn't quite realise that the truth sounded false to the core.

And Dr. Stokes could hardly be blamed for his present anger. With such positive proof in his possession, it seemed conclusive that Archie was denying the matter out of sheer obstinacy. And the Head, worried and harassed more intensely than his manner had previously shown, burst out into a flood of intense anger.

"Are you telling me, Glenthorne, on your solemn word of honour, that you did not advance this money?" he demanded loudly.

"Yes, sir," replied Archie, rather taken aback.

"You are lying, you young idiot!" shouted the Head. "What is the good of this foolery? I will give you just one chance to admit the truth, and then I will pay you this cheque."

"I did not advance the money, sir," said Archie steadily.

"Are you saying this because you have some idiotic notion that you don't want the money returned?" stormed the Head. "I am out of patience, Glenthorne. Unless you admit the fact, and accept this cheque, I will flog you in the presence of the whole school!"

Possibly the Head didn't quite mean this threat, but Archie's next words sealed his fate.

"All right, dash you, flog me!" exclaimed the elegant junior, rising to his full height with outraged dignity. "Why, I thought you were a sportsman, and I find you're nothing but a bally bully! Absolutely!"

Dr. Stokes quivered.

"That is enough, young man!" he said thickly. "I forgive your impertinence, for I realise that the words were spoken in anger. But I cannot forgive your gross departure from the truth. I shall flog you at once—publicly! And I shall send the twenty pounds to your father!"

Archie closed his lips and said no more.

He was led straight to the punishment-room, and the school was astonished shortly afterwards to learn that everybody had to collect in Big Hall. Later there was a storm of comment when Archie Glenthorne was led on to the platform.

Dr. Stokes was looking grim—his usual good humour and light-hearted familiarity were gone. He said very little to the school, but just enough to set all the tongues wagging.

"You have been called together to witness the flogging of this boy for the grave offence of deliberate and calculated falsehood!" said the Head grimly. "I shall go into no details. Glenthorne, step this way!"

Now that the supreme moment had arrived, Dr. Stokes was ready to kick himself for having gone so far. But nobody realised his secret anguish—his well-nigh insuperable worry. The Head hardly knew what he was doing. Certainly, he was not himself. And his thoughts were with his wife rather than with the boy he flogged.

It was a severe birching, but Archie took it without flinching. Never once did he utter the slightest protest. And yet one word from him would have saved him from this ordeal! But that one word would have exposed Mrs. Stokes as a thief! Archie said nothing.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALONE!

HANDFORTH grabbed Archie by the arm and swung him round.

"What have you been up to, you ass?" he asked bluntly.

"Kindly release me," replied Archie. "It's no good asking questions, old boy—I've got nothing to say."

"Then you admit you deserved that flogging?"

"I admit absolutely nothing."

"That's rot!" said Handforth. "It's the first time you've been swished, Archie, and I've never seen the Head looking so wild! You must have been up to something pretty rotten!"

"If you think so, laddie, you can bally well think!" retorted the elegant junior with heat. "But I must say I'm frightfully disappointed. I always thought you were a pal!"

He wrenched himself away, and continued his way across the lobby, and strode out into the twilight of the Triangle. Handforth stood looking after him rather blankly.

"It's beyond me!" he said, scratching his head.

"Then you ain't so keen as you make out!" sneered Fullwood. "I can understand the thing without any difficulty."

"Who asked for your opinion?" roared Handforth.

Fullwood glared.

"I've got as much right to state my opinion as you have!" he retorted. "An' it's as clear as daylight that Glenthorne's a rotten hypocrite! Always pretendin' to be as good as gold, an' yet he's a rotten liar! The Head wouldn't have swished him like that for anythin' trivial!"

"Hear, hear!" said Armstrong.

And a number of other juniors were in ready agreement. It was astonishing how prompt they were to condemn a fellow without having heard a word against him.

And for once Handforth had nothing to say.

For the facts were, indeed, strikingly significant. He knew as well as the others that Dr. Stokes was a lenient, free and easy Head. And it certainly must have been something excessively bad to have caused him to administer such a sound punishment. And the Head's very reticence regarding Archie's misdemeanour spoke for itself. Obviously, Glenthorne had committed something of a particularly guilty nature. He must have been caught red-handed in a gross and malicious lie.

And although the junior school discussed the question excitedly and amazedly, no satisfactory explanation was arrived at.

Alf Brent was deeply concerned, but he had lost sight of Archie, and couldn't find him. He was searching everywhere for his unfortunate chum. But he didn't think of looking in the dim and secluded cloisters.

Archie was there, mooching up and down dejectedly.

He wasn't thinking of the pain that racked his body. That was nothing. A flogging was pretty ghastly, but he'd soon get over it. It was the humiliation which caused him the agony—the knowledge that he was branded as a liar in front of the whole school. And yet he had spoken nothing but the truth! That was the bitterness of it.

And yet, at the same time, Archie was aware of a slight sense of exhilaration. By his silence he had saved Mrs. Stokes from discovery. Nobody but he knew the truth; nobody even suspected that the twenty pounds had been stolen, and not advanced.

And Archie reflected that it had been worth while, after all. He had no particular affection for Mrs. Stokes; he didn't think anything of her except that she was a member of the sex he had always been taught to respect. Possibly, she wasn't worth the ordeal he had gone through. Everything pointed to the fact that she was, indeed, a worthless lot.

But this made no difference to Archie.

She was a woman—and she was the wife of the headmaster. He had saved her from—

At this point Archie's thoughts were abruptly interrupted. A shadow fell across the path in front of him, and the next moment Mrs. Stokes herself gripped his arm.

"Oh, so here we are, what?" asked Archie, rather confused. "I mean to say, good-evening, Mrs. Stokes!"

"You poor boy!" whispered the Head's wife, in distress. "It was cruel of Barry to flog you like that! I didn't know anything about it until afterwards—until it was too late—"

"Oh, I say!" protested Archie. "It was nothing, Mrs. Stokes—absolutely nothing! I'm as right as rain, you know. A chappie isn't any good unless he can stand a good old swishing."

"But—but why did you allow it?" asked the Head's wife softly. "I was hoping that I might find you, and I am glad you are alone. I want to thank you, Archie—deeply, from the bottom of my heart."

"Oh, really! I mean—"

"And I must explain about that money!" went on Mrs. Stokes quickly. "I know you are terribly puzzled about it. It was I who stole it from your bureau, and I—I—"

"That's all right, Mrs. Stokes," interrupted Archie hastily. "I knew that long ago—absolutely!"

"You knew it?" she repeated, staring at him.

"Rather!"

"You knew it before my husband flogged you?"

"Yes, of course!"

"But—but one word would have saved you!" said Mrs. Stokes, in wonder. "If you had told Barry the truth, you would have saved yourself that terrible ordeal."

"Yes, dash it, but I should have landed you into a pretty nasty kind of a pickle," replied Archie. "I mean, the Head wouldn't be absolutely delighted to learn the truth about those deuced fivers, would he? But kindly allow the matter to drop, Mrs. Stokes—"

"It was splendid of you—it was noble!" breathed Mrs. Stokes brokenly. "I shall

never be able to thank you enough. I—I didn't mean to steal the money——"

"Oh, I say, you know!" mumbled Archie miserably.

"I shall pay you back, Archie, be certain of that!" went on the Head's wife. "I was mad when I crept downstairs in the night and took the money. I had to have it—it was a desperate case. And I dared not go to my husband because—because—— Oh, I can't explain! If I did you would despise me even more than you do now."

"Absolutely not!" said Archie stoutly. "I don't despise you at all, dear lady! Odds-life! I'll tell you what! I happen to have

instead of condemning Mrs. Stokes, he pitied her; he was horrified at her predicament.

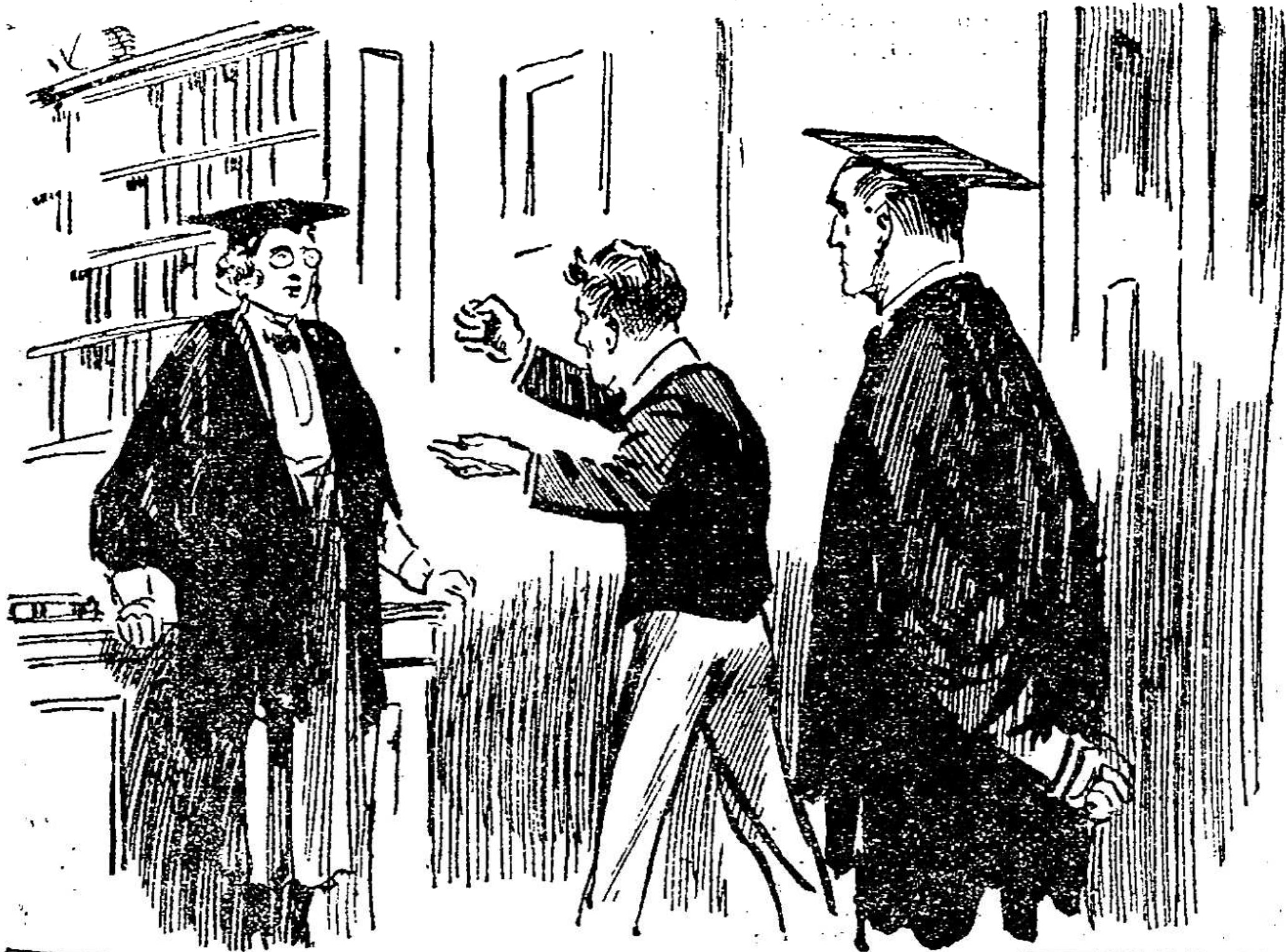
But he felt better for her little talk with him. He could face the others more bravely. Phipps, of course, had gone, and Archie was just beginning to realise how much he needed Phipps.

He went indoors miserable and forlorn, feeling utterly alone. He entered his study and found Phipps standing at attention.

"Will there be anything you require to-night, sir?" asked Phipps deferentially.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie, staring.

"Yes, sir."



"She's outside now!" broke in Handforth, breathing hard. "I tell you I won't stand by and see her expelled like this——"

"Handforth!" rapped out a sharp, curt voice.

another twenty quid in the old wallet. What about it?"

"No—no! Don't speak of it!" murmured Mrs. Stokes, her voice shaking. "Before long, perhaps, you will understand—you will realise that I am not so bad as you have reason to believe. And then you may forgive me, Archie. I am very miserable, but your wonderful behaviour has been a bright, hopeful spot amid all the blackness."

She pressed his arm again and glided away into the gloom.

Perhaps her secret was not so obscure as she imagined. Archie, at least, had a fairly keen idea as to the truth. And

"But, dash it, I biffed you out!" said Archie.

"Yes, sir."

"And you've disobeyed the young master, what?"

"Yes, sir."

"I must remark, Phipps, that your brains are of a dashed high order," said Archie approvingly. "Laddie, kindly dash about and make some tea! I am feeling sadly in need of a revive."

And while Phipps went for the tea, Archie sank almost happily on to the lounge. Life wasn't so bad, after all!

THE END.

By Your Editor



My Dear Readers,—

Before passing judgment on the unfortunate Mrs. Stokes, it will be as well to know all the circumstances that have placed her and Dr. Stokes in the awful situation in which we find them. Scandal mongers, such as Fullwood and Co. and Teddy Long, ever ready to think the worst of anyone, are gloating over this terrible affair. Their evil tongues will spread the news of Mrs. Stokes' disgrace throughout the village of Bellton, and soon the whole countryside will resound with the scandal.

"THE SNAKE IN THE SCHOOL!"

The very best thing that can happen is for a complete clearing up of this unsavoury business. The truth will out before long, for Nelson Lee is hot on the trail of the individual who is actually the cause of the mischief. In fact, the whole mystery

will be explained next week in the final story of this series, "THE SNAKE IN THE SCHOOL."

THE CALL OF THE DESERT.

Exciting news concerning Sir Crawford Grey's Sahara expedition will be a strong feature in our forthcoming story. A letter is received from a Government official in Lagos to the effect that the party has been attacked by a hostile tribe and made prisoners. There is considerable excitement at St. Frank's at this astounding news, and it is suggested that a big contingent of their number be sent out to rescue their fellow Removites, Pitt and Grey. Something certainly will have to be done, and without delay. Therefore look out next week, my chums, for a very important announcement!

Your sincere friend,
THE EDITOR.

SILVER CUPS AND FREE FOOTBALLS!

Don't make any mistake about this. They are Handsome Solid Silver Challenge Cups and Superb Match Footballs, and they figure in an amazing FREE OFFER to be made this autumn by the proprietors of that stunning sports story paper, the

BOYS' REALM

The whole idea is to encourage Junior Football. There are no difficult conditions to be fulfilled, no worrying problems to be solved—nothing to do but just write and ask for the stunning Free Gifts.

DON'T DELAY!

You will want to know how, when, and where to write. This week's number of the "Boys' Realm" will tell you. Ask your newsagent for it now. And if you can't get this week's number, order next week's in advance. That will tell you, too.

AN OFFER THAT CONCERNS YOU!



MY AMERICAN NOTE-BOOK

By the Author of our St. Frank's Stories.



No. 32. THROUGH COLORADO AND NEW MEXICO.

TUESDAY morning, upon arising, I found that we had already slipped through a corner of Colorado State—on the quiet, so to speak, for this part of the journey took place in the night, and so I saw nothing of Colorado, which was rather a pity, as I had been hoping to see something of that particular State.

However, the train was now in New Mexico, and the next stop of any importance would be at Albuquerque, and by the evening we should be getting on into Arizona.

I was now detecting a noticeable difference in the atmospheric conditions. It seemed only a few hours since I had seen ice and snow—to be precise, on the Sunday morning. But now, on Tuesday, in New Mexico, there was a very distinct change.

It was no longer necessary to wear an overcoat on the outer platform of the observation car, and the sun was becoming continually hotter. It became quite pleasant, sitting on the outer platform, and watching the steel track shooting away from underneath the train.

Sometimes, of course, the seats were all occupied, and I would then perch myself on the side rail—a position I regarded somewhat askance at the beginning of the trip. But by this time I had become so accustomed to the train that I was quite at home. The other passengers were just the same, and nobody thought anything of sitting on this low rail, practically unprotected in any way, and with the train roaring along at sixty miles an hour.

For the greater part of its enormous length the Santa Fe Railway has only a single track—a kind of gigantic loop line system. At frequent intervals our train would pass these loops, and it was the general rule to find a train waiting to continue its journey in the opposite direction. Most of these trains were enormously long ones, composed of giant refrigerator cars, laden with Californian fruit.

As for the scenery during this day's journey, it was totally different from Kansas, but I was not very wild about it. Rugged, for the most part, with enormous stretches of barren, desert-like country, with mountain peaks in the distance. Nothing settled or orderly. In fact, the further west we went

the more bare and barren became the landscape.

And Albuquerque proved to be quite a small, quaint place, with a distinct Mexican touch about it. But the country all round, in every direction, was just desert and mountain, with great stretches of sage brush.

Perhaps there is a certain fascination about this great wide country, but I should imagine it to be the loneliest of lonely spots to live in. In fact, since leaving Kansas City we had encountered not one town of any respectable size or importance, and we seemed to be getting further and further away from true civilisation, and into the remote regions of desert and hill.

But even here one would receive a jar, for there would be the inevitable Ford in view at different times of the day, calmly plugging along some rough track or other.

That night we passed out of New Mexico into Arizona, and after I had retired to bed in my berth we reached a place called Williams, where there is a branch line which takes passengers to the Grand Canyon. But, wishing to get straight to Los Angeles without change, I did not take this side trip.

But I had gone to bed with the knowledge that this was to be my last night on the train, for on the afternoon of the following day we were due to steam triumphantly into Los Angeles.

And even at breakfast-time we should really be in California, and I was looking forward with intense interest to catch my first glimpse of the Golden State.

I was up exceedingly early—indeed, at about five-thirty, for I did not sleep very well. The train had developed an extraordinary amount of stopping and jolting on this particular night—probably caused through being shifted on to sidings, and so forth, to allow other trains to pass. And when these heavy American trains jolt they do it with really extraordinary energy.

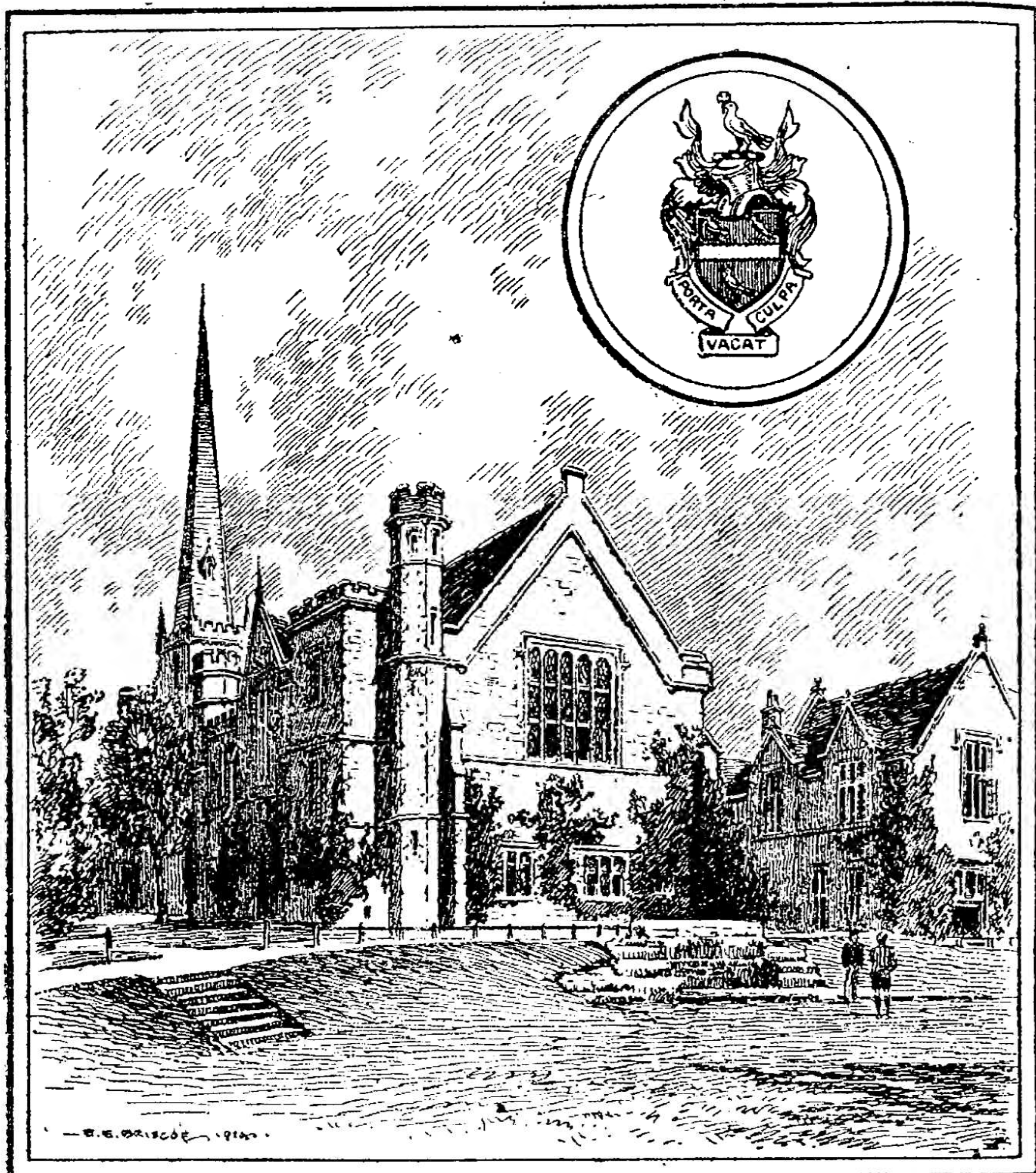
But I was in California now, and to-day would see me at the end of my journey. You will have to wait until next week, however, before learning anything more about my adventures.

Next week: "Sunny California."

OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

SPECIAL SERIES OF ART SKETCHES BY MR. E. E. BRISCOE.

No. 35. REPTON SCHOOL.



Situated near Derby, this famous school was founded in 1557 as a Grammar School under the will of Sir John Port of Etwall. There are about 420 boys in the school. It is a rule at the school that no boy is allowed to remain after he is 15½ unless he has reached one of the Fourth Forms, or after he is 17 unless he has reached the Removes. For scholastic purposes the school is divided into four blocks—Blocks A,

B, C and D. Block A represents the Sixth and Fifth Forms; Block B, the Removes; Block C and Block D, the Lower School. There are several Foundation Scholarships and Leaving Exhibitions, including a special War Memorial Scholarship for the sons of Old Reptonians killed in the War. Boys are required to wear Etons or morning coats with tails according to their size. The school motto is "Porta vacat culpa."

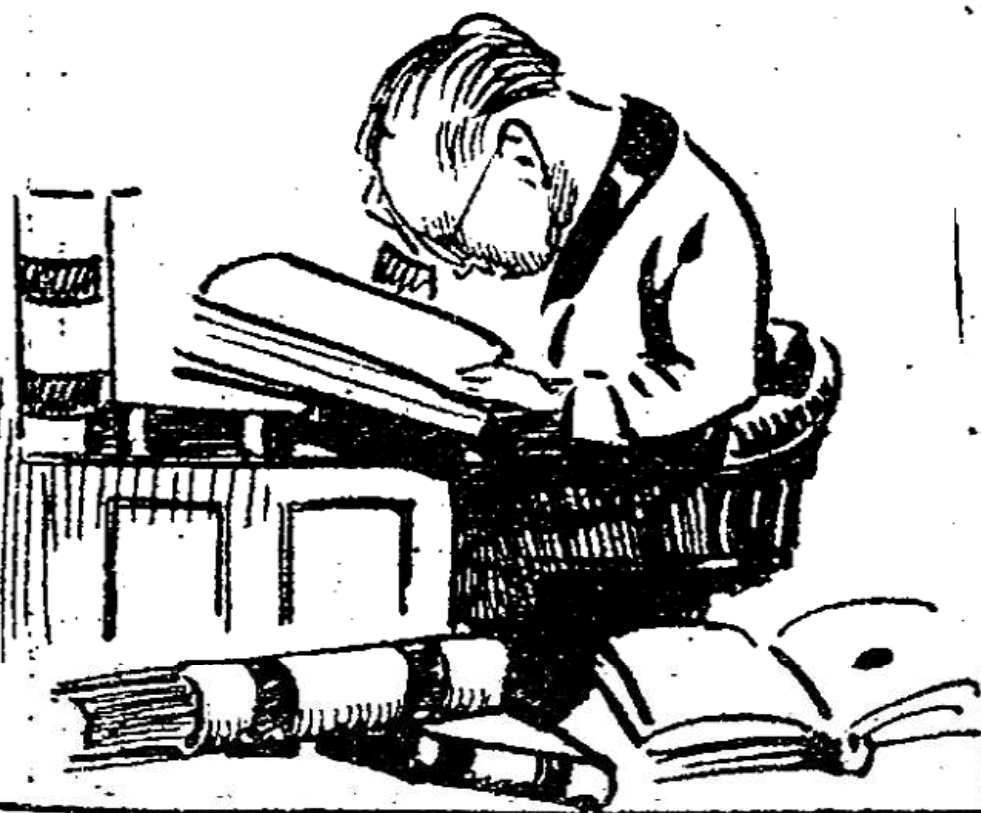


St. Frank's Magazine

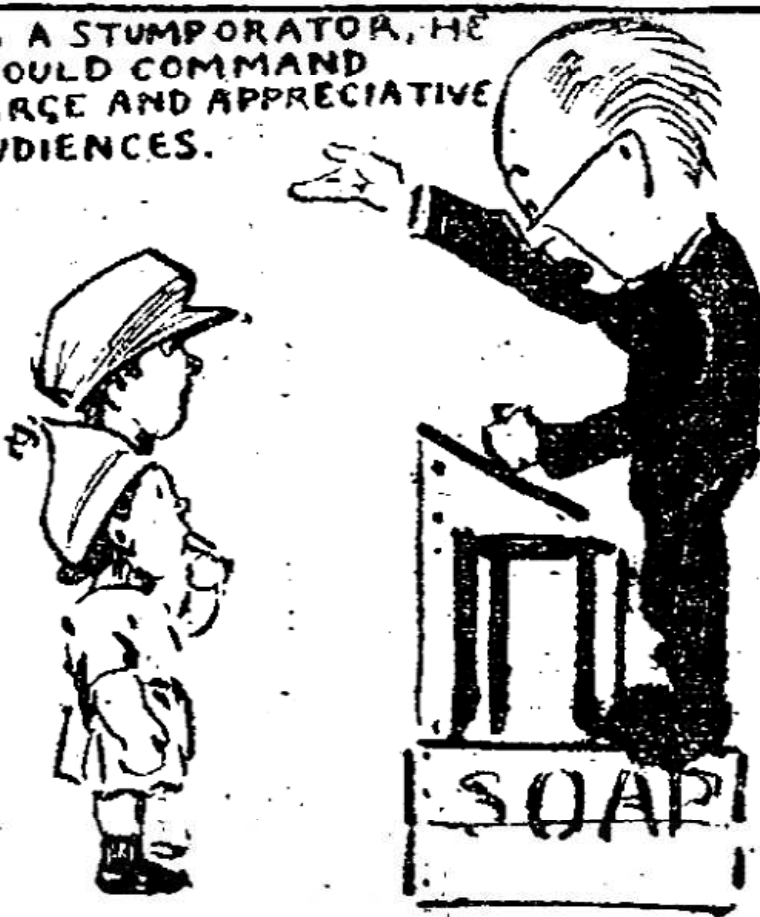


CAREERS IN CARICATURE. No. 4. TIMOTHY TUCKER

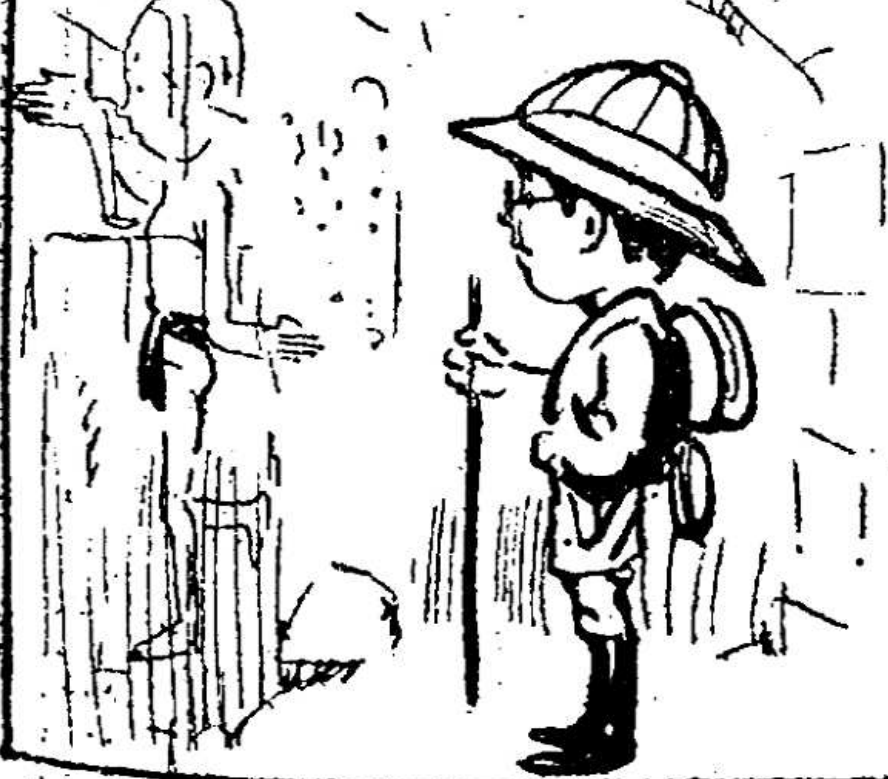
A BOOKWORM, HE WILL
CERTAINLY BE



AS A STUMPTORATOR, HE
SHOULD COMMAND
LARGE AND APPRECIATIVE
AUDIENCES.



IN EGYPTOLOGY, HE MAY WIN FAME AS THE
DISCOVERER OF THE TOMB OF KING TUCKER-
AKHEM, A DISTANT ANCESTOR.



SHOULD HE BECOME TIMOTHY TUCKER, M.P.,
THE HOUSE SLEEPS WHILE TUCKER SPEAKS.



It is said that some men have greatness thrust upon them. Our artist here suggests that "T.T." would rather thrust his greatness on other people.—THE EDITOR.



NIPPER'S PAGE

Editorial Office,
Study C,
St. Frank's.

My dear Chums,

After sulking for a week, Handy has been induced at last to write a Trackett Grim story for the current issue. As it arrived rather late, I have had to put it near the end of the Mag., next to a Wild West story by his young brother, Willy Handforth. Willy has just been to the Rodeo show at Wembley, and was so much impressed by the daring exploits of the cowboys that he could talk of nothing else when he returned to St. Frank's. When he heard how Ted had refused to write any more Trackett Grim stories, the young bounder asked to be allowed to do a cowboy yarn instead. Somehow or other this reached the ears of Edward Oswald, and, fearing that his position on the Mag. would be usurped by his young brother, he speedily forgot his resolve not to write any more Trackett Grim stories.

TAKING A RISE OUT OF HIS MAJOR.

Hence, when Willy came tearing into the peaceful calm of the editorial sanctum the other day, as though he were being chased by an enraged steer, I knew that Edward Oswald was not far away. My deduction proved to be correct, for a few seconds after Willy had deposited on my desk his thrilling story of Tom Fix and Boney, his elder brother came bursting into Study C with the latest adventures of Trackett Grim. Bestowing upon his major a disrespectful grimace, Willy decamped.

"Here it is!" said Handy, thrusting the MSS. under my nose.

"All right, put it down! I don't want to smell it," I said.

"Are you going to publish it, or are you going to print that rotten story Willie has just given you?" he asked.

"I don't know yet," I answered. "So clear out and leave me in peace!"

When Handy had gone, I read the two stories, and there and then decided to publish them both in this week's Mag.

STARTING OFF FOR THE GREAT SAHARA.

You will all be interested to read in Pitt's latest communication on the next page that Sir Crawford Grey's expedition has now left Kano, the advanced base, and has actually begun its adventurous trek into the Great Unknown Sahara. The first news of Dr. Stafford's safe arrival at Lagos is also contained in the letter. We can all appreciate the Head's disappointment at being left behind, but at the same time we recognise the tremendous risk for a man of his age to be exposed to the heat and glare of the pitiless desert sun. Nevertheless, he will probably keep in touch with the explorers by means of native couriers. We shall all keenly await Pitt's next dispatch, which, unless anything goes wrong, should arrive in time for next week's number.

STUDIES AND THEIR OCCUPANTS.

As a result of a number of questions Uncle Edward has received regarding the occupants of various studies, a full list is being drawn up of all the studies and the names of the boys who belong to them. This list I hope to publish in the Mag. next week.

UNCLE EDWARD'S REPLIES.

Some of my chums, failing to see a reply to their questions immediately answered in the "Replies in Brief," have written asking me to wake up Uncle Edward. I can only assure these chums that the poor fellow is trying his best to cope with his numerous correspondents, and that every letter will be answered in due course.

Your sincere chum,

NIPPER.

REGGIE PITT'S AFRICAN :: LETTER ::

Pitt tells us in his latest dispatch, published below, that the expedition has already started off on its trek into the heart of the Sahara, and that it is likely to prove an undertaking fraught with many hardships and unknown perils.—THE EDITOR.

Somewhere in the Sahara,
Africa.

My Dear Old Scissors and Paste,

This letter is bound to get to you all right, because we haven't quite left civilisation behind, and Dorrie says we shall be able to get mail taken down to Kano one day this week. So I'm getting ready.

We've shifted a good bit since I wrote last, and we've left Kano far behind. And now we're genuinely out on the real desert. By the way, did I tell you in my last letter that Dr. Stafford joined us in Kano, but went back to Lagos? Not only Dorrie, but a good many residents out here, advised the Head not to come on this trip. I think they were right, too, because the Head's getting on, you know, and it isn't exactly a picnic.

In fact, travelling by camel caravan may be picturesque, and all that sort of thing, but it has its drawbacks. In the first place, camels are jolly queer fish, as Jack and I have found out already.

Camels aren't so silly as some people think. They're intelligent beggars, and if you only get to know your own particular beast, he'll be a pal. Only you've got to have patience.

But when it comes to noise, they fairly give you a pain. They're regular terrors for roaring on the slightest provocation. They are naturally timid, and it may surprise you to know that they're tender-skinned. You can hardly touch one of them without it roaring out a lusty complaint. It's just the same when you mount or dismount, or shift the saddle. Sometimes they get nasty saddle sores, and in this case the poor brutes will make a terrifying uproar even if they spot you coming near.

The scenery has been changing a great deal, and the first signs of the desert were interesting. We came across palms in small groups, with their graceful stems and rustling tops. And everything seemed open, a bit like the big prairies out West.

But by now—as I'm writing—we're actually in the desert itself. Hot? I can give you my word, old son, that the heat out here is enough to cook a joint without any fire. The sun not only burns and blisters a fellow up, but it makes the sand so fearfully warm that the heat rises up in suffocating waves.

The usual course is to commence loading up before daylight, and get well started before the sun rises. But if the nights are moonlight, it's a good idea to be on the way in the wee small hours.

Out here, in this tremendous sea of sand plain, there's not an ounce of shade of any description, and I don't believe they ever have rain. Now and again we pass through a little desert village, inhabited by Tueregs or similar desert tribes. How on earth they can exist out here all their lives is more than I can understand. But I suppose they like it.

Rather a queer thing happened last night. (I'm writing this part of my letter two days after the above.) I woke up about an hour before midnight, when the camp was supposed to be all asleep.

Two of our Hausa boys were awake, and scared stiff. Dorrie soon got up, and wanted to know what the trouble was about. And the black chaps swore that enemies were prowling round the camp.

Of course, Dorrie and Sir Crawford went out with rifles, and had a good old search, but they couldn't see a sign of anything. Just imagination, I suppose. Some of these natives are as superstitious as old women. But I must say that we're all a bit impressed.

These Hausas were as obstinate as ever to-day. They flatly declare that they saw mysterious figures lurking about, and the beggars keep on making strange hints about whole caravans which have vanished completely from the desert. A bit cheerful, eh?

It seems that there's some truth in these yarns, too. We heard some rummy stories in Kano about camel caravans which have gone out into the desert, never to return. And these Hausas declare that there are some unknown enemies hovering about, and that we're in for some awful trouble.

Anyhow, Dorrie's going to send a few of the discontented fellows back, and I expect this letter will go with them. I'll close up now, and if I've got time for some more notes to-morrow, I'll add them.

Later. Hausas just off—no time for more. Cheerio!

Yours, as ever,
REGGIE.

The Adventures of TRACKETT GRIM



THE ROBBERY AT DUDCHESTER HALL!

A Wonderful Story of Detective Adventure, introducing Trackett Grim and Splinter.

By

E. O. HANDFORTH

GREAT pip!" exclaimed Splinter, suddenly falling into an arm-chair.

Splinter was the boy assistant of the celebrated incriminator, Trackett Grim. A moment ago he had been staring into the crowded thoroughfare of the Baker's Inn Road. Now he fell back from his post at the window as though he had been struck.

"What is it, Splinter?" ask his master, puffing out great clouds of smoke from his clay pipe.

"It's a client, guv'nor!" gasped the lad, with that wonderful power of deduction which he had inherited from Grim. "He's come to see you, and has driven up in a large Rolls-Royce, with four front-wheel brakes and six gears. Also the car has a mascot of solid gold seated on the radiator."

Grim smiled.

"One day," he observed, "you will be as clever as I am. Hallo! Come in!"

A knock sounded on the door of Grim's sanctum, and he immediately deducted from that that some one wanted to come in. In the course of his celebrated career Grim had been faced with a million cases or more, and very often these cases were brought to him by clients. Therefore he was able almost in the wink of an eye to tell when a client called.

The door opened, and a man stepped quietly into the room. He stood a second glancing from one to the other. Then he bowed in the direction of Grim.

"I wish to consult the world's greatest incriminator," he announced, in a tone of voice which proclaimed him a great aristocrat.

"That's me," Grim admitted modestly. "And this dear lad is my assistant. He was only fifteen last August. And by next July he will be nearly a year older."

"Marvellous!" exclaimed the client.

"Then all the tales I have heard of your wonderful cleverness are true. Sir, I have a most difficult proposition to put before you. Will you solve it?"

Without a moment's hesitation Grim saw the immense possibilities that lay before him. And at once his mind was made up.

"I will," he said simply, and lit another pipe, handing the old one to his visitor. These little acts of courtesy were never lost on Grim's clients.

"I am the Duke of Dudshire," went on the visitor, puffing at the pipe. "And I am an aristocrat of the first water. My blood is as blue as ink. I am a member of the oldest family in Sussex, and my country seat is at Dudchester Hall."

"Do not trouble to explain, my dear Duke," Grim said evenly. "You are a member of one of the oldest families in England. You attend the House of Lords, and you are immensely rich. I also deduce that you have come here on a matter of some importance."

"That is so," the Duke replied, carefully taking off his coronet and putting it upon a side-table. "I regret to say that I am the victim of a systematic robbery. Mr. Grim, the famous Dudshire plate is being stolen."

Grim almost lost control of himself. Why, the Dudshire plate was famous throughout the world. It was worth fabulous sums! He repressed a gasp and faced the Duke.

"Great pip!" he went on. "You can't mean it! When was the plate stolen?"

"Last night," the Duke continued. "And

"Enough!" Grim interrupted. "I see it all. The plate was taken last night, and now you are afraid that the cups and saucers will go, too."

"The plate is not yet all stolen," went on the Duke.

"What!" almost shouted Grim. "Do you mean to say the dastardly villains are chipping it into small pieces and taking one bit at a time?"

"Not exactly, sir," the Duke said. "You see, the Dudshire plate is in fact a service in many pieces. It is a whole set of gold dishes and other culinary articles."

"You need say no more," Grim muttered. "I see everything. I will get it back."

"Oh, thank you so much!" the Duke replied, overcome with gratitude.

"Yes," Grim went on. "Here is my plan. I will come down to your country seat disguised as one of your guests. I presume you have a house-party there now?"

"Amazing!" hooted the Duke. "I certainly have!"

"Then there will be no difficulty," said Grim. "And I will bring my lad, Splinter, along. I shall disguise him as a bootboy. Between us we will bring this terrible villain to book."

"You make it sound so easy," said the Duke.

"Not at all," Grim returned. "It is the hardest case I have ever been set to solve. There is a deep, deep mystery connected with it. And I shall never rest till I have brought it to a successful conclusion. Now, Duke, I notice that you have your car here. In one minute we will be ready to accompany you."

Grim was as good as his word.

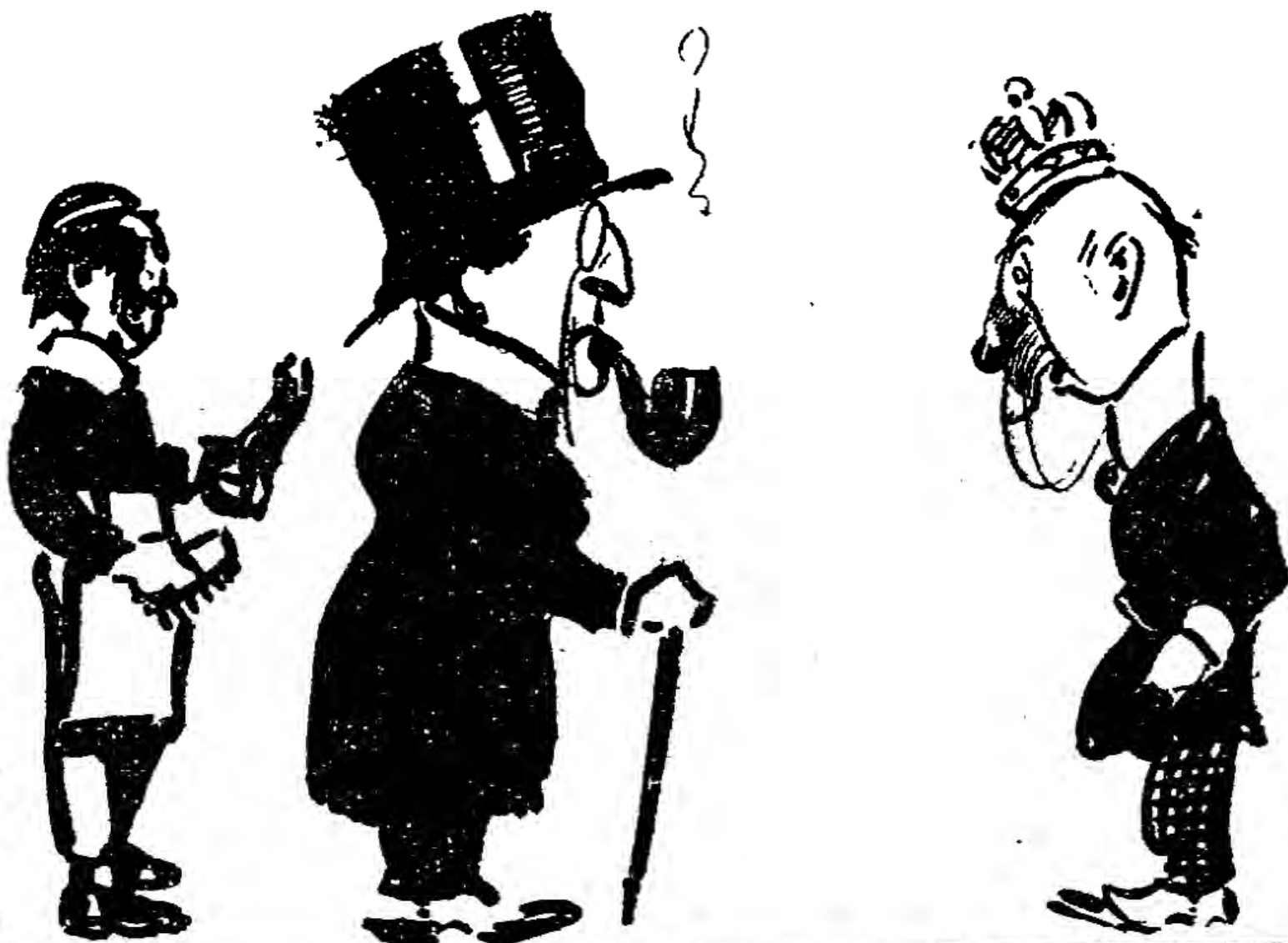
He dashed into his bed-room, and came back completely disguised as a member of the British aristocracy. He wore a silver-plated false eyeglass, a frock-coat, and a clean diekey. Altogether, no one would have recognised in this dapper man of the world the famous incriminator.

Splinter was no whit less clever. He hastily donned a green baize apron, and rubbed some scot on his face and hands. Then he snatched up a tin of blacking which lay handy, and joined his master in the hall.

"Here we are!" announced Grim, as they reached the Duke's side.

"Great heavens, who are you?" almost shouted the latter. He quite failed to recognise the incriminator and his assistant.

But Grim explained, and then the three



"Here we are!" announced Grim, as they reached the Duke's side.

"Great heavens, who are you?" shouted the latter.

got into the Duke's car, and they were swiftly whirled off to Dudchester Hall.

On the way Grim explained his theory of the case. And immediately on arrival the two took up their new duties. Splinter was taken by the butler below stairs and set to polish up one of the Duke's old pairs of brogues. And so well did he do it that he was never suspected for one moment.

As for Grim, disguised as Mr. Giltman, a wealthy young man about town, he spent the day strolling about aimlessly among the Duke's guests. Although he appeared to be seeing nothing, in reality nothing escaped his sharp eyes. That was how it was he noticed something which no one but a trained incriminator could possibly have noticed.

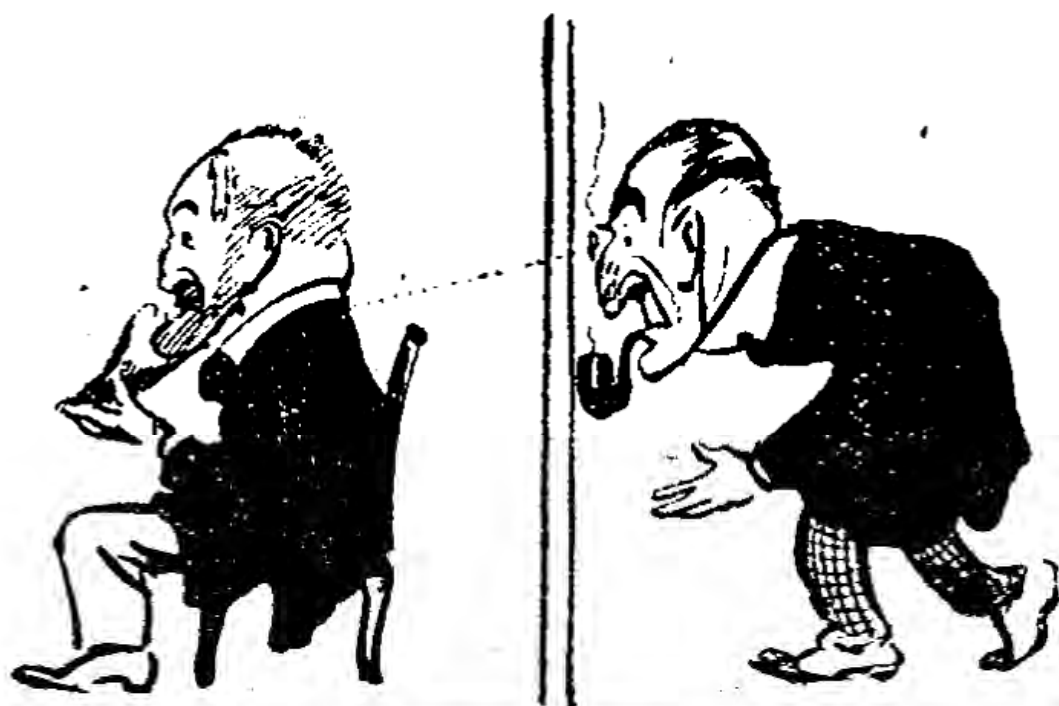
He found that one of the guests was wearing a false beard!

The beard was dark, and was worn by a middle-aged stockbroker, who was introduced as Sir Charles Bigge-Pott. Grim, bent on seeking out the thief, happened to be standing close by this magnate. And he suddenly observed that over the man's ears were silver wires, and that the beard was fastened in this manner to his face.

At once Grim's suspicions were aroused, though why he could never quite tell. But Grim followed the suspect upstairs when he went to change for dinner. Then, looking through the keyhole, he distinctly saw Sir Charles unhook his beard and place it on the dressing-table!

And there, before Grim's eyes, stood a young, clean-shaven man.

"Great pip!" gasped the incriminator.



Then, looking through the keyhole, Grim distinctly saw Sir Charles unhook his beard and place it on the dressing-table!

"That is not Sir Charles at all. It is Flash Freddie, the Gentleman Crook!"

At once his suspicions were even more fully aroused. Almost at once he realised that a man of this nature, who was wanted in every European capital for robbery, would be the very man to be stealing the Duke's silver.

It was a marvellous stroke of deduction that Grim made. But he was right, as always. Grim determined to trail Flash Freddie relentlessly. He therefore sat next him at dinner, played cards with him, and followed him up to his bed-room. But Grim did not go to bed. He turned round and hastily ran down to the dining-room, where the plate was kept.

Ten minutes later Flash Freddie crept into the room and switched on the light! He did not see Grim, for the incriminator was hiding behind some of the table decorations. Flash Freddie had no boots on. He was in his stockings, and as Grim looked he saw a hand stretch out, and another valuable piece of plate disappeared!

That was the end of the night's work, and a moment later Freddie retired upstairs. Grim had found the robber, but how was he to prove his guilt?

At once he had a brainwave. He crept up to the crook's door and took away his boots. Then he sought out Splinter, who was fast asleep in the pantry. Grim softly woke up the lad.

"Our task is finished," he said quietly. "Get me some glue."

Splinter ran off and came back with a tin of glue. This Grim carefully poured into Freddie's boots.

"To-morrow you will take these upstairs in the ordinary way," he said. "And now good-night."

It was breakfast-time in Dudchester Hall. All the guests sat at breakfast. Be-

tween mouthfuls they talked with bated breath of the robbery that had occurred the previous night. For everyone knew another bit of the famous plate had been stolen.

At ten-thirty Grim entered the room, followed by Splinter.

"Duke," he announced, in a ringing voice, "I have found the thief!"

At his words the women turned pale, and perspiration broke out on strong men's faces. But Grim went relentlessly on.

"I must ask everyone present to take off their boots," Grim said. "If anyone is unable to, I shall arrest him as the thief!"

"But, sir," protested the Duke, "surely no one could be keeping my plate in their boots?"

Grim waved the Duke aside, and once more repeated his order. At once every one present removed their boots. All save one man—Flash Freddie!

He bent down and tried to take them off, but they wouldn't move!

By this time all the guests were staring at Freddie. He was tugging and pulling at his boots, but they would not budge. And as he fumed his false beard fell with a clatter to the floor! Grim blew a silver whistle.

It was the signal agreed upon. At once a posse of police dashed into the room.

But Flash Freddie saw the game was up.

Now that his disguise lay in a mass of wreckage on the floor, he knew he would be recognised. So, with a desperate leap, he leapt to his feet!

The next second he had sent his fist crashing into the Duke of Dudchester's face. The guests crowded round, but there was no stopping Flash Freddie. He went through the whole lot, using his fists like flails.

Before he could be stopped he had jumped through the french windows and was tearing across the lawn.

"He will escape!" cried the duke quickly, recovering from the effects of the blow he had received.

But, no! Grim had seen there remained one chance of capturing Flash Freddie.

With a dexterous flick of his wrist he flung his silver whistle straight at the cracksman's head!

Crack!

With a moan, Flash Freddie dropped to the ground. The posse of police dashed up and the handcuffs were slipped on!

Then Grim and the Duke went up to his bed-room, and there was the missing plate neatly stacked under the bed. Needless to say, Flash Freddie was convicted and sent to gaol. And Grim received a huge fee. So ended one of the most remarkable cases which Grim ever undertook to solve.

THE END.



E. SOPP'S FABLES

By EDGAR SOPP, of the Fifth.

No. 31.—THE FABLE OF THE SCRIBE AND
THE HERO WORSHIPPERS.

IT happened that a certain Celebrated Scribe wandered one evening in the main street of Bannington, bent upon the purchase of Various Ingredients necessary for the manufacture of Caramel Toffee. Let it be observed that the Celebrated Scribe did not usually amuse himself in this Strange Fashion, but was bent upon proving that he could make Toffee just as well as he could write

THRILLING STORIES ABOUT TRACKETT GRIM.

And he tarried in divers Places of Barter, emerging, ultimately, bearing Numerous Parcels. Indeed, it did seem that the Scribe had determined to Start Business in opposition to the celebrated Mr. Mackintosh. In sooth, Handforth's present mission was Closely Connected with this famous gentleman. For the Scribe had remarked, in a Rash Moment, that he could manufacture Toffee of his own to equal any that could be purchased in the Tuck Shop. Thus the present

UNWONTED SHOPPING ACTIVITY.

And, in the course of his Wanderings, Handforth did make Discoveries which pleased him Mightily. For, behold, it came to pass that as he was Haggling over the price of a Pound of Butter, the merchant's Fair Daughter accosted him sweetly, begging, forsooth, for his Autograph. And it turned out that the Maid was a Staunch Reader of the Trackett Grim Stories. Indeed, she did hold the Celebrated Scribe in much awe and admiration. And Handforth, as may well be supposed,

WAS EXCEEDINGLY FLATTERED.

And this, it will be understood, was a somewhat Fatal Complication, since the Scribe was already much enamoured of his own importance. And in the next Place of Barter, whilst inquiring the price of the

Best Gran—deeming this preferable to Yellow Crystals—he was further Flattered by the arrival of not one Hero Worshipper, but a dozen. Perchance the Motley Throng had been Sent Thither post-haste by the Maid who had Clicked. And, lo, the Scribe was positively Mobbed, until

**HE DISTRIBUTED AUTOGRAPHS
GALORE.**

And when he bethought himself to return home, it came unto his realisation that he was no fit and proper person to be performing such a Menial Task as the carrying of Sticky Parcels. For was he not celebrated in the land, and did not the populace acclaim him as a Great Author? And, behold, the Scribe did cast his parcels aside—handing them, in fact, to a Local Carrier, who undertook to deliver them at St. Frank's for the Modest Price of tenpence. And Handforth returned home.

And it came to pass that he strode into the Common-Room of the Ancient House with his chin in the air, and with a Strut that was like unto the proud progress of a Peacock. Now, it chanced that a Meeting was being held, in which Certain Mysteries concerning Cricket were being Discussed. In fact, the team for the next Home Fixture was actually being Selected when

THE PROUD SCRIBE BARGED IN.

And he recounted his adventures in Bannington with Much Gusto, and was both pained and surprised when he was Curtly Interrupted and told to Dry Up. And he was further pained when, upon falling to Dry Up, he was Summarily Seized and Hurl'd Forth. Indeed, the Celebrated Scribe did Crawl Away, enlightened upon a Point of Much Truth.

**MORAL: A PROPHET IS OF NO ACCOUNT
IN HIS OWN COUNTRY**

IN REPLY to YOURS

Correspondence Answered
by **UNCLE EDWARD**



(NOTE.—Readers of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY can write to me, and I will reply on this page. But don't expect an answer for a week or two, owing to the delays of printing. Address your letters or postcards to **UNCLE EDWARD**, c/o The Editor, the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.—**UNCLE EDWARD**.)

MISS VIOLET E. A. P. (Brentwood): Naturally, nobody knows that I'm Uncle Edward. That is to say, nobody knows that I'm Handy as well. How the dickens did you find it out? I'm glad to know that you've read the Old Paper from the very first number, and that you still look forward to it every Wednesday. You certainly are the right kind of reader! I don't know about publishing a poem written by me. I'm always misunderstood. People laugh at my Trackett Grim stories, and they're as serious as anything. So I don't think I'll risk a poem. I've told Nipper what you say, and now he's as proud as a peacock. (Of course, I don't mean that really, because Nipper's a modest sort of chap.) Can I tell you why Church and McClure have always got black eyes, etc.? It's a funny thing, but I've noticed this myself, and I can't explain it. I think they must fight a lot. Goodness knows, I do my best to stop them! In fact, I'm always biffing the idiots, trying to keep them apart. I don't think you would really have loved to see me pitch into the pigs' food—of course, that's just your little joke. As for a Mag. edited by Willy, I'm a bit doubtful about it. It won't come out if I can help it!

LESLIE R. HILL (Highbury): So jolly busy this week, I haven't had time to measure those chaps, as you asked. But I'll try my hardest next week.

AN ANONYMOUS GIRL READER: Awfully sorry, but we're not in the circus now, so that suggestion of yours is rather too late. The next time you write, don't

address your letter to the Editor, but to me. And why not tell us your name?

J. STACK (Balham): It's like your sauce to say that that idiot, Teddy Long, could teach me things at detective work! And can Lawrence fight me? Of course he can, but, as he isn't asking for trouble, he won't. All the same, it's nice of you to say that I'm the best thing in the Old Paper. If Church and McClure tried to chuck me out of Study D, they'd have to go in the sanny for a week. Who told you that I'm going to assist T. T. in giving Bolshevist speeches? What rot! I'm surprised to hear that you knock your young brother about. This is a very serious aspect of bullying, and I can only condemn it as awful. I've just read your P.S., and I now heartily agree that your young brother should be biffed. Why did he want to know if the Editor was in Bedlam because he publishes my Trackett Grim stories? You wait till I catch your brother!

BLUEBELL (Bradford): Congratulations on your lovely writing. You ought to take a first prize for it anywhere. I think I'd like to be addressed as "Ted" better than "Uncle Edward"—but don't tell anybody else, because nobody really knows that I'm Handforth. I don't like saying it, but I've got to—you're a naughty girl! It's like your nerve to write to me in school, instead of transcribing shorthand! If you go on like this, I shall get in trouble with your schoolmaster. All the same, it's jolly nice of you to say that you like the Trackett Grim stories so much. But why do they make you laugh? I can understand them being a tonic, but it's a bit thick to call them funny. So you like Willy, too? But I don't think you'd care for him as a little brother. (By the way, I told him about that, and he nearly had a fit. I think it was the word "little" that did it.) And when you say that he is lovely and brainy and plucky and witty—well, I simply haven't got anything say. I think a lot of him, but not much as that! Sorry you haven't got brother. Hard lines! Brothers jolly handy. Willy always finds me handy, anyhow—especially when he's broke! And this is about every other day. Sorry I can't give you any hints swimming, but Whitsuntide is over long

ago, so it doesn't matter. It's no good asking me who's the best singer in the Remove—they're all a lot of giddy howlers, and one's as bad as another. Thanks for saying you'll write again. You can bet I shall be pleased to hear from you.

C. W. HUNT (Wallingford): There you are, my son—there's your name in print. How do you like it? It's a pity you didn't give me your full Christian name in your letter, or I would have printed your "handle" in all its treble glory. In reply to your inquiry, Irene's eyesight is perfectly good. Her eyes, in fact, are the most wonderful in the world. I wonder if you weigh as much as Fatty Little?

A. FEARN (Nottingham): Of course, I'm a relation to E. O. Handforth. What next? In fact, he never walks a step unless I go with him.

A. R. TINGEY (Leytonstone): I say! Three full pages, you know! And questions and suggestions galore! I'm so jolly busy this week, old son, that I don't feel up to giving you the reply you deserve. So I'll leave it till next week, and give you tons of space. Hope you don't mind.

BISCUIT (Crumpsall): I don't really require four telephones on my desk, and I haven't actually got them. But I drew that picture, and it was just a little hint to the Head that all junior studies should be on the 'phone.

ALAN POLLOCK (Cavan, Ireland): I think Irene likes Archie all right, but you know what an ass he is, and naturally she prefers a strong, brainy fellow who can play games and do other clever things. When you say that E. Sopp's Fables are better than my Trackett Grim stories, I feel like biffing you. It's a good thing you're on the other side of the North Sea! That suggestion of yours about altering the picture on the cover has just come right, because Nipper's done this already. Funny you should get the same idea.

CLARA W. (Southampton): Thanks for your Many Happy Returns, but how do you know when my birthday is? I tried to put my signature at the end of the last Trackett Grim story, but Nipper cut it out—he had the nerve to say he thought it was a word that I'd scratched out. Like his cheek, wasn't it? By the way, if you look anything like that picture of yourself, I think your hair wants bobbing, or something.

WILLIAM RIGBY (Wigan): The only tip Fullwood had for the Derby was one that I gave him—when I tipped him into the Fountain. Glad you think the Trackett Grim stories are getting better. But how can they? And what do you mean—"Am I still in love"? And when you say that girls are a bother, I

don't agree with you. Some girls are lovely.

A. FIELD (Wood Green): Fancy asking me who I'm going to marry—and me still at school! Of course, there's just a chance that I might ask a certain friend of mine— But, look here! What's it got to do with you? I think you are quite right in saying that Edgar Sopp ought to give his space to me, so that I could make my Trackett Grim stories longer. I'm surprised at you thinking that Sherlock Holmes is better than Trackett Grim, but there's no accounting for tastes.

TUBBY (Walthamstow): Your congratulations received, but I'm not exactly sure that I appreciate them. How many more times have I got to say that the Trackett Grim stories aren't supposed to be funny? There's no fear of Fatty Little fading away—he can't even walk away sometimes.

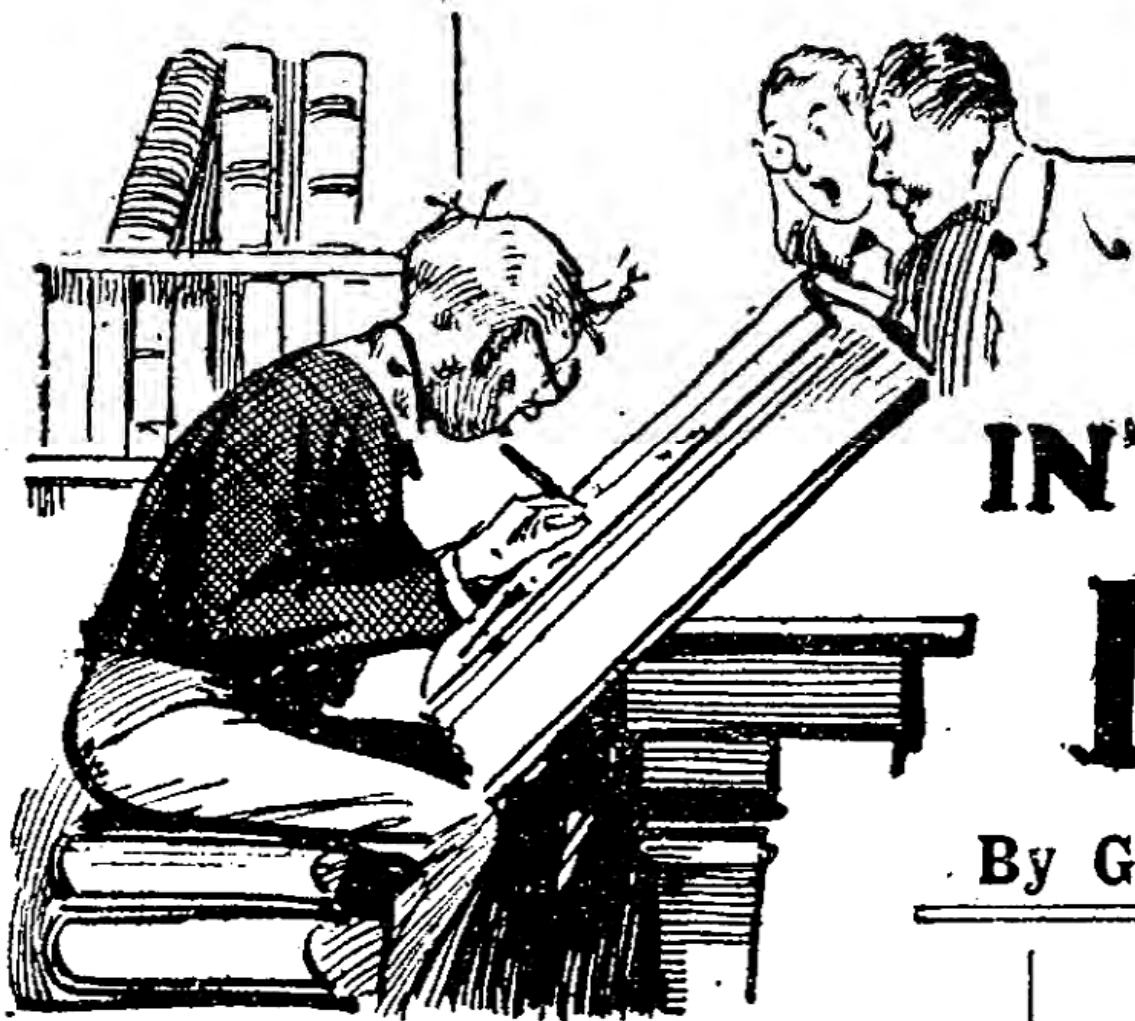
STANLEY BECK (Ealing): You ought to think yourself lucky to have a pretty girl living so near to you—and her name is rather nice, I think. Of course, I could make up a sentence of her name—but I haven't got time. Yes, it's a pity I didn't go to Africa with Pitt and Grey, because I could have given them all sorts of advice. But I suggested it to my pater, and he— Oh, well, we don't want to go into personal matters, do we?

A. F. H. (London): What on earth do you mean? How dare you suggest that I bully Church and McClure? Your letter, you rotter, is an absolute insult, and that's why I haven't even answered it.

SWEETSTUFF: You've asked some difficult questions, but I'll try to answer them. I've never seen any rubber screws, so I can't tell you where to buy them. The best way to boil water without burning it is to put it on a slow fire and let it gently simmer. I think it's better to cut the cokernuts up when you're making cokernut toffee, because cokernuts are rather big, and they might fill up your hollow teeth if you include them whole. And when making almond toffee, never use more than one hundred almonds to a pound of sugar, or you won't get it to cook right.

NOTICE.—I've got another batch of letters to answer, but there's a concert on to-night, so they'll have to wait till next week. In the next issue I'll reply to C. P. ANDREWS, ELDIE B., GEOFF, C. A. H. M., DOLLY J. H., JACK, WILLIAM L. HOPE, R. M. F., E. WARD, PETER COLLINS, D. H. R., and L. STEVENS. Of course there'll be some more letters coming in as well, but you can't expect me to give the names before I've seen them. So long until next week.

UNCLE EDWARD



PEEPS INTO PEPYS' DIARY.

By GUY PEPYS of the Remove.

MONDAY.—Much commotion in the class-room. Caused by a cat, or what seemed to be a cat, in the chimney. And Mr. Crowell to angrily demand who had introduced a cat into the Form-room. Whereupon Handforth ventured a suggestion that it might be Felix, who had started out for a walk, and had kept on walking until he reached St. Frank's. A foolish quip, since it brought Handforth naught but an imposition of one hundred lines, Mr. Crowell being of ill-temper.

TUESDAY.—A hapless day, for misfortune did descend upon me right heavily. For yesterday, during the hubbub in the class-room, I did amuse myself by drawing a caricature of Mr. Crowell, which, to my undoing, I forgot to destroy. So that on entering this morning the master's eye did fall upon my wretched drawing of himself. And he to ask in tones of severity who and what it was. Yet, as I had written underneath the words "Old Crowell," he could have been in no uncertainty. He then did pronounce the terrible sentence that I should be confined within the precincts of St. Frank's for a week.

WEDNESDAY.—Johnny Onions, the acrobat, and circus performer, being now in the Remove, doth spend much time in the gym., where also I do delight to watch him, and strive to imitate him, also seeking from him hints and helps. While thus engaged this afternoon, Fullwood did stroll in, and did cast contemptuous glances on us, uttering the while foul remarks about circus brats being no fit companions for the sons of gentlemen. And so a very lively set-to. Johnny would have chastised the cad, but I, being incensed also, I did fall upon Fullwood and belabour him with sundry blows before Johnny could draw nigh. Thereupon followed a fight, which, alas! was brought to an untimely end by

the entrance of Mr. Clifford. But I flatter myself that I got not the worst of it. In the evening I to Bellton, Mr. Crowell being out, and so the path clear. Safely back without discovery, and so all well, may the saints be praised.

THURSDAY.—Fatty Little did greet me with some cryptic remark that he was flush, which I did take to mean that pocket-money was plentiful. And he to invite me to tea at the Japanese Café in Bannington. But as I am "gated" for a week, and Mr. Crowell being of watchful eye, he did change the venue to Mrs. Hake's tuckshop. Fatty seemeth to be in fear of himself when he is flush, and so doth take another as a safeguard.

FRIDAY.—Willy Handforth did very civilly ask me if he could procure me anything from Bannington, whither he was going, and I did express a desire for four ounces of treacle toffee, good old-fashioned stuff, which I do much prefer to modern confections. Willy to return later, handing me a strange package which he did declare to be my toffee. And I to discover, upon removing the wrapping, a much be-gritted lump of sticky mess, imbedded in which, to my horror, I did discover sundry beetles and such-like abominations. And when I did turn upon Willy in indignant inquiry, he to calmly assure me that there was no need to worry. It seemeth he had been collecting his wretched specimens—and in his pocket, forsooth! Much angered, for the toffee uneatable, and my pocket the lighter by sixpence.

SATURDAY.—Expenditure low this week by reason of my being confined to the school, and so no opportunities of spending. Pocket-money above the average, which pleaseth me, as I do abhor to go about with empty pockets. Anticipating my natural liberty next week with much delight.



THE ROGUE OF THE RO-DAY-O

A thrilling story of TOM FIX, the
cowpuncher, and his famous broncho,
BONEY.

By WILLY HANDFORTH.

THE sun blazed down on Cyclone Creek like the dickens. All sorts of shouts filled the air, and the shopkeepers were doing a roaring trade, because it was Rodeo Day. The township was full of cowboys and cowpunchers, but these last chaps could punch other things besides cows.

Suddenly a terrific fog rolled up at the end of Main Street, and everybody stared. In fact, the Rodeo stopped, and hundreds of eyes were turned on the Main Street.

But it wasn't a fog at all. It was only Tom Fix galloping into town on his marvellous horse, Boney, and kicking up the dust. He shot right into the Rodeo, and pulled his horse back on his hornches, and leapt to the ground with one clean leap.

"Say, boys, how's things?" he shouted. "I guess I've come right here to clean up you guys. Say, how many prizes are there—"

But just then a hulking great brute pushed forward, and he jabbed his six-shooter into Tom Fix's ribs.

"Quit!" he roared ominously. "I guess I want all these prizes for myself. So you vamoose, darn you!"

Quick as a flash Tom Fix knocked the revolver out of the rotter's hand, and the next moment he kicked the rotter out of the Rodeo. But this wasn't enough, for the man was Broncho Bert, the toughest gunman in the whole of Arizona.

"This is where you bite the dust!" he snarled viciously.

And, with these thrilling words, he fired six shots in rapid succession. And everybody expected to see Tom Fix drop to the

ground, riddled like a night-watchman's pail. But Boney saw his master's peril, and, with a powerful nay of anger, he swung round on Broncho Bert, and kicked the revolver out of his vile grip, just the same as Tom Fix had done.

But Boney was even cleverer than his master, because that kick of his had caught the rogue under the chin, and sent him flying to the ground, unconscious. And he was carried away to hospital.

That's what happens to the guys who get in my way, said Tom Fix calmly, as he dusted himself down. Say, what's the next event? I guess I'm ready to beat any galoot who comes along.

And Tom Fix tied the faithful Boney to a post, and walked into the arena, his leather chaps waving in the wind. And in two minutes he was riding on the back of a huge bullock, which couldn't get rid of him, although it tried everything; and at last our hero swung the brute over and sat on his head. And the judge shouted out that he had won the first prize, and Tom Fix took it and stuffed it in his pocket.

"That's the way to do it," he said carelessly, as the cowboys looked on, green with envy. "I came right along to beat you hoboes, and I'm sure gonna do it!" This sounded like a boast of Tom Fix's, but it wasn't, because he was a marvellous chap.

You can talk about the Rodeo at Wembley as much as you like, but this one in my story was ten times as good. And Tom Fix won every prize of the day, until he was so loaded up that he couldn't carry much more.

And so he went off back to his shack,



But Boney saw his master's peril, and sent Broncho Bert flying to the ground with a kick in the jaw.

jolly pleased with himself, having won about fifty quid, and it was getting dark, too. Not that this mattered, for Tom Fix was fearless, and his faithful horse, Boney, could see his way in the dark as though he were a cat.

"Hold!" came a sharp command. Hands

And he soon started out across the prairie, in search of further adventures. I don't know what they'll be yet, but I'm going to write some more of these thrilling stories. If Ted can write his rotten Trackett Grim yarns, I can knock him sideways with these hair-raising tales of the Wild West.

up, you rotter, I'll plug you!"

"Broncho Bert!" hissed Tom Fix, under breath. "How did you get out of hospital?" Tom Fix didn't know, and it doesn't matter, because I can't think of any good reason, although I've tried for ten minutes. And it's only a story, so blow it! These editors want all their own way, but I'm not going to rack my brains for nothing.

Anyhow, Broncho Bert was out of hospital, although he went back again in a few minutes. For by the time Tom Fix had done with him he looked like a nasty accident. He didn't remember anything when he woke up, and Tom Fix was up in the hills in his shack.

TRAVEL TALES



By an Old Boy.
(LORD DORRIMORE'S
WEEKLY TRIFLE.)

No. 5.—A DEATH FIGHT WITH AN ALLIGATOR.

IN my library at home there hangs the head of an alligator, upon which even now I can scarcely look without a shudder of horror. It belonged to an old bull alligator, whose acquaintance I made in a Florida swamp, an evil-smelling hole full of sulphurous mire, in which my friend and I sank up to our waists, and sometimes up to our armpits.

We were after two photographs of a big alligator—and it's astonishing what dangers men will brave to get photos. After we had been at work for some time, I saw that the huge reptile—he was just about thirteen feet long—meant to attack me.

I threw away my camera. The alligator came for me, and I prepared to ward him off. But I slipped, and he was on me. I shouted to my companion to shoot, but he said he daren't for fear of hitting me.

Then I felt my leg gripped, and I was dragged down into that beastly slime.

I kicked, struggled, spluttered. Then I thought of my sheath-knife, grabbed it, and drove it straight into what I thought—and hoped—was the monster's eye. The grip eased, and I fought to get to the surface, and saw my friend about twenty feet away, with a rifle. I shouted to him to throw me the rifle. He did so. I caught it, and saw the 'gator just coming up, blood flowing from his left eye. I fired—twice—I don't know how I managed, and then I sank again into that frightful slime.

When I came to myself, the first thing I saw was a vulture high up in the blue vault of heaven. I struggled to get up, but was pressed back, and a flask was put to my lips. It took me a month to recover after we got on board the Wanderer. And I was cured of all desire to photograph crocodiles.

CHARACTERS' NAMES COMPE- TITION RESULT.

(Concluded from last week.)

Miss W. L. Talbot, 3, Cornwall Place, Mumbles, Glamorgan; Arthur F. Taylor, The Lodge, Coombelands, Addlestone, Surrey; Jack Thompson, 52a, Harehills Rd., Leeds; J. Thompson 9, Lord St., Sherton, Lancaster; L. E. Thorell, 81, Osnaburgh St., Regent's Park; Miss A. Thorpe, Rose Farm, Tivetshall, Norwich; George Tindall, 76, Pembroke Rd., Kensington, W.8; A. R. Tingey, 72, Wallwood Rd., Leytonstone, E.11; William Tink, 3, Brooksby St., Liverpool Rd., N.1; G. P. Tinson, "Redcroft," Ganwick, Barnet; Robert Tolladay, 62, Salop St., Highgate, Birmingham; Ernest Totty, Well Barn Farm, Moulsoford, Berks.; Albert W. Tull, 31, Manchester Rd., Fratton, Portsmouth; Frank Upton, Pontyrhyll, nr. Bridgend, S. Wales; A. Upward, Martinstown, Dorchester; Robert Vallas, 114, Norwood Rd., Tulse Hill, S.E.27; P. Wainwright, 28, Woodstock Rd., Moseley, Birmingham; L. Walden, 99, Clonmell Rd., Tottenham, N.15; Miss E. M. Walker, Hope Cottage, Fortis Green, N.2; W. W. Wall, 1, Norman St., King's Rd., Chelsea; W. Wallington, 30, Colebrooke Row, Islington, N.1; Frank Ward, 26, Charles St., Hatton Garden, E.C.; John Ward, 2, Albert Villas, Balmoral, Belfast; Frederick E. Ward, 7, Elm Park Rd., Reading, Berks.; Cecil War. 61, Roberts St., Scotswood, Newcastle-on-Tyne; V. Watson, 18, Royal Avenue, Doncaster; F. P. Whale, 13, Desboro' Ave., High Wycombe, Bucks.; Arthur White, 63, Tanner St., Bermondsey, S.E.1; Edward Williams, 346, Caledonian Rd., Islington, N.1; R. Williams, Emms View North, Three Mile Cross, nr. Reading; P. A. Williams, 24, Wandsworth Bridge Rd., Fulham, S.W.6; W. M. Williamson, Churchmourt, Lochee, Dundee; Percy Wood, 41, Avenue Rd., Leytonstone, E.11; W. G. Wreford, "Burell," nr. Saltash, Cornwall; Philip J. Wright, 24, Camper's Ave., Letchworth, Herts.; W. Wright, 15, John St., Doncaster; Charlie Wright, 12, Caledon Rd., Carshalton, Surrey; W. Wyatt, The Institute, Hockley Heath, Birmingham.

Solution.

1. Nipper	7. Solomon Levi
2. Ed. O. Handforth	8. Timothy Tucker
3. Fatty Little	9. Reginald Pitt
4. Tom Burton	10. Jack Grey
5. Jerry Dodd	11. Monty Tregellis-
6. Archie Glenthorne	West
	12. Tommy Watson
13. Dick Goodwin	19. Fullwood
14. Clarence Fellowe	20. Armstrong
15. Duke of Somerton	21. Singleton
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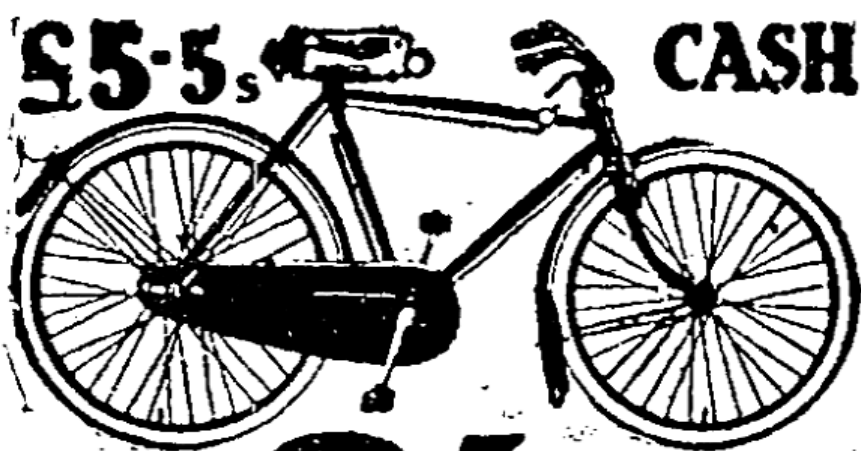
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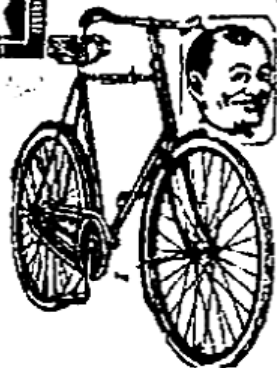
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