

THE BEST SCHOOL AND DETECTIVE YARNS!

The NELSON LEE

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The Eagle's Prey

2d

A
Thrilling
Story of
Nelson Lee
and
Nipper.



Sir Edward Hand-
forth removes his
sons from the school.
See St. Frank's Story

*The
School with a bad Name.*

THIS NUMBER CONTAINS:

TWO GRAND COMPLETE STORIES

Magnificent Magazine Supplement. Splendidly
Illustrated Throughout.



Another missile came shooting into the road. It struck Handforth fairly and squarely in the centre of the face.

THE SCHOOL WITH A BAD NAME!

*A Tophole Story of
School Life, featuring
the Famous Boys of
St. Frank's.*



The scandal at St. Frank's, described in last week's story, has created in the public mind a strong feeling against the school. The unfortunate boy, Wallace, who died while taking part in some evening celebrations at the school with a few of his associates, died from natural causes. The worst possible construction was put upon the incident when it was known that the boy's death occurred during the festivities, and that his companions belonged to the lowest element at the school. The newspapers made the most of the sensation, and spoke of drunken orgies at St. Frank's. Indignant parents are removing their sons from the school, the boys are hissed and booed at in the streets of Bellton and Bannington, and the very name of St. Frank's is spoken of with contempt. Reginald Pitt, the new Skipper of the Fourth, is determined to fight for the existence and honour of the school, and to regain the high position St. Frank's formerly held among the great schools of England.

THE EDITOR.

By E. SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

MR. PYCRAFT SHOWS HIS COLOURS.

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE halted as though turned to stone. "Good gad!" he ejaculated, in horror.

From some totally mysterious, unknown source, a blob of mud had whizzed through the air and had spattered itself over the centre portion of Archie's beautiful fancy waistcoat.

"I mean, how absolutely ghastly!" murmured Archie faintly. "This seems to me to be one of those fruity occasions when a chappie doesn't know whether to turn hither or thither!"

He stared down at his soiled waistcoat with a kind of fascinated horror. He

seemed to awaken out of his trance, and went as if to touch the dire spot, but drew his hands away with a shudder.

"Dash it all, I'd rather grab a good old adder, or something equally foul!" he declared. "Oddslife! Where did this one come from? It appears to me that some murky scoundrel is absolutely lurking in the offing!"

The swell of the Fourth Form at St. Frank's was in Bellton Lane, not far distant from the school gates. He had passed the wood, and as far as he could see, not a soul shared the landscape with him.

It was quite early morning, and Archie, acting on the advice of Phipps, had sallied forth for a slice of the good old exercise. Always obedient when Phipps commanded,

Archie had promptly acted on the suggestion.

He had gone down as far as the River Stowe, and had then felt so much better that he considered further exercise not only unnecessary, but positively fagging. And now, on his way back, toying with thoughts of breakfast, this unexampled disaster had happened.

"Yah! Go back to your ole pig-sty!"

Archie started violently, and then found himself gazing at three or four village youths who were esconced on the other side of the hedge. And the rich red blood of the Glenthornes arose.

"You frightful rotters!" exclaimed Archie indignantly. "I mean to say, all this dashed business, what? It's a bit thick when a cove absolutely can't walk down the good old lane without having his best waistcoat spattered with vast quantities of mire!"

The village youths yelled with merriment. But as Archie advanced towards them with clenched fists, they gave a final hoot, and sped off. Archie gave up the chase and bristled with fury.

"This," he observed, "is getting too much! I mean, not only too much, but above the chin! Something will have to be done."

Archie was not the only fellow who had made a remark of that nature. And there were plenty of others who had had assorted missiles hurled at them from behind the hedge from the village louts. It was becoming a popular pastime.

For St. Frank's had lost all its prestige.

The famous public school was scorned and held in contempt not only by the surrounding country, but by the whole of Britain. The recent tragic death of Wallace, of the Fifth, following upon a disgraceful midnight orgy of drinking, smoking and card playing, had aroused widespread indignation.

And St. Frank's was a school with a bad name!

Archie produced his handkerchief, and gingerly made some half-hearted attempts to wipe the mud from his waistcoat. And he was just plucking up courage to attempt the job properly when he received another shock.

"Indeed! And what is this, may I ask?" came a sour, rasping voice.

"Eh? What? I mean— Oh, so there you are!" said Archie, flustered. "What-ho! Greetings, old tin of tomatoes!"

Mr. Horace Pycraft, the master of the Modern Fourth, started. He was not accustomed to being referred to in this fashion. And he was by no means a man of delightful temper. He was thin, weedy, with a most unpleasant cast of countenance.

"Boy, you are impertinent!" he said sourly. "What are you doing here? And how have you managed to get yourself into

that disgraceful condition? I require an immediate explanation."

Archie Glenthorne was at a loss.

"But, dash it all, must I really answer all this?" he asked. "You, as it were, have no authority— Or, to be more exact, I'm not in the Modern House at all, sir. I'm an Ancient House chap."

"Indeed!? Is that so!" exclaimed Mr. Pycraft, adjusting his thick spectacles. "In that case, I will let the matter drop, and say no more. So you are an Ancient House boy? Splendid! No doubt you are quite proud of yourself, eh?"

Archie looked at the Form master curiously. Mr. Pycraft was a newcomer. When the old Remove had been divided up into two sections—the Ancient Fourth and the Modern Fourth—Mr. Crowell had remained master of the Ancient House. Mr. Pycraft had come to St. Frank's as a permanent institution to preside over the Modern House juniors. Until this term the Modern House had been known as the College House.

"No doubt you are proud of yourself?" repeated Mr. Pycraft unpleasantly.

"I must remark, dear old soul, that the observation absolutely whizzes through the old brain without leaving any impress!" said Archie. "That is to say, I'm dashed if I know, dash it, what you're driving at."

"Your mode of speech, boy, is utterly fantastic!" said Mr. Pycraft. "But what can one expect? What can one hope for in such boys as yourself? Let me see, it was in the Ancient House, I think, that the truly disgusting scene of debauchery took place?"

"Are you referring, by any chance, to that frightful affair on the first night of term?" asked Archie.

"You know well enough that I am referring to it," replied Mr. Pycraft severely. "I must confess that I am greatly disappointed in St. Frank's. The school is rotten to the core. The Ancient House, particularly, is riddled and saturated with every conceivable form of petty vice. Indeed, that one appalling orgy proves this!"

Archie Glenthorne drew himself up.

"You will please understand that I belong to the Ancient House!" he said wrathfully. "I am dashed if I didn't suspect you were this kind of bird!"

"Glenthorne!" shouted Mr. Pycraft shrilly.

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Just because a few frightful cads go a few yards beyond the limit, everybody puts down St. Frank's as a dashed sink of iniquity! And you join in the general verdict! Good gad! What about the good old chunk of loyalty, Mr. Pycraft?"

The Form master was rather taken aback.

"Enough!" he snapped. "I refuse to demean myself by further argument!"

He turned on his heel and strode away. Archie had a feeling that he had gained the honours of the encounter.

CHAPTER II.

FULLWOOD'S NEW PAL.



ARCHIE was quite disgusted.

He considered it a point of honour that everybody connected with St. Frank's should stand loyal and true to the old school.

And for Mr. Pycraft to share the general condemnation was staggering. It proved, beyond all doubt, that he was narrow-minded and bigoted.

For it was well known that the school had suffered undeservedly. The scandal had been caused by a mere handful of fellows who called themselves the Fast Set. They were nobodies—insignificant cads who were of no more importance than the tiniest fags in the Third.

And yet, because of their follies, St. Frank's was now spoken of by outsiders with scorn and derision. It was so unjust as to be almost unbelievable. But it was merely the way of the world—to condemn without evidence, and to judge by the flimsiest of rumours.

Half the boys of the Fifth Form had left the school—taken away by their parents. The Third was depleted by fully a dozen, and even the high and mighty Sixth was now weakened considerably.

The only Form that remained intact was the Fourth.

But this was because of Reginald Pitt's fine, able leadership. The Junior Captain had quickly proved himself to be a fellow of indomitable purpose.

And although the parents of half the Fourth had commanded their sons to return, not one had done so. They should have left on the previous evening. But Reginald Pitt's common sense had prevailed. And the Fourth was still at St. Frank's in full force.

Everybody was now waiting for the fireworks to commence.

The boys had ignored their parents, and even the Headmaster himself had not been able to shift their resolve. Archie Glen-thorne was one of the defiants, and he was quite determined to tick his pater off severely, if the latter should be rash enough to visit St. Frank's.

As for Mr. Pycraft, Archie dismissed that gentleman with a contemptuous snort. He buttoned up his jacket, and walked on—painfully conscious of the fact that his spattered waistcoat was still visible above the top button.

And it was just the luck of things, of

course, that he should walk right into Irene Manners & Co., of the Moor View School, opposite the big gates. He went all hot and cold, and made a wild grab at his jacket, turning up his collar and holding it closed.

"Why, Archie, you're not cold, are you?" asked Irene Manners, in surprise.

"Cold?" said Archie feebly. "Not at all! I—I mean— A somewhat priceless morning, what? Sunny, and all that sort of rot! A few balmy clouds in the offing, and—"

"I think there's something balmy, in addition to the clouds," said Doris Berkeley pointedly. "What's the matter, Archie? Are you off your chump this morning? You look all dithery!"

"Doris!" protested Marjorie Temple.

"Does my lovely language shock you," grinned Doris. "Oh, what does it matter? I can't help using slang—my pater always teaches me! He's a holy terror at home!"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie briskly. "That is to say, what? I don't happen to have the pleasure— Gadzooks!"

He had incautiously released one hand for a moment—in order to tardily raise his hat. And a gust of wind had blown his coat open, revealing the tragedy in all its stark horror.

"Whatever have you done to your waistcoat, Archie?" asked Marjorie.

"Oh, that?" he asked, as though noticing the muddy waistcoat for the first time. "Oh, nothing! Well, I mean, it's my waistcoat, what? Just a little accident, you know."

"But you look so awful!" said Marjorie.

Archie groaned within him. Of all the Moor View girls, he liked Marjorie the best—and here she was actually saying that he looked awful! He would rather have learned that his pater had gone bankrupt.

"You see those frightful village chappies heaved a few cartloads of mud over the good old hedge," he explained. "I was trusting to whizz indoors without attracting the populace, but—"

"Oh, the brutes!" said Irene indignantly. "Everybody seems to be against St. Frank's now! It's altogether too bad! It's a shame! I'm just as proud of St. Frank's as ever I was—I think it's the best boy's school in the country!"

"Good man!" said Archie heartily. "Er—I mean—absolutely! And priceless sentiments, too, Miss Irene. Thanks vastly, for the expression of friendship. Allow me to call you a sportsman!"

"I suppose you'll call me one, even if I don't allow it," laughed Irene. "Well, we must be getting along. I do hope you get over your troubles all right."

"Rather!" said Archie. "Trust the Remove for that, you know. Oh, sorry! I mean the Fourth-form! Dashed confusing, all these bally changes, what!"

Archie politely raised his cap, and hurried into the Triangle. On the Ancient House steps there were two or three juniors collected—Fullwood and Co., of Study A, and another fellow.

Archie passed by, and a foot was deliberately pushed out as he reached the top step. So Archie entered the Ancient House lobby on his face. He sat up dazedly.

"Well, that was a silly thing to do!" said the junior who was with Fullwood and Co. "I shouldn't walk in like that if I were you, old man. It's liable to——"

"You absolutely foul cad!" said Archie hotly. "You did that deliberately, dash you!"

"Of course I did!" said the other calmly. "I rather enjoy playing tricks on foppish fatheads like you!"

CHAPTER III.

THE MORNING OF FATE.



CLAUDE CARTER was a new boy in the Fourth.

Owing to the sensations of the recent scandal, and the inquest and the funeral, nobody had taken particular notice of Carter. But he seemed to be very friendly with Fullwood and Co.—which was no recommendation. He was in Study J with Armstrong and Griffith.

He was by no means a dandy like the chums of Study A. His attire was careless, and his manners were equally so. He was dark, slim, and there was an expression on his face which made one rather distrust him.

Archie Glenthorne slowly rose to his feet, and examined Claude Carter from head to foot, bringing his famous monocle into use to assist the process.

"Satisfied?" asked Carter pleasantly.

"Good gad, no!" replied Archie. "It seems to me, you frightful rotter, that there's only one way of wiping out the dashed insult! It's a fag, but it's got to be done. Take that, dash you!"

Crash!

Archie's right fist swung round, and Claude Carter went over backwards with a howl of surprise and pain. Fullwood and Co. looked on in blank astonishment. Carter sat up, furious.

"I thought you said that fool couldn't fight!" he yelled.

"I—I——" began Fullwood, flustered.

"I think," said Archie, "that honour is satisfied! In future, you set of absolute blots, I shall ignore you with a vast amount of disdain!"

Archie swept indoors, and Claude Carter scrambled to his feet and dusted himself down. He was not in a nice temper.

"You silly fathead!" he snorted, glaring

at Fullwood. "What do you mean by telling me to trip him up?"

"I didn't know he'd turn on you like that," retorted Fullwood. "He's usually such a lazy beggar—he never troubles to swipe anybody. He must have taken a dislike to your face!"

"You leave my face alone!" snapped Carter.

"There's no need to get ratty," said Fullwood. "You'll get more than one punch while you're in this place, my son! Most of the chaps are a crowd of goody-goody duffers, who don't even know how to smoke a cig!"

"Impossible!" said Carter, staring. "My hat! It's about time somebody came along to wake up the dead! Why shouldn't we carry on the good work?"

"What good work?" asked Gulliver.

"Why, all this business about St. Frank's going to the dogs!" grinned the new boy. "Why not keep it up? If everybody chooses to give us a bad name, we might as well live up to it!"

"You'd better not let Pitt hear you talkin' like that," warned Bell.

"You needn't worry—I'm a careful chap," said Carter. "But I mean it—really. Why should we go about pretending to be saints? People expect us to paint the town red—so let's do it! We've got plenty of excuse now—and we might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb!"

Advice of this sort fell upon ready ears when proffered to Fullwood and Co. Claude Carter, it seemed, was a reckless young rascal who was only too ready to lead others into vicious mischief.

And his present friendship with the chums of Study A was only just a mere beginning. While Reginald Pitt was fighting might and main to restore the school's good name, a small section of juniors made up their minds to live up to the school's bad name.

To-day, of course, was a day of fate.

Half the Fourth Form was expecting trouble. They had disobeyed parental orders by remaining at St. Frank's. Fired by Pitt's speech on the previous evening, they had stuck to the school.

And to-day, without doubt, the reckoning would come.

"It's no good, of course!" exclaimed Cecil de Valerie, gloomily.

"What's no good?" asked Tommy Watson.

"It's all very well to talk about loyalty, and sticking up for the school, and restoring the good name—but it's only a dream," growled De Valerie. "I'm beginning to see that now. We can't last—most of us will have to leave to-day, for a cert."

"Leave?" exclaimed Handforth, pushing forward. "Who's talking about leaving?"

"We shall be forced to," said De Valerie. "I've had a telegram from my pater this morning, and he's coming down to fetch me!

You don't suppose I can defy him to his face, do you?"

Edward Oswald Handforth glared.

"It's not a question of defiance," he retorted. "All you need do is to quietly tell him the facts, and if he's a sensible man, he'll understand, and let you stay on."

"I'll bet he won't!" said De Valerie, shaking his head.

"Then you admit he's not a sensible man?"

"My pater's sensible enough, but he's a perfect terror when he's made up his mind," replied De Valerie. "I can talk till I'm blue in the face, but it won't make any difference. What's more, I shall get an awful ragging for staying here overnight, and making him drag down to fetch me!"

"To fetch you!" sneered Handforth. "Then you mean to go? My only hat! Where's your determination? What's become of your pluck?"

Cecil de Valerie bristled.

"Look here, we don't want to have a row!" he said hotly. "You wait till you get a telegram from your pater, saying he's coming to fetch you!"

"I don't need to!" said Handforth coldly. "I've had one!"

"What! You mean that Sir Edward is coming here?" gasped Watson.

"This morning!" nodded Handforth. "He's coming to fetch Willy and me. But will he drag us away from St. Frank's? No, my son, he won't, not while I've got a shred of strength left!"

The other juniors grinned. They couldn't help it. The prospect of Sir Edward Handforth coming to St. Frank's to fetch his two sons was attractive. But the prospect of Handforth and Willy resisting their fiery father was positively worth waiting for.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INVADING ARMY.



SIR CRAWFORD GREY started, and adjusted his glasses.

"Upon my soul! I really believe that that gentleman is Mr. Pitt!" he murmured. "I must find

out——"

He broke off, and hurried along the platform at Victoria Station just as a tall, brisk-looking gentleman was about to enter a first-class compartment.

"Why, hallo, Sir Crawford!" exclaimed Mr. Reginald Pitt, with genuine pleasure. "A most happy meeting! How are you? Haven't seen you since we both landed in England from our Sahara trip."

Sir Crawford Grey looked rather troubled.

"I really wish our meeting could be as happy as you intimate, Mr. Pitt," he said. "What do you think of this terrible story

about St. Frank's? I am going straight down there this morning—to investigate personally."

"Well, that's most remarkable!" declared Mr. Pitt. "That's my object, too! I haven't actually told my boy to leave, but I am seriously thinking of transferring him to Harrow or Rugby, if possible."

"And I thought about sending Jack to Hazlehurst," said Sir Crawford.

"A fine school, no doubt—— Why, hallo! Surely that gentleman just passing the barrier is Sir Edward Handforth?" exclaimed Mr. Pitt. "And I really believe he is accompanied by Colonel Glenthorne."

Reggie's father was correct. Sir Edward Handforth, M.P., was very much in evidence, for he was arguing with Colonel Glenthorne at the top of his voice. Sir Edward was very much like his famous son.

And this train was carrying numerous other parents, too. It was the one fast train of the morning that stopped at Bell-ton, and it could easily be understood why all these gentlemen concentrated on it. There were other trains in plenty, but they were all slow, and necessitated a change at Bannington.

"By George!" exclaimed Sir Edward boisterously. "What's this? What's this? Mr. Pitt! Sir Crawford! I don't mind wagering that you're going down to St. Frank's College?"

"Exactly," said Mr. Pitt.

"Then your son has probably had the unparalleled impertinence to disobey orders, eh?" roared Sir Edward. "Good gracious me! What are these boys coming to nowadays? It's disgraceful! That's what it is—nothing more nor less than intolerable!"

"But, really, Sir Edward——" began Mr Pitt mildly.

"Are my own children any better?" demanded Sir Edward. "No, sir, they are not! The infernal young scamps have defied me! Can you believe that?"

"It certainly is somewhat staggering," said Sir Crawford gently.

"I ordered them to return home yesterday—and I'm hanged if they didn't send me a telegram last night to say that they had made up their minds to remain at school!" snorted Sir Edward. "They had made up their minds! I have never heard of such impudence in all my life!"

"Gad, but they've got some spirit!" said Colonel Glenthorne admiringly. "I respect such lads as those, Sir Edward. 'Impertinence, as you say—but what a fine spirit!'"

"A fine spirit—to defy me?" said Sir Edward, glaring.

"I did not quite imply that, I hope," said the colonel. "A fine spirit, Sir Edward, to stand loyally by the school in its hour of trouble. My own son has done precisely the same thing. I am delighted, but I must visit St. Frank's in order to satisfy myself that the school deserves standing by."

"It doesn't!" retorted Handforth's pater finally. "Good heavens! Haven't you read about that disgraceful scene which resulted in a boy's death? Do you think I am going to leave my sons in a school where such things are possible?"

"It may have been a pure accident—" began Mr. Pitt.

"Fiddlesticks, sir!" interrupted Sir Edward. "Fiddlesticks! It's my belief these carousals are of frequent occurrence—only they have hitherto been hushed up. St. Frank's has had a fine name—but that name

got into conversation with. For they turned out to be the fathers of other Fourth Formers.

So, when the train steamed out of Victoria it contained a veritable army of incensed parents. They were practically all on the same errand—to invade St. Frank's, and to drag their sons away by the scruff of their necks.

And the invaders were not all masculine. There were several worried-looking ladies on the train—anxious mothers, who were sorely distressed at the thought of their sons being

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is ground into the dust now. And my sons will not remain in such a hotbed of utter vice! I have arranged for them to transfer to Redcliffe College!"

And many of the other parents were talking in the same strain.

A little further along the platform, Lord Westbrooke, Tregellis-West's guardian was deep in grave conversation with Lady Helen Tregellis-West, who had come to see him off. Sir Montie's aunt was very concerned.

A stout gentleman—obviously Mr. Little—was discussing matters with three other prosperous looking gentlemen whom he had

contaminated by the evil influence of such an iniquitous place as St. Frank's.

And during the journey most of the ladies and gentlemen got better acquainted, and they were all firm in the same resolve—that nothing on earth should influence them. They would remove their sons firmly.

Sir Edward Handforth, indeed, stated quite plainly that he would take the opportunity of severely censuring Dr. Stafford. And he would put up with no excuses.

It really seemed that afternoon at St. Frank's would be somewhat lively.

CHAPTER V.

KICKING UP A DUST.



"MY only hat!" said Willy Handforth blankly.

He had strolled to the gates, in order to see if there was any sign of the expected enemy, and his gaze fell upon something that nearly knocked him all of a heap.

A veritable crowd was advancing upon the school.

Ten or fifteen gentlemen were escorting five or six ladies, and in the very forefront of the invading host Sir Edward Handforth himself was marching along like an officer leading his troops.

The manner in which Willy leapt back into the Triangle was a revelation. No rabbit could have shot into its hole with greater speed. And Handforth minor turned and sped into the Ancient House like a streak of lightning.

He burst into Study D breathlessly.

"Cave!" he panted. "Pater's here!"

Handforth and Co. were just settling a little argument. Morning lessons were over, and for over an hour during the course of work Handforth had longed to punch Church for some trivial offence. And now, in Study D, Church was going through the mill.

But Handforth hadn't had everything his own way. He was the richer by a swollen nose, and Church considered that anything that happened to him was well worth that beautiful swipe.

But Willy's arrival saved him.

"Don't you hear?" hissed Handforth minor. "It's the pater! A whole crowd of other people, too—fathers and mothers by the score! I nearly had a fit when I looked down the road just now!"

"My goodness!" muttered Church huskily. "I'll bet my dad's in the crowd! What the dickens can we do?"

Handforth cast a nervous glance out of the window.

"You're afraid of your own father, I suppose?" he asked tartly. "Better keep your eye on the door, Willy, so that we can dodge if necessary," he added with apprehension.

"You're not afraid of your pater, are you?" said Church, with sarcasm.

"Afraid of him? No!" retorted Handforth. "But—but it's just as well to let him cool down a bit! My pater's rather inclined to be a bit hasty. There's nothing like being on the safe side."

Willy nodded.

"I think we'd better buzz down and catch the next train home!" he said in a husky voice. "I never thought the pater would come down like this, you know! He's absolutely ruined the whole scheme!"

"Looks like it!" growled Edward Oswald. "We can't defy him to his face."



A blob of mud had whizzed through the air and had spattered itself over the centre portion of Archie's beautiful fancy waistcoat.

"That's not the same yarn you told this morning," remarked Church.

Handforth made no reply. He had just caught sight of his father entering the Triangle. And every ounce of Edward Oswald's spirit deserted him for the moment. There was something very terrifying about Sir Edward's attitude. His very walk was purposeful and sinister.

"So you can't defy him?" asked Willy coldly. "That's not what you told me just after breakfast! You advised me to leave everything to you, and now you're talking about knuckling under."

"Yes, but—"

"I'm ashamed of you, Ted!" said Willy bitterly. "I thought you had more strength of will—more determination and fire!"

"Look here, you young bounder—"

"But you needn't worry!" interrupted Willy curtly. "I'll attend to the pater—I'll give it to him straight from the shoulder. Your weakness has made me strong—"

"My weakness!" roared Handforth.

He drew himself up, his eyes blazed. Willy dodged automatically, but he was just a shade too late. Handforth grabbed him, swung him round, and seized his fist.

"Good man!" he said heartily.

"Eh?" gasped Willy.

"You've saved me from being a weakling!" said Edward Oswald. "By George! And I was nearly knuckling under! You needn't worry, Willy, old son. Leave the pater to me—I'll face him now."

Perhaps he wouldn't have been quite so firm in his resolve if he could have seen Sir Edward Handforth at the moment. In Dr. Stafford's study, Sir Edward was laying down

the law in no uncertain voice. All the other parents were crowding the apartment, indignant and heated.

"I must beg of you to cease this tirade, Sir Edward!" exclaimed Dr. Stafford coldly. "It is utterly pointless for you to come here in this bullying attitude, and I deplore the entire circumstance. Your sons have been granted every facility for leaving the school, and you have absolutely no grievance."

Sir Edward breathed hard.

"Possibly not, sir!" he growled. "My contention is that this situation should never have arisen! I like St. Frank's—always have liked it! Was educated here myself, by George! But I cannot allow my sons to remain in a school that permits such shocking scenes——"

"One moment, Sir Edward!" interrupted the Head angrily. "I must protest against your gross mis-statement. The school permits nothing that is not perfectly open and honest and straightforward. Much as I regret the unfortunate incident which led to Wallace's death, I cannot be answerable for the wild actions of a certain section of my boys on the first night. In future there will be a very different order of things on the first night of term. I shall have profited by this appalling experience."

Sir Edward cooled down.

"I am afraid I don't understand," he growled.

"Really, Sir Edward, is it necessary for me to go over the whole matter?" asked the Head appealingly. "I ask you, ladies and gentlemen," he added, turning to all the others. "Your sons are at liberty to leave. You have stated your intention of removing them from this school, and I must bow to your decision. The boys have defied you entirely on their own initiative."

"Is it possible they desire to remain in this dreadful place?" asked one of the ladies, in horrified tones.

"Madam, it pains me to argue in this fashion; but St. Frank's is really not the dreadful place you imagine," said Dr. Stafford with some heat. "On the first nights, as you may or may not be aware, a certain amount of laxity has generally been permitted. The boys have been left greatly to themselves, and hitherto there has never been the slightest trouble."

"It is never wise to be lax," declared the lady stiffly.

"Having dealt with boys for many years, madam, I must disagree once again," retorted Dr. Stafford. "But I will admit that the first night discipline on all future occasions will be greatly tightened. A small minority of boys took a mean, contemptible advantage of my leniency, and the disgraceful champagne supper was the result."

"Including the death of that poor, dear child!" said another lady.

"Wallace's death was hastened by the ex-

citement of that party, but the medical evidence has clearly proved that death might have overtaken him at any moment," said Dr. Stafford. "The case against St. Frank's is a fictitious one—a false case from beginning to end!"

CHAPTER VI.

DEFYING SIR EDWARD.



SIR EDWARD HANDFORTH grunted.

"I wish I could believe it, sir—I wish I could believe it!" he exclaimed gruffly. "I do not doubt your own conviction, Dr.

Stafford, but facts are facts, and they cannot be easily explained away."

The Head shrugged his shoulders.

"I am not trying to explain them away," he said wearily. "No less than thirty of my boys have been removed from the school, and at least thirty more are under orders to go. I am helpless in the matter. If you wish to take your sons away, ladies and gentlemen, I beg of you to remove them as rapidly and as quietly as possible. I shall certainly do nothing whatever to hinder you."

It was only with difficulty that the Head held himself in check. He was accustomed to dealing with unreasonable parents, and this invasion had incensed him highly.

But what was the use? His knowledge of human life told him that he could talk until he was blue in the face, and it would make no difference. People had made up their minds that St. Frank's was bad, and his word alone would have no effect. The death of Wallace, the exaggerated newspaper reports had put in deadly work.

Sir Edward Handforth was the first visitor to leave the study, and he sallied forth in search of his sons. He meant to make short work of them. They had defied him, and they should pay the penalty.

Sir Edward was grim as he strode out of the Head's house into the Triangle. He caught sight of two juniors standing by the fountain, and he strode across to them. They politely raised their caps.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Reggie Pitt.

"Ah!" exclaimed Sir Edward, fixing them with a stern gaze. "You are two of the boys who came into the Sahara, aren't you? H'm! This is a fine state of affairs as soon as you get back!"

"It's not our fault, sir," said Jack Grey.

"And I understand that you, Pitt, are chiefly responsible for a large number of boys remaining behind," went on Sir Edward. "How dare you influence my sons in this disgraceful behaviour? What have you got to say for yourself, young man?"

Reggie smiled.

"I've only got one thing to say, sir," he replied cheerfully. "St. Frank's is the best

school in the country—and I mean to fight as hard as I can to prove it! And I mean to lead the Fourth Form in our battle against these infamous rumours that have given the dear old place a bad name."

Sir Edward started, a good deal of his anger vanishing. There was something about Pitt's smile that was arresting. The captain of the Fourth had an extraordinary winning way with him.

"Stuff and nonsense!" growled Sir Edward, pulling himself up with a jerk. "This school has gone to the dogs! It is no fit place for young gentlemen! Where's my son? Where's Edward?"

"I haven't the faintest idea, sir, but I'll have a look, if you like," said Reggie obligingly.

"You needn't trouble," grunted Sir Edward. "I'll find him myself, thank you. And when I do, I'll give the young rascal the hiding of his life."

He strode into the Ancient House, marched down the Fourth Form corridor, glaring at the doors as he went along. He arrived at Study D, and burst in. Handforth and Co. were busy at work at the table—or pretending to be. Willy was sitting by the window, industriously blowing up a football.

"Edward!" thundered his father.

"Oh, hallo, pater!" said Handforth, looking up. "Just squat down a minute, will you? I shan't be a tick!"

Sir Edward gave a gulp. For Handforth calmly returned to his work, and acted as though it was the most usual thing in the world for his father to burst in like this. Willy blew up the football so vigorously that he nearly burst it.

"How dare you?" thundered Sir Edward violently.

Crash!

He brought his fist down on the corner of the table so violently that the inkpot leapt up and spurted its contents neatly and liberally over McClure's face. The unfortunate junior gave a yell of dismay.

"What do you mean, you young rascal, by refusing to come home yesterday?" roared Sir Edward, taking no notice of McClure's discomfiture. "I am in no mood for arguments! Get your things, and follow me!"

Handforth rose to his feet, and gave a kind of preliminary gulp.

"Oh, that?" he said carelessly. "The fact is, pater, we're not coming."

"Not—not coming!" repeated his father blankly.

"No, sir. Willy and I have decided to stay," went on Handforth casually. "Can't leave the old school in the lurch, you know. If you care to hang about for the afternoon, I dare say we can rake up some tea later on."

Sir Edward opened his mouth, but no sound came. Such defiance as this was beyond his understanding. Willy was so overjoyed at his major's superb coolness that he forgot

all about the football in his enthusiasm, and it deflated with a sudden fierce hiss. Sir Edward fairly jumped.

"You—you confounded young puppy!" he roared, recovering his speech. "And you, too, sir!" he added, turning on Willy. "You've decided to stay, have you? You've made up your minds to ignore my orders?"

"Well, you—you see, pater——"

"I see two insolent young dogs!" thundered Sir Edward.

"Yes, dad. We're your sons!" said Handforth.

Fortunately, Sir Edward failed to see the point, or a second tragedy might have happened at St. Frank's within the week. But he was in no mood for arguing, and he simply sailed in.

CHAPTER VII.

REGGIE PITT GETS BUSY.



JOHAN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS, of Study 6 in the Modern House, came to an abrupt halt in the middle of the Triangle.

"Great jumping corks!" he ejaculated. "Look at that!"

Percy Bray and Denny, his study chums, stared hard. They were too surprised to make any comment. A kind of cyclone had just emerged from the Ancient House.

A big, burly gentleman fairly hurtled out, with a struggling, kicking encumbrance in either grasp. To be absolutely exact, Sir Edward Handforth was in the act of removing his undutiful sons.

He had Edward Oswald by the scruff of the neck, and Willy by the collar. And the two unfortunate juniors were rushed down the step at lightning speed, and literally dragged across the Triangle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A number of juniors roared with appreciation at the joke. As Armstrong remarked, it was about time that somebody took Edward Oswald in hand. But the leader of Study D was slowly recovering.

He hadn't had a chance until this minute. His father had seized him, had rushed him down the passage, across the lobby, and Handy was only just realising that there hadn't been an earthquake, after all.

It was really the yell of laughter which revived him. He went hot and cold all over, and recovered the use of his limbs. Never before had he been so humiliated in public.

"Now, then!" panted Sir Edward breathlessly. "I'll teach you to defy your own father! You'll both go down to the station as you are, and your things'll be sent on! You leave this wretched school for good!"

Handforth suddenly wrenched himself away, and stood there breathing hard.

"I won't!" he said thickly. "I won't shift!"

"Good heavens! Are you still defiant?" shouted Sir Edward.

"Yes, I am!" replied Handforth. "I don't mean to be disrespectful to you, pater, but you don't understand. You don't realise the horrible injustice of all this. It's a shame——"

"Silence!" blazed Sir Edward.

"You won't keep me silent, even if you poleaxe me!" roared Handforth. "You've come here to take Willy and me away, and we're not going!"

"Never!" said Willy stoutly.

"Bravo!" said Buster Boots, clapping.

"Impudent young puppy!" stormed Sir Edward, glaring at him.

"Yes, sir," said Buster. "Go it!"

"This—this is nothing more nor less than a pre-arranged plot!" shouted the enraged father. "As for you, Edward, I shall not send you to Redcliffe, after all. I shall——"

"Why not try a reformatory, sir?" suggested Buster.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wait!" hooted Handforth. "You wait till I've finished with my pater! I'll jolly well smash you to pulp! As for leaving St. Frank's, I won't agree to it! What'll become of the school if I go? How can it hope to ever lift its head again?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Enough of this confounded insubordination!" went on Sir Edward, forcing himself to be calm. "I will excuse some of this impertinence because you are obviously out of your mind! But when we get home——"

"Sorry, pater, but I shan't arrive until the end of the term," interrupted Handy. "I hate being frank like this, but you're committing an injustice. St. Frank's is the best school under the sun——"

"Bravo, Handy!"

"That's it, old man—stand by the colours!"

"That's what I'm doing!" snorted Handforth. "Look here, pater, if only you'll listen to me a minute I'll prove——"

"I'd rather you left it to me, old son," interrupted Reggie Pitt, striding up, and lifting his cap to Sir Edward. "Would you do me the honour, sir, of coming indoors for a few minutes?"

"Eh? What on earth——"

"It's very important, sir—vital!" said Pitt earnestly. "I've got something to tell you that you can't possibly afford to miss. It's so grave and significant that I mustn't breathe a word of it out here."

Sir Edward checked himself, and stared.

"What do you mean, young man?" he demanded suspiciously.

"I'm not trying to fool you, sir—this is really serious," replied Pitt gravely. "What I have to say is private—and so absolutely vital that you can't possibly refuse me. Please, sir—don't refuse!"

Sir Edward's curiosity was aroused. There was such a note of urgency in Reggie's tone that it couldn't be mistaken. And Pitt, too, looked intensely worried. His eyes were gleaming, and there was a light of grim

determination in them. The other juniors had seldom seen their skipper so tense and emotional.

"You want me to come indoors?" asked Sir Edward gruffly.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'm not sure——"

"The matter is connected with your sons, sir," said Pitt, in a whisper.

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Sir Edward, with a start. "All right—I'll come. But remember—if you are daring to play a practical joke on me I will thrash you within an inch of your life!"

"I can assure you, sir, that my motives are entirely honest and honourable," said the junior captain earnestly.

They passed indoors, and Reggie led the way without further comment to the lecture hall. He opened the door, and ushered Sir Edward in. Handforth's pater took a couple of strides forward, and then paused.

The solemn, oak-panelled apartment was already occupied by a number of impatient ladies and gentlemen. In a word, Pitt had rounded up the last of the parents.

By sheer diplomacy he had got them all together in one bunch. And now, with a firm set to his jaw, he closed the door, and locked it.

CHAPTER VIII.

STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER.



LORD WESTBROOKE gazed at Pitt angrily. "Haven't we had enough of this nonsense, my boy?" he asked. "What impudent trickery is this?"

"No trickery, sir, and no impudence," replied Reggie steadily.

"Then how dare you inveigle me into this room under false pretences, and keep me waiting for more than fifteen minutes?" demanded Lord Westbrooke hotly. "You assured me that you had something to say concerning my ward, Tregellis-West—something of a vital character——"

"Quite true, sir," replied Pitt firmly. "But if you will give me just five minutes, I will state the facts clearly, concisely, and without any attempt to deceive. Please give me a fair chance."

Pitt was startled at his own calmness. He had decided on a bold move, and now that it was actually in operation, he found himself dealing with it easily and coolly.

In half-a-dozen strides he had reached the platform, and his audience regarded him in sheer surprise. It was somewhat novel to listen to an address by a mere junior schoolboy.

But Pitt, after all, wasn't "mere." There was something about him that impressed these ladies and gentlemen sub-consciously. They couldn't name the emotion that thrilled them. They only knew that this Fourth-Former somehow commanded their respect and attention.

Reggie Pitt had never had his chance until this term. Indeed he had only been junior captain for a day or two. He was proving himself a born leader.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you have all come here to remove your sons from this school," began Pitt steadily. "And you have made this decision because you regard St. Frank's as an undesirable establishment."

"You are quite correct in that statement, at all events," puffed Mr. Little.

"St. Frank's is a place of evil!" declared Doyle's mother.

"I have informed you that I have something to say regarding your sons," went on Pitt. "That was no mis-statement—I have. I want your sons to remain at St. Frank's, to stick to the old school, and to prove, by their actions, that the whole story is a fabrication."

"Boy, you are out of your mind!" exclaimed Sir Edward. "Do you dare to indicate that the death of that poor lad, Wallace, was fabricated?"

"No, sir—but Wallace might have died in any case—party or no party."

"Rubbish, sir!" growled Sir Edward. "Upon my soul! Why do we listen to this young upstart? I appeal to you, ladies and gentlemen——"

"Why not give the lad a chance?" asked Sir Crawford Grey quietly.

"Oh, very well!" growled Sir Edward, rebuffed.

"You have all read the newspaper reports, you have heard the rumours, and you have made up your minds that St. Frank's is a dangerous place for boys to live in," said Reggie Pitt firmly. "Having heard these stories, you take it for granted that wild parties and drinking bouts are of frequent occurrence. Ladies and gentlemen, I should like to tell you the absolute facts," he added grimly. "The facts—cold and bare, without the slightest frilling!"

His audience began to lose its impatient look, and Pitt was aware of greater attention. He quickly seized his opening.

"In this school, as in every school, there are a few seniors and juniors who like to call themselves the 'Fast Set,' he exclaimed grimly. "They are an insignificant minority—a miserable handful of cads and rotters who are despised and ignored by the majority. Every bit of this scandal has been caused by such a miserable handful."

"Have you any proof of this statement?" asked Lord Westbrooke curiously.

"Proof, sir? Undeniable proof!" replied Pitt, with tense conviction. "If you had cared to ask Dr. Stafford for proof, you would have obtained it. These cads—not more than a dozen all told—were mad enough to get up a party on the first night of term. They thought it fine and manly to drink champagne, and smoke cigarettes, and play cards. While this was happening, mind you, the entire Fourth Form, with the exception of three utter outsiders, was fast asleep in its dormitories. In other

words, every one of your sons was not only guiltless, but absolutely innocent of the very party itself. We did not know it had happened until the alarm was given."

"Huh!" grunted Sir Edward.

"Is it fair?" demanded Pitt fiercely. "Is it fair and just to take your sons away when they would prefer to remain? Is it fair to blame them for something that they didn't even know of?"

"That is scarcely the point, my boy," said Sir Crawford quietly. "I think I am right in stating that we all desire our sons to leave because we fear they will become contaminated by similar orgies."

"Hear, hear!" said Lord Westbrooke.

Reggie Pitt smiled.

"Then let me assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that all such fears are groundless," he went on boldly. "These orgies you speak of are a myth. The one that happened was an isolated case—and it was sheer coincidence that poor Wallace died. The entire Fourth Form has pledged itself to stick to the school. What will happen if the chaps are taken away wholesale?"

"The school will undoubtedly suffer," said Lord Westbrooke thoughtfully.

"Suffer?" repeated Pitt. "St. Frank's has got a bad name already—although it doesn't deserve it—and the more fellows taken away, the less chance the school will have of recovering."

"There is truth in that, of course," admitted Sir Crawford.

"Half the Fifth has gone—but the Fourth is still intact," said Pitt earnestly. "Can't we be allowed to keep it intact? St. Frank's will go bankrupt if this taint is allowed to remain unchallenged. Once a place has a bad name, it goes down and down."

"Then what is the object of this appeal?" demanded Sir Edward.

"The Fourth wants to fight with might and main to restore St. Frank's to its former prestige," replied Reggie. "It sounds big, I know, but the Fourth can do it—and show up these others—these seniors who have thrown up the sponge without even a struggle!"

Lord Westbrooke looked round at the others.

"Upon my soul, the boy impresses me!" he declared. "I shall certainly not insist upon Tregellis-West leaving if he wishes to remain."

Reggie's eyes gleamed. It was the first sign of victory.

CHAPTER IX.

STILL INTACT.



SIR EDWARD HANDFORTH grunted.

"I am by no means satisfied!" he said obstinately. "The boy may be partly right in what he says, but nothing can alter

the fact that my sons are subject to the

contaminating influence of these wild parties. I shall remove them from the school."

Reggie Pitt set his teeth.

"Haven't you got more faith in your sons than that, Sir Edward?" he demanded. "Don't you think them strong enough to live decently? They're two of the best chaps in the school—with clean records and without a single black mark against them. Haven't they proved that healthy living appeals to them? Why should you expect them to change, just because a handful of cads committed this folly?"

"I can trust my sons anywhere!" retorted Sir Edward warmly.

"In that case, sir, you can't possibly object to them remaining, said Pitt quickly.

"The boy's right, Sir Edward," declared Lord Westbrooke. "If your actions are to be consistent with your expressed opinion, you will allow your sons to stay on."

"Oh, indeed!" snorted Sir Edward. "Indeed!"

"I don't like boasting about my own Form, ladies and gentlemen, but the Fourth has done more to maintain the high traditions of St. Frank's than any other section of the school," continued Pitt. "What happened when William K. Smith, the millionaire, set himself out to destroy the school? It was the Fourth that saved the day."

"Quite true—quite true!" agreed Sir Crawford, nodding.

"And it'll be the Fourth again—if the Fourth is allowed to have a sporting chance," went on Reggie quickly. "It's bad enough for half the Fifth to be gone—but we can get over that. But if the Fourth is reduced to a mere handful there won't be enough spirit left in the school for any fight to be put up. Things will simply go from bad to worse, and St. Frank's will ultimately be closed—ruined, shattered beyond repair."

The audience of parents was impressed.

"But what if the Fourth remains intact?" continued Reggie, without giving anybody a chance to speak. "What then? The Fourth will have a big fight to get the good name of St. Frank's back—but the Fourth always comes out strongest when it's fighting. I urge you, earnestly and anxiously, to let your boys remain here. Give them this one term, at least, and just see what happens. Let's have a sporting chance! We all love the old school, and want to see her honoured and respected."

"If Jack desires to remain—he shall remain!" said Sir Crawford.

"Thanks awfully, sir," exclaimed Pitt. "Jack's my own chum, as you know, and I need him badly."

"Then you take it for granted that I shall allow you to stay?" put in Mr. Pitt.

"Yes, dad—I know you will," replied Reggie.

"Upon my word! I do believe you are right," exclaimed Mr. Pitt. "Bless the

boy! He seems to be doing just as he likes with us."

It was only the example that was needed. Most members of Pitt's audience had wavered, and were already re-considering their decision. And Reggie took the uncertain ones in hand at once.

"Do you think," he demanded, "that your sons would have ignored your orders for them to return home if St. Frank's was rotten? Most chaps are only too glad of any excuse to get away from school. But the Fourth knows how unjust all these rumours are, and there's a big feeling of indignation and loyalty in the school. Another point. Your sons view the prospect of a change of school with absolute apprehension."

"Indeed, why?" demanded somebody.

"Because they are leaving St. Frank's under a cloud," retorted Pitt promptly. "They may not be under a cloud individually, but the whole school is discredited. What will happen to these boys when they go to Redcliffe, or Hazelhurst, or elsewhere?"

"That's rather a fine point!" said Lord Westbrooke, nodding.

"I can tell you what will happen, ladies and gentlemen!" said Pitt grimly. "Your sons will be cut dead—they'll be looked on with scorn and contempt. They'll be suspected of the fast living which St. Frank's is just now notorious for. There's not much justice in this world, and I can honestly tell you that every boy who leaves St. Frank's at this moment will be put through a kind of torture at his next school."

"Impossible!" declared one of the ladies.

"Is it, madam? Send your boy to Hazelhurst, and see what happens!" exclaimed Pitt warmly. "He'll be singled out as a rank outsider on the very first day of his arrival—and he'll never get over the stigma. And why? Because he comes from St. Frank's—because he comes from the school with a rotten reputation."

"How revoltingly unfair!" said the lady, horrified.

Pitt gave a short laugh.

"You won't find much fairness when a fellow hails from a school with a bad name," he said, rather bitterly. "He enters his new school, burdened with a dreadful handicap. Without the slightest justification or proof, the majority of his new schoolfellows will credit him with every possible kind of vice."

"By George!" exclaimed Sir Edward. "You're right, boy—your argument is absolutely sound! My sons shall remain here!"

"Thank you, sir," said Pitt quietly. "If only the Fourth can live down this evil name, and restore St. Frank's to its former proud position; then the reward will be ample."

Reggie Pitt's task was practically done. The few isolated waverers were so convinced. And when the door of the lecture hall was unlatched, the crowd of parents passed out—a changed body.

The Fourth Form captain had conquered.

CHAPTER X.

UP AGAINST IT.



THE news spread like wildfire.

In less than ten minutes the whole school was buzzing from end to end—marvelling at this extraordinary and well-nigh incredible story. Reginald Pitt, single handed, had changed the army of irate parents into a party of smiling, happy converts.

Without exception they had succumbed.

And the entire Fourth Form—Ancient House section and Modern House section—was intact to a fellow. Hardly anybody could believe it. And as nobody had been present in the lecture hall at the time, Pitt was looked upon with awe. How had he performed this miracle?

"Hang it all, I never thought Reggie was such a firebrand!" exclaimed Buster Boots enthusiastically. "When it comes to the test, he's on the mark! He's even a better skipper than Nipper used to be."

"Just as good, anyway," agreed Bob Christine.

And this was the general opinion.

A few fellows suffered a slight pang of disappointment at not going home—but this was only a passing phase. In their hearts, they wanted to remain at St. Frank's, and Pitt had filled them with a strong, grim determination to stand loyally by the old school.

And it was, after all, just an example of what real leadership could do. A weak Form Captain would have knuckled under at the outset, judging the odds too overwhelming. But Reggie Pitt, in spite of his cheerful face and jocular manner, was a fellow with an iron determination. Once he made up his mind on a thing, that thing had to be done—or something would burst.

Dr. Stafford himself could scarcely believe the news when he heard it. The harassed Head was quite startled, in fact, when he received visitor after visitor—all equally enthusiastic and apologetic. Parents came to him, urging him to forget their former hastiness.

And in the afternoon the majority of the visitors left—fully satisfied that St. Frank's was as clean and wholesome as ever. And the general position was greatly improved.

Yet it was still grave enough.

With the Sixth, Fifth and Third badly

depleted, St. Frank's was looking half empty. If the Fourth had been scattered in the same way, then, indeed, little hope would have remained.

For it was the Middle School that counted.

The fags were too young to make any sort of fight in unison. And the seniors were too dignified and lordly to enter into any campaign that was likely to belittle them.

It was the Fourth every time—the Fourth who bore the brunt of outside condemnation, and who would fight with grim determination to smash down this increasing wave of prejudice.

But the juniors had a bigger fight ahead than they even realised.

It wouldn't be long before they received certain indications of the coming battle. But at the moment they celebrated.

Dr. Stafford himself sent for Pitt, and questioned him curiously concerning the manner in which he had wrought the change. Reggie was quite frank. He told the Head just how it had happened.

"I am quite proud of you, my boy," said Dr. Stafford, at length. "You are a credit to the school, and I only wish we had many more like you."

Reggie flushed.

"There's plenty more like me, sir," he answered promptly. "Perhaps I've got a bit more cheek, that's all. But you can always count on the Fourth to be loyal. We've got a bit of a fight ahead of us, but we're entering into it with plenty of determination."

"Your spirit is admirable, and I must really congratulate the Fourth Form on having such a sensible leader," smiled the Head. "But it isn't fair, Pitt, that you youngsters should have to bear the brunt of this dishonour. You are entirely guiltless, and——"

"We're not bearing it, sir—we're just making up our minds to grapple with it," interrupted Pitt. "And if you hear of any little shindy, I hope you won't be too hasty. We're bound to have enemies—and, well, sir, the Fourth is inclined to be a bit war-like at times."

Dr. Stafford smiled.

"You can rely upon me to be quite discreet, Pitt," he replied drily. "I need not warn you that you must use discretion on your account, too. I think I can trust the Fourth to act like gentlemen."

"Thank-you, sir," said Pitt. "We won't forget."

And thus, in a way, the campaign had a sort of official sanction. And Dr. Stafford was wise in this decision. Whether he permitted it or not, the juniors would let themselves go. And as they were gathering their forces to fight down the scandal, it was impossible for the Head to discourage the movement.

There had been ample proof that public opinion was making a dead set against the

school. The Head himself, to his consternation, had been hissed and jeered at in Bannington, and he could well imagine what treatment the boys themselves would be in for.

Mr. Beverley Stokes was frankly delighted.

"Splendid, young 'un!" he said, clapping Pitt on the back. "If the Fourth only maintains this strength, there's just a chance we shall be able to live down this scandal."

"I hope so, sir," said Reggie.

"Of course, it's going to be a fight—public opinion is a hard nut to crack," went on Mr. Stokes, shaking his head. "Once a rumour is set going, it grows bigger and bigger, and it's an infernally tough customer to kill. And just at the moment St. Frank's is suffering from more than a bad rumour."

"Yes, sir—there's a grain of truth behind it all," said Pitt. "That's just the trouble. We've got to admit that that rotten party took place, and so we're all rather helpless."

"That small core of truth had been magnified into a whole fungus," said the Housemaster thoughtfully. "And unless we can dig it up by the roots, there's just a possibility it will grow to such proportions that we shall never be able to battle with it. As far as I can see, the only way is for the school to prove itself worthy by acting on the dead level."

"Well, you can count on the Remove, sir," said Reggie stoutly.

"I know it," smiled Mr. Stokes. "That's why I'm optimistic."

CHAPTER XI.

BEYOND THE PALE.



"EVERYBODY ready?" asked Handforth, bustling into the Ancient House lobby.

"It's like your nerve!" snorted Bob Christine.

"We've all been waiting for you for five minutes, and you calmly dash in and ask if we're ready!"

Pitt glanced at his watch.

"We shall have to hustle, too," he said briskly. "These local trains may be late sometimes—but they're always prompt when a fellow dashes into the station a minute past the time."

The Junior Eleven was just starting off for Helmford.

It was the first fixture of the season, and

during the past two days Little Side had been the scene of great activity. King Football had come into his own again, and there were very few juniors who were sorry. Football, on the whole, was preferred to cricket.

This particular game had added interest in the fact that it was Reggie Pitt's first appearance as skipper. During the previous term, Nipper had occupied that proud position. But Nipper was away in London now, working side by side with Nelson Lee against the League of the Green Triangle.

So far, Pitt had done well. He had exceeded all expectations as Lowest School Captain—although Nipper had always had the greatest possible faith in Reggie's strength and capability.

And Pitt, of course, was a born footballer.

He was probably the best junior winger in the country, and he possessed just that right amount of tact and judgment that goes to the making of a perfect sports captain.

His first team had been selected without fear or favour. He had chosen the fellows who were revealing the best form. Handforth was in his old position as goalkeeper—for in this particular branch of the game he excelled.

The team, in full, was as follows: Handforth; Armstrong, Boots; Church, Yerke, De Valerie; Pitt, Grey, Christine, Watson, Tregellis-West. Some of the players had been placed in unfamiliar positions, and quite a number of critics were dubious.

But Pitt knew what he was about, for he had been watching very closely during practice, and during the inter-House match which had taken place two evenings earlier.

It was Saturday afternoon now, and St. Frank's had really settled down to the new term in earnest. The unfortunate death of Wallace was hardly forgotten, but thrust aside. And the school was carrying on as usual.

Of course, the Fifth was a poor ghost of its former self, and even the Sixth looked rather like a skeleton. But the Fourth retained its complete personnel, and all the juniors were now grateful and delighted at being allowed to stay on.

Bob Christine was feeling particularly pleased because he was chosen to lead the St. Frank's attack. Nipper had always played centre-forward—but Christine was an excellent substitute.

And Pitt's selection had clearly proved that he did not favour his own House more than the rivals across the Triangle. His one aim was to select the best team.

About a dozen other fellows accompanied the eleven. They caught the train all right, and arrived in Helmford without incident. They had timed it comfortably, reaching the playing fields of Helmford College a full fifteen minutes before the game was due to commence.

It was rather a warm, close afternoon—

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that type of autumn day which is really more suitable for cricket than football. But this couldn't be helped. One cannot choose one's own weather—which, after all, is, perhaps, fortunate.

The St. Frank's party was booked for a little surprise.

They had hardly entered the gates of the big public school when a crowd of Helmford juniors surrounded them, staring in a strange manner. And Barlowe, the junior skipper, pushed himself in front of the rest.

"What are you chaps doing here?" he asked rudely.

"Doing?" repeated Pitt. "We've come to play the match, of course."

"Match?" repeated Barlowe. "Which match?"

"Don't try to be funny!" interrupted Handforth, with a snort. "You know as well as I do we've got a fixture with you this afternoon."

Barlowe elevated his eyebrows.

"Fixture?" he repeated. "You're mad!"

Reggie Pitt became slightly suspicious.

"What's the game, Barlowe?" he asked grimly. "You can't pretend there never was a fixture, because it's on your list as well as mine. There's something else behind this. Don't you want to play us?"

"We won't play!" retorted Barlowe curtly.

"Play these rotten cads?" put in another Helmford fellow. "Likely! They'd better clear off these grounds before we pelt 'em! We don't want blackguards of this sort contaminating the school!"

Pitt bit his lip.

"I always had an idea you were rather a decent chap, Barlowe," he said quietly. "What particular accusation have you got against us? Be blunt about it—there's nothing like the truth!"

"Oh, well, if you want it, you'll have it!" retorted Barlowe, with a supercilious sneer. "After what's happened at St. Frank's, I should imagine you chaps would prefer to hide your heads in shame."

"Shame!" roared Handforth.

"What else?" said Barlowe sourly. "It's like your confounded nerve to come here at all! As for the fixture, it's off!"



"My only hat!" said Willy Handforth blankly, as he watched the invading hosts arriving at the school gate.

"Off?" repeated Pitt, taking a deep breath.

"Off—wiped out—cancelled!" said Barlowe, turning away. "And the sooner you rotten outsiders clear off, the better!"

CHAPTER XII.

HANDFORTH'S KNOCK-OUT.



REGGIE PITT was furious.

He looked calm, however, and the other St. Frank's fellows were impatient with him. They would have preferred

to see their skipper knock Barlowe flat with a direct right-hander.

Pitt felt like delivering such a blow—but his good sense prevailed, and he held himself in check.

It would do no good to knock Barlowe down—except to relieve his own feelings—and he would at once place himself in the position of the aggressor. And St. Frank's was in bad enough odour already.

"This is rottenly unfair!" burst out Reggie passionately. "Look here, Barlowe, I want another word with you—"

"You can clear off!" interrupted Barlowe, turning. "I've said all I mean to say. You and your pals are only wasting your time and contaminating the school property!"

Handforth nearly broke a blood-vessel.

"Aren't you going to knock that cad down?" he roared, glaring at Pitt.

"Don't get excited, old man—remember what we're up against," said Pitt quietly.

Handforth checked, for there was something in Pitt's tone that calmed him. And he realised that Reggie's self-control was wise.

"Are you going, or shall we kick you out?" asked Barlowe.

"Before we start any fighting, wouldn't it be sportsmanlike to say what your grouch is about?" demanded Pitt. "There was a scandal at St. Frank's—we admit it. But there's not a fellow in my Eleven who took the slightest part in that rotten affair—"

"That's nothing to do with it!" interrupted Barlowe. "We wouldn't demean ourselves by playing against such a dirty school! So the sooner you go, the better! And don't forget that all our other fixtures are wiped off the slate!"

"But look here—"

"It's no good arguing!" snapped Barlowe. "We won't stand you!"

Pitt turned to the other St. Frank's juniors, and gave them a significant glance.

"Well, we'd better make tracks," he said shortly.

"You mean it—we're going?" panted Boots, with a glare.

"I mean it," said Pitt.

"Then I don't!" stormed Handforth. "If you think I'm going to stand these rotten insults from such a gang of knock-kneed cads—"

"Steady, old man—steady!" interrupted Pitt quietly. "We've had enough insults to warrant a free fight. But is that going to help us to clear the name of St. Frank's? These precious sportsmen have refused to keep the fixture. Well, it's all over. The only possible move for us to make is to leave the place with dignity."

Bob Christine nodded slowly.

"You're right, Reggie," he said. "With this prejudice against us, everybody will pick on the slightest excuse to run us down all the more. And we can't force the rotters to play."

"I wouldn't play with them now if they went down on their beastly knees!" said Handforth indignantly. "All right! I'll keep my temper! But, by George, it's an effort!"

Pitt breathed rather more freely. He had been fearing that Handforth would create a scene—and that would have been disastrous. Without question, the St. Frank's fellows would have received all the blame.

They turned away, grim and angry. Without speaking, they walked through the gateway, and emerged into the quiet country road. This affair had come as a complete shock. They had never counted on such a blow.

Not only was the match abandoned, but

they had been told, clearly and concisely, that they weren't wanted any more! In other words, St. Frank's was now regarded as undesirable.

"The snobs—the miserable, contemptible snobs!" muttered Pitt grimly. "It only shows how—"

Whizz! Whizz! Swish!

From the opposite hedge a number of missiles came hurtling upon the football field. A dead cabbage—some rotten apples—and a few similar articles. A few of the fellows were hit.

"Hi! Stop that!" shouted Boots furiously.

"Go back to your rotten dog-kennel!" came a yell.

"Blackguards!"

"Champagne-drinking sots!"

"Drunkards!"

A perfect storm of condemnation came down upon the heads of the St. Frank's group. Looking up, they could see a crowd of Helmford boys behind the hedge—which was thin and patchy, with many gaps.

For a moment or two the Saints could do nothing but stare. The rank, appalling injustice of this treatment startled them, and they felt rather limp.

They—who had been utterly innocent of the champagne party—were roundly accused without the faintest prop of evidence! Not only the general public, but their own school rivals were down upon them. It was something they had never bargained for.

Swish!

Another missile came shooting into the road. It struck Handforth fairly and squarely in the centre of his face. There was a dull, squelching sound, and Handforth uttered a gurgle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Helmford crowd yelled. That missile had been a sponge—a sponge soaked in ink—and it had done deadly work. Handforth had gone fairly black in the face.

"By George!" he spluttered, in a tearing rage.

With three strides he had reached the hedge, and he dived through it like a charging bull. He had particularly noticed the sponge-thrower. And Handy got through the hedge so quickly that the humorist had no time to escape.

"You insulting beast!" roared Handforth. "Put your hands up!"

The fellow started back.

"Not likely!" he shouted. "I don't fight with hooligans!"

"All right, then—take that!"

Biff!

Handforth brought his right round with beautiful precision. There was all the force of his shoulder behind it, and the Helmford junior took the punch with a howl of surprise and agony that might have been heard half a mile away.

He crashed over, and lay groaning.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COUNCIL SCHOOL SPORTSMEN.



FOR a moment a tense silence reigned.

The Helmford fellows were startled. They hadn't expected such prompt retaliation. But any fair-minded and disinterested onlooker would undoubtedly have agreed that Handforth had received full provocation.

"Want some more?" demanded Handy thickly. "Get up, you shamming rotter! And who else wants to have a go?"

"Chuck it, old man," said Pitt quickly. "You've knocked him flat—let it rest there. We'd better clear out of this miserable hole."

"You're not blaming me for biffing this cad?" demanded Handforth.

"Not at all—he deserved it," said Reggie. Handforth turned away, rather cooler. His late victim picked himself up, and hurried off, nursing his jaw. And at that moment a severe-looking gentleman in a flowing gown swept upon the scene.

"What is the meaning of this disgraceful fracas?" he demanded hotly. "Barlowe! Who are these boys?"

"St. Frank's chaps, sir," said Barlowe. "Please, Mr. Gunn, they came over for the match," put in another Helmford junior. "But we won't play against such a mob!"

Mr. Gunn frowned. "I quite understand!" he said sourly. "St. Frank's boys, eh? How is it that they had the audacity to come here in the first place? St. Frank's is no school for gentlemen—as we have good reason to appreciate. You can go away as soon as you please, you young ruffians!" he added, raising his voice and addressing the St. Frank's Junior Eleven.

"Hold on, sir!" said Pitt grimly. "I'd like a word——"

"Impudent boy! Don't dare to address me!" interrupted Mr. Gunn curtly. "Unless you leave at once, I shall report your conduct to the Headmaster—and advise him to communicate with your own Headmaster! Go! I will not allow such young hooligans to remain in contact with my scholars!"

Reggie Pitt shrugged his shoulders. "It's no good, you chaps," he said bitterly. "Even the masters are against us. We'd better clear."

And even Handforth could see that the position would only be worsened by remaining. The St. Frank's fellows strode down the road in a group followed by a storm of triumphant jeering.

"Well, what do you think of that?" asked Boots breathlessly.

"Think of it!" muttered Handforth, wiping his face for the twentieth time. "I can't think! I'm boiling too much! I didn't let myself go properly, or I should have half killed somebody! How's my face?"

"A bit smudgy," said Church. "But don't worry—there's a stream just down the road, and you can have a rinse."

"My hat! No match this afternoon!" growled Bob Christine. "Well, we're soon getting it in the neck! What shall we do now? We're sort of all dressed up and nowhere to go!"

Pitt nodded. "There's a train in about ten minutes," he said. "Let's get back home."

He was bitterly disappointed, in addition to being enraged. Such treatment as this was almost incredible. And yet, now that Pitt came to think things out, he might have expected something of the sort.

From past experience he knew how atrociously unreasonable human beings could be—and, somehow, boys were the worst culprits of all. For they were liable to act without thinking—to accuse without considering.

It was a disconsolate crowd that boarded the train at Helmford Station ten minutes later. Conversation flagged. Hardly anybody wanted to speak. Even Handforth had lost his ready tongue.

The train reached Bannington, and scarcely any comment was made. The train went through to Bellton, and although somebody tentatively suggested alighting at Bannington, to go to the pictures, the idea was ignored.

The train started after a brief stoppage and pulled out through the quiet outskirts of Bannington. Then it came to a halt again—presumably on account of a red signal.

John Busterfield Boots grunted.

"I say, this is insult after injury," he growled. "Just look out here! It's a pity the train couldn't stop somewhere else!"

A meadow adjoined the railway line, and in this meadow were two goal-posts. A number of youthful footballers were punting a ball about. And the sight was a galling one for the disappointed St. Frank's team.

Handforth leaned out of the window, and watched. Pitt was leaning out of the next window—for the Eleven was occupying two adjoining compartments.

"Who are they?" asked Handforth, watching with interest.

"Council School chaps," replied Pitt keenly. "Waiting for the other team to turn up, I suppose. Makes you feel a bit rotten, doesn't it?"

"I wouldn't mind playing these chaps this afternoon!" said Handforth.

"Not much chance of that," replied Reggie. "Of course, the Council school fellows have always been pretty friendly—Hi! Look out!"

Plop!

Pitt's warning came too late. A miskick near the edge of the meadow had sent the ball careering towards the train. It really seemed as though Handforth was doomed for punishment on this particular afternoon.

The football struck him on the nose before he could withdraw his head. And he and the leather vanished into the compartment.

"Yaroooh!" roared Handforth wildly.

He picked himself up, considerably hurt.

"Who did that?" he yelled, jumping to the window.

"'Ere, chuck us back that football, mate!" shouted one of the Council boys.

"That's likely—after you've biffed me over!"

"Sorry!" grinned the Bannington boy.

"It was Joe's fault, 'ere. 'E didn't mean it, young gent. Quite a haccident!"

CHAPTER XIV.

PLAYING THE GAME.



HANDFORTH cooled down. An apology always disarmed him, and further anger became impossible. He tossed the ball back, and earned the chorused thanks of the

Council school boys.

It was quite a pleasure for the St. Frank's eleven to find themselves treated as ordinary human beings. The train was still stopped, and appeared to be in no hurry to move—although the engine was hissing impatiently.

"You fellows waiting for anybody?" asked Reggie Pitt.

The Council boys had all gathered near the low, wooden fence, and were looking at the train with grinning faces. The mishap to Handforth had rather tickled them.

"Yes, mate—waiting for the Caistowe lot," said one of the rustic footballers. "But they don't seem to be turnin' up! Looks like we're goin' to be dished out of our game!"

"Then you're in the same boat as we are!" growled Handforth.

Reggie Pitt started.

"I say, do you mean it?" he asked quickly. "Won't the Caistowe team turn up?"

"Don't seem like it now—it's too late."

"Would you care to play against St. Frank's?" asked Pitt.

"Come off it!" grinned the boy in the meadow.

"I mean it—honest Injun!" declared Pitt.

"Lumme! You're a sport!" said the Council schoolboy. "Not 'arf we won't play you! But 'ow can you git out o' that train?"

"We'll show you!" replied Pitt crisply. "Come on, you chaps! Any port in a storm!"

The other members of the Junior Eleven were only too eager. The carriage doors were opened, and in less than a minute the entire St. Frank's contingent had leapt down on the permanent way, taking with

them their bags and other impedimenta. The doors were slammed.

"Just in time!" panted Bob Christine.

The engine gave a preliminary whistle, and the train commenced to move—both guards being fortunately unaware of the lightened load. But the passengers in the nearby coaches were looking on either severely or smilingly, according to the character of the individual.

Pitt and his merry men jumped over the fence, and found themselves facing the Council School crowd.

"Crikey! I thought you was only pullin' our leg!" said one of the country youths—a raw-boned youngster with untidy hair. "Do you mean it—honest? You want a game?"

"It's going to save our lives," replied Pitt solemnly. "Many thanks, O thou of freckled visage! We've been disappointed over our match this afternoon, so a better meeting than this couldn't have happened."

"Meetin'!" grinned the other. "Strikes me, we've got to thank that there train! My name's Bert Gibbons—I'm the captain of this little lot. You chaps are from St. Frank's, ain't you?"

"What of it?" demanded Handforth, glaring.

"All right, mate—don't bite me!" protested Gibbons.

"I thought you were going to accuse us of being hooligans, or something," said Handforth bluntly. "There's plenty of people about here who think that St. Frank's is a sort of school for criminals!"

Bert Gibbons grinned.

"Oh! You mean that there scandal affair?" he asked. "Me an' my mates don't take no notice o' that rubbish. We know St. Frank's—don't we, Joe? Don't we, Mike? We're jolly pleased to play against you, young gents."

Reggie Pitt fell upon Bert Gibbons, and hugged him.

"For those beautiful words allow me to implant a kiss upon thy manly brow!" he said fervently.

"'Ere, chuck it!" said Bert, in alarm.

"You needn't worry—I wasn't going to do it really!" grinned Pitt. "But, seriously, thanks, old son, for your friendliness. It's refreshing to meet somebody who doesn't take any notice of silly rumours. Now I come to think of it, haven't I met you before?"

Bert Gibbons grinned.

"You ain't 'arf a caution, Master Pitt!" he said. "Met me? Ain't you hired my dad's boat on the river many a time? I knows most o' the young gents of St. Frank's—an' so do my mates. An' we knows the wrong 'uns, too. 'Tain't likely we're goin' to think badly of such young sports as you, sir."

The mystery was explained. These Council School boys knew the ins and outs of the

whole affair—and gave the discredit in the proper quarter. They knew that Pitt and Handforth and all these others were true blue.

And before another five minutes had elapsed the game had started.

The junior eleven entered into it with pure, unadulterated enjoyment. After being disappointed at Helmford, they were delighted at being provided with a game after all. And this Council school team was no mean opposition, either. Bert Gibbons had trained his players well.

It was, of course, a one-sided affair, but the game was a game—it wasn't a mere rough and tumble kick-about. Reggie Pitt, playing in his old position of outside left, forced opening after opening.

And two of them were quickly taken advantage of by the inside forwards.

Bob Christine snapped up the ball from the very feet of the opposing left back, dodged neatly, and sent in a low, hard drive which had the goalkeeper guessing all the way.

"Goal!" yelled the scattered onlookers.

"Good shot!"

The second goal came from Tommy Watson, and after that the St. Frank's team eased down a bit. They felt they had the game in the hollow of their hands. But they hadn't.

Gibbons and his men made a surprisingly brisk rally, and they scored twice within a minute. The shots that beat Handforth were fast and tricky, and the best of goalkeepers would have been conquered.

"Two all!" said Reggie Pitt, as they lined up again. "Good! This is getting interesting!"

CHAPTER XV.

ASKING FOR TROUBLE.



"COMING for a ride?" asked Claude Carter genially.

He had pulled to a standstill in the Triangle at St. Frank's—seated on the saddle of a smart, racy looking motor-cycle. The engine was throbbing impatiently, and Carter was rather impressive in a leather jacket, and an airman's helmet.

"Who me?" said Fullwood, as he inspected the machine. "I don't mind, thanks. Any old thing you like."

Ralph Leslie Fullwood eyed the side-car somewhat dubiously. It was attached to the motor-bike in the usual way, but the body of the side-car was a small, torpedo affair, with a point at either end. It was, in fact, a side car of the type which is usually affected by "one of the lads." It was decidedly "sporty" in every way.

"No need to be so patronising," said Carter. "I'm not begging you to come—

you needn't bother unless you like. As a matter of fact, I need some ballast."

Fullwood ignored the new boy's remark.

"Is there room enough in that freak thing?" he asked.

"Get in and see," replied Carter briefly.

Fullwood got in—and found much more room than he had expected. And a moment later they were careering out of the gateway at a reckless speed. Fullwood's chums, Gulliver and Bell, watched the departure enviously.

"Those chaps are green with jealousy!" grinned Fullwood as the outfit sped down the lane. "Of course, I could have an affair like this if I chose, but it's too much bally fag to keep the thing in order. Which way are you going—to Bannington?"

"Yes, I thought about having a look in at the races," replied Carter calmly. "There's a pretty big meeting on this afternoon, and I've got my eye on one or two likely gee-gees."

Fullwood's eyes sparkled.

"Then you're a good sport, too?" he asked. "I say, Carter, you're a chap I like! What tip have you got for the three-thirty?"

"Speckled Bess."

"By gad, that's my fancy, too," said Fullwood eagerly.

"She's a cert—a ten-to-one chance, too," said Carter. "I mean to have a quid on that race. I am out in this get-up so that I shouldn't stand much risk on the course."

"You're a pretty wily sort of bounder!" said Fullwood admiringly. "It's a good thing I've got my overcoat on. We'd better stop in Bannington, and I'll buy a soft felt—and stuff this rotten school cap in my pocket."

"We're both wily, it seems," chuckled Claude Carter.

They were speeding along the Bannington road now, and although Carter's driving alarmed Fullwood once or twice, Bannington was eventually reached without any fatality.

Going down the wide part of the High Street, towards the shopping centre, Carter cut out the engine, allowing the combination to glide noiselessly down the gradual slope.

"Not a bad little 'bus, is she?" he asked casually.

"Jolly fine!" said Fullwood promptly. "I say, look out, there's an old idiot crossing the road—"

"Don't worry! I'll make him jump!" grinned Carter.

The thought was characteristic of the young rascal. A hundred yards ahead an old countryman was hobbling across the wide road, his back towards the speeding motor-cycle.

He was unwise, no doubt, for crossing the road without glancing up and down. But he had as much right to the highway as the motor-cyclists, and it was plainly Carter's duty to sound a warning.

He did so—but in his own time.

Instead of tooting his horn at once, Carter allowed the freely running outfit to get within a bare yard or so—steering so that he would shoot past the old fellow within a few inches.

"Watch him jump!" he grinned.

Zurrrrrh!

A terrific, devastating note ripped out from the electric horn. It was a terrifying sound to hit anybody at close quarters, without any previous warning. And it was the most contemptible of mean tricks to play such a cruel joke on an old cripple.

The old man leapt a clear foot into the air, gasping and panting with fright.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Fullwood and Carter.

They swept by so closely that the wide handle-bar just touched the old man's sleeve as he threw out his arm. And the poor old chap, nearly suffering from heart failure, staggered and fell.

But retribution was at hand.

There was a sudden roaring hiss, and Carter's grin vanished. The front wheel was wobbling ominously, and he jammed the brakes on.

"Tyre's gone!" he rapped out savagely. "What cursed luck!"

"Oh, by gad!" snapped Fullwood.

They pulled up, having completely forgotten the poor old chap a few yards behind. They thought solely of themselves. They could yell with laughter at the misfortune of others, but their own misfortunes startled them.

"Must have been a rotten nail, or something," said Carter fiercely. "That tyre's nearly new—Here, what the——"

He looked up in surprise as two or three men came up and surrounded the machine. One man in particular was noticeable. He was a burly farmer, in rough tweeds and gaiters.

"Get off that durned contraption before I lug ye off by the schruft of your neck!" he roared. "I'm going to tan ye until ye howl for mercy!"

CHAPTER XVI.

TARRED WITH THE SAME BRUSH.



FULLWOOD leapt out of the side-car with surprising alacrity.

"Ay, and you, too, you young hooligan!" shouted the farmer. "Ye ought to be locked up! Nearly killed that poor old feller—that's what ye did!"

"I didn't touch him!" shouted Carter indignantly.

"You didn't touch him, but it was one of the filthiest tricks I've ever seen!" cut in another young man—a well-dressed young

fellow who had run out of the bank at the corner.

"Oh, ye saw it, too, did ye?" asked the farmer.

"I was watching all the time," said the other. "These young idiots deliberately scared old Miles. He's a bit deaf, you know, and that shock must have been an awful jar."

The old fellow had picked himself up, with the help of several passers-by. The crowd was growing rapidly, and Fullwood and Carter were hemmed in. They cursed their vile luck.

But for that burst tyre they would have been a mile away by this time; and now there was no chance of breaking free. The crowd continued to increase, and the townspeople were very angry.

"They said these St. Frank's schoolboys was young scoundrels—and now I know it!" shouted the farmer, addressing all and sundry. "Boys as can do a trick like that ain't fit to eat with pigs!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Give the young ruffians a good whipping!"

"They're all the same—the whole crowd!" shouted another man. "St. Frank's ought to be closed! We don't want these young scallywags mixing with our sons in Bannington!"

"Then some of you had best go along to the football field, just beyond the gasworks!" shouted a boy on the outskirts of the throng. "There's lots of these St. Frank's kids there, playing against Bannington Council School!"

There was a roar of strong disapproval; and then, in the middle of the excitement, a policeman came along and took charge of affairs. He escorted Fullwood and Carter to the side of the road—for the crippled machine and the crowd had caused such an obstruction that all traffic was held up.

Fortunately for the two young rascals, attention was diverted from them. The presence of the police made any drastic punishment impracticable. And a certain number of people hurried off to the football field to see what was going on.

The crowd chiefly consisted of idlers, and it grew bigger and bigger as it progressed. Urchins joined it, yelling gleefully, and by the time the outskirts of the town were reached, the throng was formidable. And everybody was fired with the same indignant spirit.

On the Council school football field the game was progressing well. The second half had already commenced, with St. Frank's leading by the odd goal out of five. Bert Gibbons and his team were giving the Saints a much better game than they had anticipated.

But the result was never in question.

By making an extra strenuous effort, Pitt and Co. would have scored three or four goals right off; but they didn't wish to rout

their friendly rivals. They were enjoying the game too much.

"All right, Reggie—to me!" sang out Grey, as the forward line swept towards the Council School goal. "Good!"

Jack gathered up the leather in his stride, Pitt's pass being neat and accurate; and Grey was just about to shoot when he came to a halt, staring blankly. An enormous crowd was invading the field.

"Hi! Clear off, there!" roared Handforth. "You're interrupting the game!"

No notice was taken of his yell.

"Klek 'em off!"

"Back to St. Frank's, you young varmint!"

nothing but angry looks and rough treatment. Handforth and one or two others tried to fight. But the odds were too overwhelming.

The game was broken up, and almost before they knew it the St. Frank's juniors were deposited on the road, bruised, dishevelled, tattered, and grimy. Every one of them was more or less of a wreck.

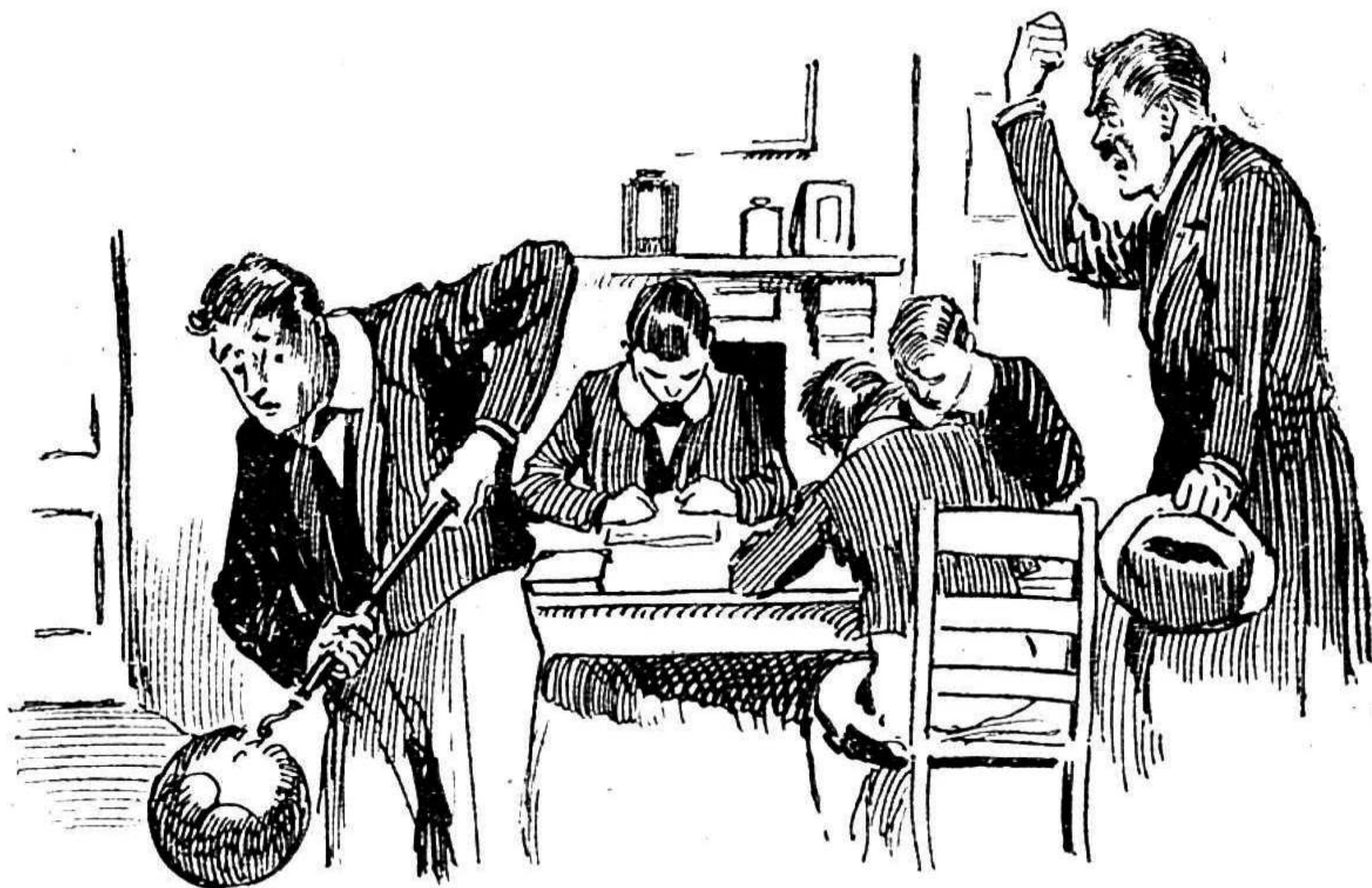
"And never you come in the town again!" roared one of the enemy.

"Keep to your rotten hole of a school!"

"'Ere, 'ere!"

"Next time we see you, we'll 'arf kill you!"

The crowd was not only rough, but menacing to a degree. And the unfortunate



Handforth and Co. were busy at work at the table—or pretending to be. Willy was industriously blowing up a football. "Edward!" thundered his father.

"Off you go!"

"'Ere," gasped Gibbons, "what's the idea of—"

"These St. Frank's kids ain't fit to play with you boys!" roared one of the Bannington gang. "They're rotten to the core! They're a set of young ruffians—that's what they are!"

There was no time for Pitt and his men to flee—even if they had wanted to do so. They were simply surrounded, picked up, and swept away in the wild rush.

They were hounded off the field with the utmost violence.

Protests were in vain. The juniors got

Junior Eleven could do nothing but retreat. And so they returned to St. Frank's—bodily hurt and in a state of miserable indignation. They were angry, too, at this unjust treatment.

"It's no good—we're all tarred with the same brush!" said Bob Christine bitterly. "We're hounded off like a lot of lepers! What's the good of fighting against such a rotten prejudice?"

Reginald Pitt's eyes glittered.

"The fight's going to be a stiff one; but we're not dead yet!" he said grimly. "The battle's only just begun!"

THE END.

By Your Editor:



My dear Readers,

The present school series, dealing with St. Frank's in disgrace, gathers in interest with each successive story. The old school would seem to be very harshly treated by other schools and the public generally. But they are not so much to blame as the scandal-mongers who have made full use of one deplorable incident to rouse public indignation against everyone connected with St. Frank's. No one now will have anything to do with the school. The boys are ostracised wherever they go. The inhospitable treatment at the hands of their old opponents at football and cricket, the Helmford Grammar School, was humiliating in the extreme. But these indignities grow more aggravating every day, and with the school depleted so seriously in numbers by the stern action of parents and guardians, the future is clouded with financial disaster, and the ultimate closing down of the school would then be inevitable.

AN INVITATION TO MR. BROOKS.

The experiment of running a correspondence section in the "St. Frank's Magazine" pages, open to all readers of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, and of having the letters of all the latter who care to write answered by a prominent Fourth Form schoolboy, has proved so popular with our readers that I have decided to go a step further and invite Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks—the author of every St. Frank's story

which has appeared in these pages since they commenced in 1915—to conduct a page of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, himself from next week onwards, for the purpose of getting in even closer touch with his readers.

GETTING TO KNOW THE AUTHOR.

Now, boys—and girls—you've seen the interview and photograph of Mr. Brooks, which appeared last week. So, for the first time, you've had a more personal acquaintance with the man who has given you so much pleasure throughout the past seven years.

MR. BROOKS ACCEPTS.

I'm glad to tell you that Mr. Brooks has accepted our invitation, and if you've anything of interest to write to him about—any suggestions to make to him in the way of making his tales even more acceptable to you than they have so evidently hitherto been—just address your letters or postcards to EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, Esq., c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4., and Mr. Brooks will be delighted to receive your letters, and to act upon any proposals you may make which appear to him likely to find favour with the bulk of his great army of readers.

"Our Author's Page" will be found immediately following the Nelson Lee story in this and each future issue.

THE EDITOR.

Result of Mystery Picture Competition No. 5.

In this competition the first prize of £1 1s. for the best inscription to the picture has been awarded to:

E. RIDLEY, 14, WEST GATE, SLEAFORD, Lincs,

for the following:

"Get thee gone, my fine centurion, and have a care in future!"

The twelve consolation prizes have been awarded to the following:

H. Bailey, 133, Belasis Avenue, Haverton Hill, Middlesbro'.

A. G. Burrows, 2, Wych Lane, Fareham, Hants.

E. F. Gontier, Central Y.M.C.A., Tottenham Court Road, W.C.1.

A. Griffiths, 42, Elmsleigh Road, East Hill, Wandsworth, S.W.18.

D. C. Leuty, 150, The Grove, Camberwell, S.E.5.

B. Mills, 4, Norway Street, Portslade, Sussex.

J. Moore, 17, Towler Street, Peterboro', Northants.

G. Newbury, 6, Blatchington Road, Seaford, Sussex.

Fred Thorne, 6, Fig Tree Court, Temple, E.C.4.

H. S. Wheeldon, 19, Bennett Street, Ardwick, Manchester.

A. Whiting, 4, Felix Cottages, Fortis Green, East Finchley, N.

Tom W. Wilde, 3, Clegg Street, Springhead, near Oldham.



A thrilling story of NELSON LEE, the celebrated detective, and his brilliant young assistant, NIPPER, who are engaged in a determined campaign against the League of the Green Triangle, a criminal organisation, controlled by PROFESSOR ZINGRAVE.

Nelson Lee has recently escaped from the powerful clutches of the professor, who had kidnapped him on the Crimson Eagle by a clever ruse. The famous detective has vowed to smash up the Green Triangle once and for all, and to bring its formidable leader to justice. In this, the second episode of the Green Triangle series, the wonderful aircraft, known as the Crimson Eagle, is introduced again, and plays an important part in a daring robbery of jewels in mid-ocean from a Trans-Atlantic liner.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRAP.

THE forest was almost impenetrable. Nelson Lee and Nipper, fighting their way through the dense undergrowth, progressed slowly. They had been unable to find any recognised path, so they were compelled to fight almost every foot of the way.

"Phew! Zingrave meant to be safely away from the public eye this time, guv'nor!" commented Nipper, as he paused to wipe his brow. "If you hadn't escaped, this lair might have remained undetected for years."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"Yes, it is certainly as inaccessible as any spot in England can be," he replied. "From our point of view a disadvantage—but from the Green Triangle's a decided help. We haven't got much further to go now."

"Thank goodness for that," said Nipper gratefully.

Lee's statement was quite correct. No more lonely spot could be imagined than this. In the heart of a dense Hampshire forest, where there were no roads or even footpaths—a retreat that was cut off from the outside world completely and utterly.

It was about mid-day, and Nelson Lee and Nipper were nearing the end of their journey. The September sun was shining overhead—although only a few rays penetrated through the mass of foliage above. But, although the forest was cool, both the famous detective and his assistant were

perspiring freely. It was a sheer effort to progress.

And presently they emerged into a clearing.

It was a welcome relief after the imprisoning effect of the dense forest. The clearing was fairly large, and in the centre of it were some ancient, ivy-grown ruins. Standing before the picturesque old wall was a stiff, stolid-looking policeman—an incongruous spectacle, amid these surroundings.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Nipper. "Who on earth built this place in the middle of the forest, sir? And what was it, anyway—before Professor Zingrave pinched it as a secret retreat?"

"I cannot answer your question with any degree of accuracy, but I fancy the place was built by an eccentric ancestor of the present Lord of the Manor," replied Nelson Lee. "This ruined building is at least four hundred years old, and the house was evidently a forest hermitage. But we needn't go into the history of these matters, young'un."

"But what a place to choose!" said Nipper. "It's so isolated and hidden that we've been an hour forcing our way through the woods."

"You forget that the Green Triangle is in possession of the Crimson Eagle—the most remarkable aircraft in existence," said Nelson Lee. "As you know, the Eagle is built on the flapping wing principle, and can hover over any spot with the greatest ease. So, you see, it was easy enough for the enemy to come and go as freely as they pleased—but, of course, always under cover of darkness."

Nipper nodded. Vividly he remembered the Crimson Eagle. The aircraft was startlingly lifelike—an enormous bird, brilliant red in colour, which flew in the natural way—using its wings for propulsion.

Such a craft could easily fly over this dense forest, and alight in the clearing. Considering that the Green Triangle's aircraft could attain a speed of two hundred and fifty miles per hour, the isolation of this retreat was only figurative. In reality, it could be reached from almost any part of the kingdom within an hour or two. London, indeed, was only a few minutes' flight away. Speed is a wonderful killer of distance.

But Professor Zingrave's retreat was a retreat no longer. Nelson Lee had been kept a prisoner there—but he had escaped. The famous detective claimed no credit for this merciful deliverance. He had gained his release owing to an entirely unforeseen mishap.

But it was to Lee's credit that he seized the opportunity while it existed. There had been an explosion, and although Nelson Lee was half-blinded by dust and fumes, he had fought his way out of the underground prison—a converted dungeon—and had fled through the forest.

Naturally, his first step upon reaching London had been to inform Scotland Yard—and Zingrave's retreat was now in the hands of Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard and a few assistants.

"We are still faced with many difficulties," remarked Lee, as he and Nipper approached the ruins. "We don't know where the Green Triangle headquarters have been shifted to—but it is just possible that we may pick up a few clues. That is why I have come down."

"Well, we're in good time, guv'nor," said Nipper. "The police only took possession this morning, so the trail ought to be fresh."

"That's just the trouble—there'll be no trail worth calling the name," said Lee. "Zingrave and his men always came and went by means of the Eagle—and an aircraft leaves no trace, Nipper. Still, we'll live in hopes. Even the cleverest criminals make mistakes."

As they came up to the ruined doorway the constable respectfully saluted. He was a burly looking specimen, and apparently a local product.

"You'll be Mr. Lee, I take it, sir?" he asked respectfully.

"Yes."

"The inspector said as you'd be coming, sir," went on the policeman. "A rare queer business, this, ain't it? They do say as this here Green Triangle is getting more dangerous every day, sir."

"Let's hope not," replied Lee drily. "If you'll tell me where I can find the inspector—"

"Mr. Lennard be below, in that prison place, where you was kept, sir," replied the

rural constable. "My stars! 'Twas a good thing you escaped, sir! A rare comfortable place, no doubt, but no spot for a man such as yourself, sir, if I may take the liberty of saying so."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"The comforts of the prison were undoubtedly many," he agreed. "I was treated with wonderful courtesy and attention—but a dungeon even though well furnished and illuminated with electric light, remains a dungeon in spite of all such camouflage."

"That it do, sir," agreed the policeman vaguely.

"Well, if you'll lead the way below——"

"The inspector told me to stand on duty here, sir," objected the constable. "I don't reckon I ought to shift. You can go straight through, and down a passage, and you'll find Mr. Lennard all right."

"Nevertheless, I should prefer you to act as guide," persisted Nelson Lee. "You would only be absent from your post for a few minutes."

The constable hesitated, scratched his head, then turned. And as he entered the gloomy building he was surprised to feel something pressed hard into the centre of his back.

"One word, my friend, and I'll shoot you down without the slightest compunction!" came Nelson Lee's voice, calm and even. "A clever piece of acting—but it won't do—Rotherhithe Pete!"

CHAPTER II.

THE INFORMER.



NIPPER stared in blank amazement.

The constable had come to a dead halt, and he stood there without moving a muscle. Nelson Lee was perfectly calm and collected, though there was a dangerous gleam in his eye.

"Slip these over our friend's wrists, young 'un," said Lee crisply.

Nipper took the handcuffs which Lee held out. He fought down his bewilderment, and dodged round to the front of the alleged policeman. The man's face was pale and drawn.

Click!

One of the handcuffs snapped over his left wrist, and the sound awoke him. It was probably a sound that brought back unpleasant memories. He half-turned, completely transformed.

"You infernal demon!" he snarled. "I thought I'd fooled you——"

"Steady, Pete—violence won't help you," interrupted Lee sharply. "Better take things quietly. I should hate to shoot, but my finger is perilously near the trigger."

Rotherhithe Pete gulped, and stood rigid again.

Click! The second handcuff was snapped on, and the man was rendered harmless. Nelson Lee removed his revolver from the man's back, and stepped round him. Rotherhithe Pete was looking sullen.

"A daring subterfuge, but risky," commented Nelson Lee. "I have met you once before, Mr. Peter Hawkes. Perhaps you remember the Hampstead bank affair, six years ago? I caught you red-handed, and, if I remember rightly, we had quite a tussle. Ah, there is still a scar on your forehead. I was reluctantly compelled to use the butt of my revolver. Possibly you recall the incident?"

The man grunted.

"I said all along that the trick wouldn't work," he growled. "You're too blooming smart, Mr. Lee—and I know it! But old Zingrave wouldn't take no notice of me. And now I'm booked for gaol agin, I s'pose. I ain't had no luck for a twelvemonth!"

"I'm afraid I cannot sympathise with you in your troubles," said Nelson Lee. "But you can help yourself very materially if you adopt a reasonable attitude, my friend. I'd like to know—truthfully—the precise nature of the situation here."

Rotherhithe Pete looked at Lee keenly.

"If I tells you, will it get me off?" he asked cagerly. "Honest, guv'nor, I ain't one o' these Green Triangle chaps. I was brought in at the last minute—didn't even know what the job was till I got here. They chose me because I was big, and could look like a cop."

"I can make no promise, Hawkes—I can guarantee nothing," replied Lee. "But I think you can trust me to act squarely, and if you can supply any worth while information, the police will certainly bear it in mind."

Rotherhithe Pete was silent for a moment. And Nelson Lee and Nipper waited. Out-



There were four figures huddled up in the cupboard-like cavity, and all were squatting on the floor, bound and gagged.

side, everything was quiet, and there was no indication that other Green Triangle men were lurking about. But Nelson Lee suspected that such was the case.

And although the famous detective was calm and cool, he realised that both he and Nipper were in a tight corner. A false move, and Lee would find himself a prisoner again. And this was a thought that affected him strongly.

Obviously, there had been some excitement.

Lennard and his men had undoubtedly arrived. But instead of finding the spot deserted and abandoned, they had apparently encountered a number of Green Triangle agents.

So the retreat was still in the possession of Professor Cyrus Zingrave's criminal band. And the Scotland Yard men were captives.

At that moment there was a faint hope. Hawkes was probably the only man who knew that the trap had been discovered. And as he was helpless, Nelson Lee still had a chance of turning the tables. But once the other Green Triangle men were brought to the scene it would mean a fight for liberty—with the odds all against Lee and Nipper.

Rotherhithe Pete uttered another grunt.

"It's no good me playing the fool!" he muttered. "I might get off with three months' hard if I tell all I knows. It's no good being obstinate when you're copped. No penal servitude for me if I can help it! Follow me, guv'nor, and I'll take you to where Mr. Lennard is locked up."

"All right—go ahead," said Nelson Lee.

"Better be careful, sir," warned Nipper. "He may be trying to fool us—"

"If he is, he will suffer rather severely for his treachery," replied Nelson Lee grimly. "You may think, Pete, that I am bluffing with this automatic. But I am not. In such a desperate situation as this I shall use the weapon with deadly effect if you betray me."

Rotherhithe Pete was indignant.

"I'm on the square, Mr. Lee," he protested. "I know the game's up, and I want to make things as easy as I can for meself. It's only a fool as keeps his mouth shut when he's nabbed."

Nelson Lee knew the man to be a habitual criminal—burglar, motor-car thief, and so forth. He had a bad record, but he was also known as an informer—one who "peached" on his accomplices when caught.

It rather surprised Lee that Zingrave should have employed such a man. But there was a possible explanation of this. The trapping of the police had necessarily been planned in a great hurry, and Zingrave had been compelled to recruit his helpers at short notice. And Rotherhithe Pete was certainly the very man to act the part of a policeman. Zingrave had never dreamed that Lee would see through the deception. Without a doubt, the whole affair had been deliberately planned so that Lee should again fall into the hands of his enemies.

Rotherhithe Pete led the way across the gloomy ruin, and entered a dark, forbidding passage. Nelson Lee and Nipper followed.

CHAPTER III.

STARTLING NEWS.



NELSON LEE was keenly on the alert for any sign of treachery; but at the same time one outstanding fact became clear to him. The League of the Green Triangle was not an extensive organisation now. In its earlier days the League had numbered hundreds of members.

But this revival of the infamous criminal association was more or less of a bluff. Lee had suspected it from the first, and now he was sure. Rotherhithe Pete was no member of the League. And the very fact that he had been recruited for this special service proved clearly enough that the League's true members were limited.

Indeed, Lee almost believed that there were no more than a mere dozen, at the most—Professor Cyrus Zingrave, "Major" Woodhouse, and a few more. Woodhouse was the pilot of the Crimson Eagle, and a very necessary man.

Not that the Green Triangle was any the less dangerous because of its limited size. Lee knew well enough that the task before him was a grim, perilous one. Zingrave alone was a sturdy foeman, and with the Crimson Eagle in the League's possession, any prolonged war would be necessarily one-sided. But Nelson Lee was more determined than ever he had been to smash up the League, and finally crush the wily professor.

Peter Hawkes led the way down the passage, and both Lee and Nipper used electric torches, so that there was plenty of light on the scene. And Nipper kept a constant watch in the rear.

Some steps led steeply downwards into the bowels of the earth, and after these had been descended another passage was revealed. A stone floor was beneath Lee's feet, and at intervals there were heavy, metal-studded doors fitted into the wall. Pete came to a halt before one of these, and indicated the bolt with a motion of his manacled hand.

"In there," he said briefly.

Lee quickly shot the bolts back, and flung the door open. He held his automatic ready, and at the same time flashed his light into the dark space which lay revealed.

"Ah, good-morning, Lennard!" said Lee pleasantly. "I hardly expected to find you in this predicament. Only three men with you? A mistake, old man—you should have brought a dozen!"

There were four figures huddled in the cupboard-like cavity, and all were squatting on the floor, roped up in a most effective manner. They could make no comment, for the lower portions of their faces were bound round with effective muffers.

"There you are, Bobs; what did I tell you?" growled Rotherhithe Pete. "I ain't a bloke to play a double game. I'm copped, and I knows it. I won't give no trouble."

Nipper quickly hurried away into the little dungeon, while Lee kept his eye on the prisoner. It only took Nipper a few moments to remove the gags, and cut through the ropes.

Chief Detective-inspector Lennard rose stiffly to his feet, making grunting sounds. He was half-angry, and half-joyous. The Scotland Yard man was rather uncomfortable, too.

"Infernal nuisance!" he snapped. "Those

brutes sprang on us even before we could look round—eight or nine of the curs! We put up a bit of a fight, but it was hopeless.”

“I think I remember advising you to bring at least a dozen men,” said Nelson Lee drily. “I don’t wish to criticise—”

“Oh, go ahead—I like to hear it!” interrupted the inspector. “As a matter of fact, I wanted to bring a dozen, but the Chief wouldn’t hear of it. And this is the result! I thought they were going to nab you, Lee. I’m confoundedly glad you spotted the game.”

The other three men emerged from their prison looking relieved. And Rotherhithe Pete was thrust into the dungeon, and the door was closed and bolted.

A quick search was made. The entire ruins were examined; but Nelson Lee and the police had the place entirely to themselves. If there had been any other Green Triangle men lurking about, they had now taken alarm and vanished.

“How did it happen, old man?” asked Lee.

“We arrived here several hours ago,” replied the chief inspector. “A deuce of a job through this forest, but we got here at last, and took possession. Then the fun started. Eight or nine men appeared from the trees, and we had a fair tussle; but it was soon over, and ever since then we’ve been in that wretched dungeon.”

“Well, things aren’t so bad as they might have been,” said Lee briskly. “There’s not much danger of an attack now—and we’re prepared, anyway.”

“They were planning to get hold of you and Nipper,” said Lennard. “It’s a pity they took alarm, or we might have grabbed the whole bunch. Not that they’d have been much use—we want Zingrave, not these underlings. What do you suggest as the next move?”

“Well, as a preliminary, we’ll put a few questions to Mr. Hawkes, below,” said Lee. “He probably knows nothing, but we can try him, at least.”

It was becoming more and more evident that the men employed on this task had not been members of the Green Triangle, but just hastily collected roughs who were good fighters. But the affair proved that Professor Zingrave was keenly alive to the importance of capturing Nelson Lee.

Rotherhithe Pete knew nothing. At least, so it appeared at first. He explained that he and several others had been offered £5 each for a simple job. They had been brought into Hampshire by car at dead of night, and had been guided through the forest by a Green Triangle man.

“That’s about all I know, Mr. Lennard—honest!” said Pete earnestly. “You ain’t going to be rough on me, I suppose? Just my luck to be the only bloke copped, but—”

“You needn’t worry yourself; you won’t get much for this,” interrupted the chief inspector gruffly. “It’s a pity you can’t tell us something more definite—”

“I heard a bit of talk, now I comes to think of it, but I don’t s’pose there’s much in it,” said Pete. “Two o’ those Green Triangle blokes was talking about a liner—the Melania, I think her name was—”

“The Melania!” echoed Lennard sharply. “What about her?”

“Well, by what I could hear, the Green Triangle’s going to make a raid on the ship,” replied Hawkes. “I don’t see how, and I dare say it’s only a piece of bluff—”

“Bluff be hanged!” snapped Lennard. “The Heathbrook jewels are on board that liner, Lee, and some of our special men have been detailed to go on board when the ship docks at Southampton.”

Nelson Lee’s eyes gleamed.

“When is she due?” he asked keenly.

“First thing to-morrow morning—she’ll be approaching the Channel about now, I should think,” said the chief inspector. “The Heathbrook jewels are worth a mint. Oh, but it’s ridiculous! How can the Green Triangle raid an enormous liner like the Melania?”

“You’ve apparently forgotten the Crimson Eagle,” said Lee quietly.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SWOOP OF THE EAGLE.



THE R.M.S. Melania steamed majestically on her course.

Although land was not far distant, the passengers had no knowledge of this. For every horizon was blank—nothing but the sea as far as the eye could reach. It was evening, and the sea was calm, the sky being clear.

The great liner had had a fair trip across the Atlantic, and she was due at Cherbourg late that same night, and would probably enter her dock at Southampton early on the following morning.

Most of the passengers were making preparations for leaving the ship—packing trunks, writing letters, and so forth. The vessel was by no means full, for it was the end of the season, and comparatively few people were travelling from the United States to Europe.

A knot of first-class passengers on B Deck were leaning over the rail, for’ard, discussing their plans. One of them was Mr. Joseph Thorne, and he represented the London and Home Counties Bank, Ltd. He was in charge of the famous Heathbrook jewels—now safe in the strong-room below.

Mr. Thorne was a slim, smartly-dressed gentleman, and he was laughingly discussing New York with an American acquaintance. And Mr. Thorne noticed a curious speck in the sky, far distant.

For a few minutes he went on talking as before, seeing the speck only subcon-

sciously. But the thing suddenly forced itself upon his attention, and he shaded his eyes with a well-manicured hand.

"An aeroplane, by the look of it," he remarked. "Stranger! I didn't think they ventured over the open Atlantic in this way."

"An aeroplane?" repeated the other. "Well, that's certainly remarkable! But, say, that machine is shifting pretty smartly, isn't she?"

Mr. Thorne was too astonished to make any reply. The aircraft, which had been a mere speck a few moments ago, was now so close at hand that its colour could be distinctly seen. The machine was red, and it flew with a curiously bird-like movement.

And her speed was so extraordinary that she was practically over the top of the *Melania* in a few brief seconds. There was no characteristic roar of the engine, or whistling whirr of the propeller. This craft was as silent as the bird she represented.

She was descending in wide circles, her wings outstretched, rigid. There were many other passengers watching now, and something of a sensation was caused on the liner. Even an aeroplane of the ordinary type would have startled the passengers—but this machine was so astonishing in appearance that amazement was felt by all.

As the craft glided lower and lower, it could be seen that she was designed after the fashion of an eagle—head, wings—all complete. Even the eyes were bird-like and seemingly alive.

And to make the whole illusion more staggering, the wings lost their rigidity, and moved with the graceful, easy motion of a living eagle. And the aircraft dipped down, circled, and performed other movements with such extreme grace that the spectators were spellbound.

"This is the most astounding thing!" ejaculated Mr. Thorne huskily. "What craft can she be? Is it possible that such a vessel can exist? I am tempted to believe this this is an actual bird! But that, of course, is impossible! There are men within

"Just like an eagle—a crimson eagle!" said one of the others. "That seems to remind me— Yes! Don't you remember? There was something in the New York papers about a criminal gang called the Green Triangle, or something? Didn't they have an aircraft—"

"Good heavens!" muttered Thorne.

His mind instantly flew to the precious jewels in his charge. But in the same second he laughed at his fears. How could this aircraft do anything to assail the might and magnificence of the great *Melania*? Mr. Thorne would soon see!

The Crimson Eagle grew lower and lower—until, indeed, she hovered only a few feet above the forward masthead. And with her wings gently flapping, she maintained

this position, travelling at precisely the same speed as the liner. It was a wonderful exhibition of complete control. None of the passengers had ever seen an aircraft perform such miracles.

The captain himself was on deck now, gazing upwards at the Eagle with admiration intermingled with annoyance. He didn't quite like this aircraft hovering so low down.

And then the captain received a fresh surprise. For a voice sounded from above—clear, distinct, and loud, as though amplified by means of a loud-speaking device.

"Within a few minutes a rope will be lowered," came the voice. "You will be good enough to attach to the end of it a parcel containing the Heathbrook jewels. We represent the League of the Green Triangle, and we are in deadly earnest!"

CHAPTER V.

THE RAID.



CAPTAIN MACKINNON frowned.

He had heard every word, and at first he believed that this was some ridiculous practical joke. Other people had heard those words, too—for they were so audible that all the passengers on the upper decks had no difficulty in distinguishing the purport of that command.

Mr. Thorne was agitated beyond measure. Yet, at the same time, he was not unduly alarmed. The jewels were not in his care now—the liner was responsible, since he had delivered them into the chief purser's hands. Mr. Thorne was rather glad that he was a mere spectator. But he was naturally deeply concerned.

"We will give you just five minutes," continued the loud voice from above. "Make no attempts to fool us, or the results will be grave. Failure to comply with our demand will mean the dropping of a few bombs."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Captain Mackinnon.

Several of his officers hurried to his side. The purser came, too, and there came a quick discussion.

"We can't be bluffed into this mad business, sir!" exclaimed the purser quickly. "It's only a threat—these people daren't attack us!"

"You needn't worry, Mr. Jones—I shan't deliver up a single article of value to these rogues," replied the captain grimly. "If somebody will fetch me a megaphone—"

"Here you are, sir!" interrupted one of the junior officers.

He handed over a megaphone that he had brought with him, and the skipper took it, and placed it to his mouth.

"Can you hear me?" he shouted.

"Yes—go ahead!" came the voice from the Eagle.

"I take no notice of your demand, and you'd better shift away from that position at once!" shouted the captain angrily. "I cannot have the lives of my passengers endangered in this madness."

"The madness is entirely on your own side," replied the voice. "Remember—if you refuse to deliver up the Heathbrook jewels we shall be compelled to bomb you. We shall bomb you until you signal your submission. Do you still remain obstinate?"

Captain Mackinnon made no reply—he was too purple with rage. The cool impudence of these adventurers startled him. But he was relieved to see the Crimson Eagle sweep away to starboard a moment later. Her wings now worked with swift, rhythmic grace, and the craft circled upwards at astonishing speed. She sped away in a great sweep, and returned at a height of fully three thousand feet. She raced ahead of the Melania, and several of the watchers noticed a flashing object drop from her crimson body.

A mighty roaring explosion shattered the calm of the sea, and caused the great liner to vibrate with the concussion. An immense column of water surged upwards about ten fathoms ahead of her bows.

The bomb had been well placed—and was obviously in the nature of a warning. There had been no attempt to hit the liner herself. Again the Eagle swept round, and another flash appeared.

Boom!

The second explosion was louder and more shattering in its effect. For this time the bomb dropped immediately in front of the liner's bows. The Melania lifted up and lurched drunkenly, a deadly indication of the explosion's force.

There was almost a panic among the passengers. The officers were palefaced and startled. Captain Mackinnon was convinced.

Again the Eagle dropped, and resumed her former position, hovering just clear of the forward masthead. Passengers were fleeing

madly, fearing that another bomb was to be dropped.

And the voice came down again:

"That was just a sample of what we can do. Will you hand over the Heathbrook jewels, or shall we give you a more deadly demonstration? The next time we shall show no mercy."

"Mr. Jones, we've got to give in!" said the captain hoarsely. "I can't risk the lives of my passengers for the sake of a parcel of jewels—"

"But they're worth a fortune, sir," protested the purser.

"I don't care if they're worth twenty millions!" retorted Captain Mackinnon. "Far better to lose them than to lose one life. Go below and get the parcel, and return as quickly as you can."

"Wouldn't it be better to deliver up a bogus package—"

"We can't risk it—they might bomb us out of sheer spite," replied the captain.

"No, Mr. Jones—we're helpless. By thunder! I'd give anything for an anti-aircraft gun at this moment! The infernal rogues!"

But the Green Triangle knew well enough that anti-aircraft guns were obsolete in these days of peace. And five minutes later the Heathbrook jewels were brought on deck, and delivered into the hands of the Crimson Eagle.

And while this little drama was being enacted, Nelson Lee and Nipper, in London, were making frantic efforts to warn the liner of her peril. They succeeded in getting through to her by wireless—but their warning was of no avail.

And they learned, with mingled feelings, of the Crimson Eagle's complete success. This time Professor Zingrave had scored a striking victory. The League of the Green Triangle was in possession of the greatest prize that had crossed the Atlantic for years.

But Nelson Lee remained calm. His determination to crush the league was stronger than ever. He had made a good start in his campaign, and he was resolved to go one better by recovering the Heathbrook jewels while the scent was hot.

THE END.

EPISODE THREE OF THIS EXCITING
"GREEN TRIANGLE" SERIES WILL
APPEAR NEXT WEEK IN:

"THE JEWELS OF ILL-OMEN!"

These "Green Triangle" Stories appear
exclusively in "The Nelson Lee Library."

OUR AUTHOR'S PAGE

Mr. EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Chats With His Readers and Comments on Their Letters.

(NOTE.—By kind permission of the Editor, I have pleasure in issuing a cordial invitation to my readers in general to write me letters or postcards should they feel so inclined. These should be addressed to me personally: C/o The Editor, The NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. If any of you care to write to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon any of your remarks which are likely to interest a majority. If you have any grumbles—make them to me! If you have any suggestions—send them along! I write the stories, but you read them; and while I fear it is impossible to please you all, my aim is to please the largest possible number. You yourselves can be my best helpers in achieving this aim. To quote the classic words—"My true intent is all for your delight."—E. S. B.)

WHEN the Editor of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY first suggested the idea of this page to me, I was a little dubious. I wondered if you would care for such an unusual feature. But second thoughts are sometimes best. I reflected upon the chorus of approval expressed in the avalanche of letters which have been pouring in on "Uncle Edward" during the past few months, and ultimately decided that I would risk the experiment. So I allowed the Editor to persuade me, with the result that I am now commencing my weekly chat to you all.

Those letters to "Uncle Edward"—hundreds upon hundreds of them—bearing such unmistakable evidence of the pleasure which my school tales have given to countless readers, have not only been a source of gratification to me, but they have spurred me on to do my little best to make my future stories even more acceptable to you than the past tales appear to have been. Your welcome and enthusiastic letters have, in fact, proved nothing less than a fount of insistent inspiration to me.

At the same time, too much praise is not good for anybody, and a grumble is invariably more helpful than a eulogy. So, my dear boys and girls—yes, and all you adults of all ages and both sexes—I cordially invite your grumbles. Tell me where I have failed

to please you, and I will try to avoid those pitfalls in future. My dearest wish is to give you of the best that is in me, and you yourselves can give me the most valuable guidance of all. And you can especially help me by pointing out your dislikes. Now, don't be afraid—let me have it straight from the shoulder. I can assure you I shall heartily appreciate your censure, which will act as a kind of "Trespassers will be Prosecuted" board, cautioning me where not to wander.

It is my hope that this little weekly chat together will bring me into closer touch with you than my stories alone could ever hope to do. I would like it to be a medium of cheery intercourse between us. It will be my aim to talk to you all on matters likely to be of universal interest, confining myself whenever possible to points brought to my notice by yourselves. And when letters are scarce, I propose to interest you, if I can, on any topical matters which I think have a good chance of holding your attention for the moments which my page will take to read.

Though this page will bear a somewhat similar character to the "In Reply To Yours" column in the "St. Frank's Magazine," it will yet be totally different. For though I shall hope to keep it enlivened with cheery remarks, it will not be flippant. In other words, I wish to breezily deal with only such matters as a majority of you are likely to be seriously interested in. And although I may select letters on occasion for individual attention, I think it will be better as a rule to just briefly mention the suggestions I have received, give a bare indication of their source, and then just chat to the lot of you about them.

"Uncle Edward"—now sailing under his true colours as "Edward Oswald Handforth"—has received a few letters which, owing to their length and importance, he has had to place aside, after a bare printed acknowledgment to their writers, for future attention, and next week I propose to deal with a few of these on this page.

Now, my dear readers, it is up to you! If you like the idea of this page, let me have your letters and comments. Then I'll do the rest—the best that is in me to give will be at your service in every possible way.



September 27, 1924

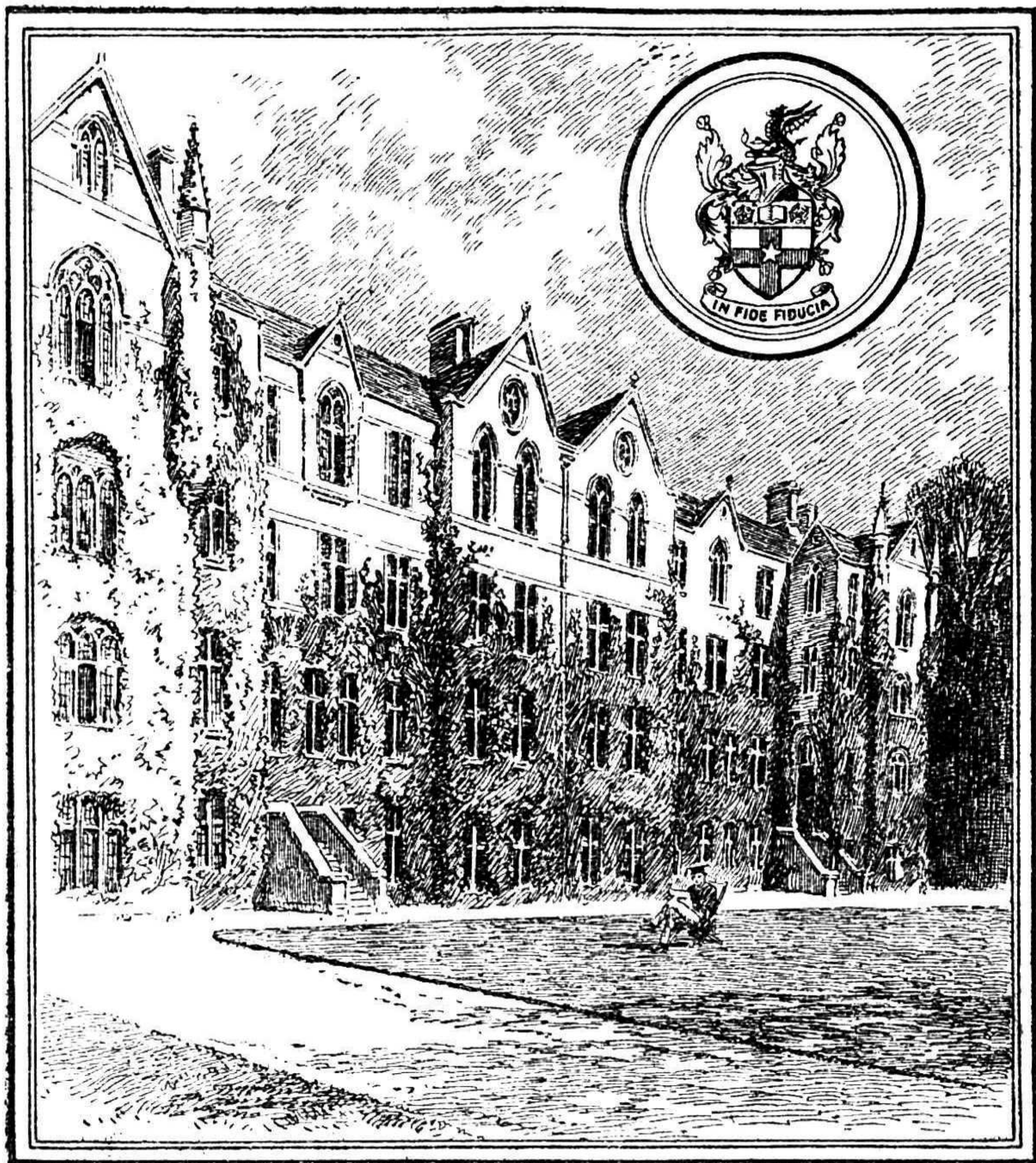
A Story Without Words.



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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

No. 46.—THE LEYS SCHOOL.



The Leys School was founded in 1874 (and incorporated in 1878) by leading Wesleyans. The purpose of the school is to provide a public school education under Christian but non-sectarian influence. The science building was opened by Lord Kelvin, P.R.S., in 1893, the swimming-bath, chapel, gymnasium and library wing being added later. The library, which is under the main gateway, was opened by his Majesty King George, in 1914.

The number of boys in the school is over

220. There are no day boys. The school is run on the hostel system, and there are five houses.

In common with most public schools, there is a classical and modern side, and a choice between these two sides is made when the boys reach the Upper Fourth Form. The school has an O.T.C., which is voluntary. The Leysian Mission, belonging to the school, has its headquarters in City Road, London, and does much valuable work in that part of London.



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

My dear Chums,

In these days public opinion counts for a great deal. It can be swayed one way or the other, not necessarily by what is true, but by what appears to be true. At the present time, public opinion, with all its strength and numbers, is arrayed against our school. We do not blame public opinion for this. It is perfectly honest and fair-minded, and when it knows the truth some day, it will turn round on those who have misled it. But the unsavoury fact remains that the majority of people at this moment believe that St. Frank's is mainly composed of an undisciplined lot of cads and hooligans who freely indulge in midnight orgies of drinking, gambling and smoking. The school is now looked upon as an unfit place for the sons of gentlemen.

THE DUTY OF THE FOURTH.

Parents are removing their sons wholesale. The Third, Fifth and Sixth Forms will soon cease to exist. Only the Fourth remains more or less intact, thanks to the way the fellows have stuck together. As the backbone of the school, I look to the Fourth to stand firm by the grand old traditions of St. Frank's. Do this, and we shall win back our good name, although we must be prepared in the meantime to suffer all kinds of humiliation from our persecutors.

THE ENEMY IN OUR MIDST.

You know them. I need not deface this Mag. by mentioning their names. Happily, they are a small minority, but dangerous for all that. It is they who have brought degradation on the whole school, and it is they we must watch and suppress. At a time like this we cannot afford to harbour cads, for they are the real enemy in our midst. They are, no doubt, chuckling with glee to know that we are all tarred with

the same brush. We will make sure of tarring and feathering them in real earnest if we catch them at their rotten pranks again. In future, it must be war on the cads, and any rotter found smoking, bullying or misbehaving himself in the town will be summarily dealt with.

THE FOURTH UP-TO-DATE.

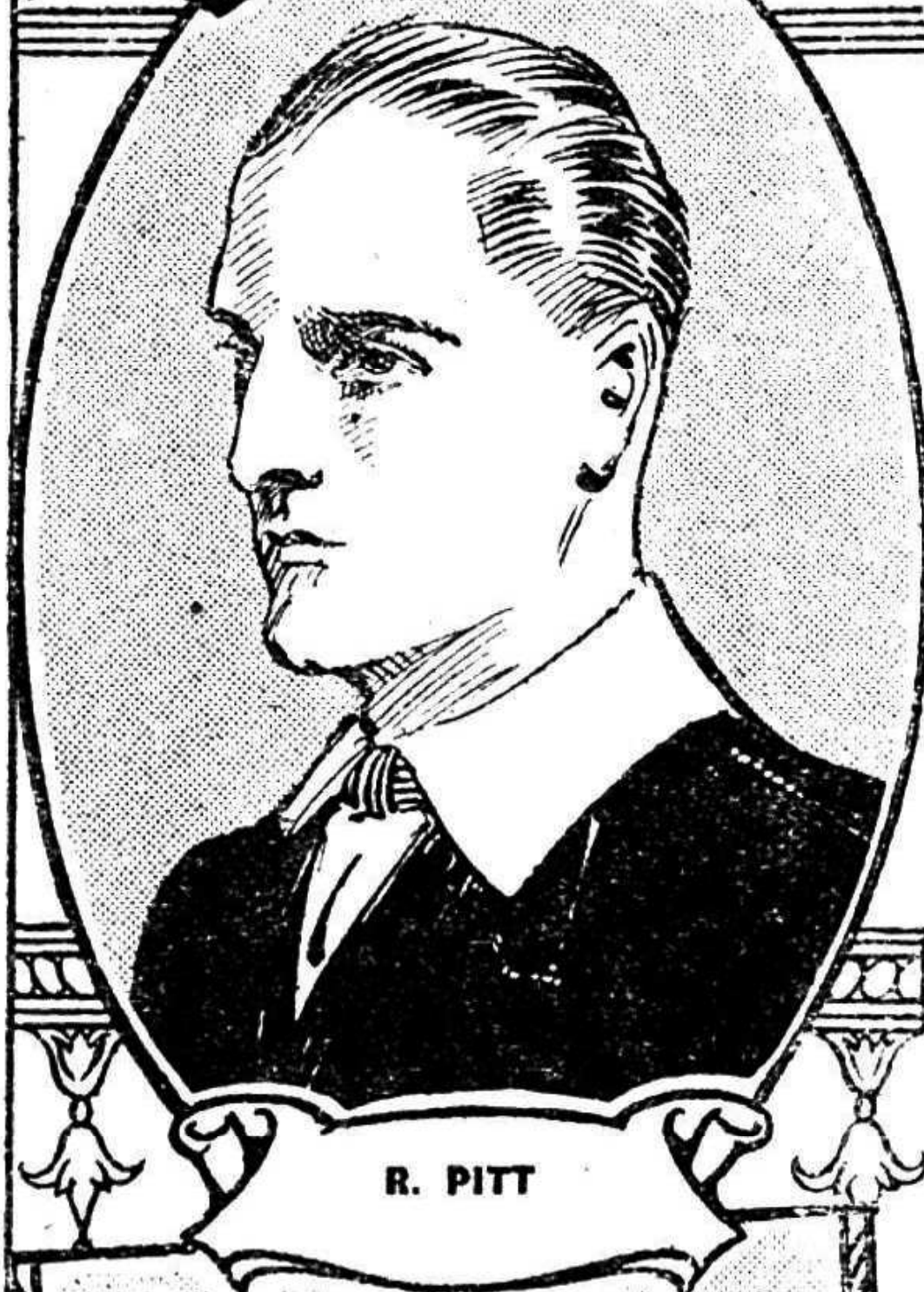
The new series of Portraits and Who's Who, starting in this number, will eclipse anything of the kind we have done before. Every member of the Fourth Form will have the pleasure of seeing himself and his friends faithfully pictured, with a concise and completely up-to-date description of himself, even to the colour of his eyes, height, weight, hobbies and main characteristics. There will be no attempt at flattery or caricature. We shall depict you as you are. Readers of the Mag, should collect and keep every issue containing these interesting details of the Fourth, for some day you may want to refer to them. The arrangement of the Who's Who paragraph alongside the portrait is a decided improvement.

UNCLE EDWARD.

The identity of Uncle Edward as Edward Oswald Handforth (see this week's Replies in Brief) scarcely comes as a surprise to anyone, and so, for the benefit of those readers who may be curious to know why Handy should go to the trouble of telling us something we all knew before, I will explain. The fact of the matter is that Handy is getting tired of being called "Uncle," and the absolute outside limit was reached when someone started referring to him as "Nunky." I don't exactly remember what happened to this too affectionate nephew. Anyway, Handy refuses to sail under this nom-de-plume any longer, and henceforth he will conduct his "Replies in Brief" under his patronymic of Handforth.

Your old chum,
REGGIE PITT.

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY. And WHO'S WHO.



R. PITT

No. 1.—REGINALD PITT. (Captain, Ancient Fourth.)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Slim, wiry, well-proportioned, and always neat without being dandified. Finely chiselled features, clear complexion, infectious smile, genial expression. Eyes, deep brown. Hair, very dark. Height, 5 ft. 1 in. Weight, 9 st. 8 lbs. Birthday, Jan. 12th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Quick, decisive, very keen-witted, resourceful and inventive. Humorous, good-natured, with a fine sense of judgment, utterly fearless and a born leader.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Skipper junior football and cricket elevens. Superlative footballer. Miraculous winger. Good all-round cricketer, fine swimmer, excellent boxer. Fond of cycling, reading, drawing, and a particularly brilliant amateur actor. Chief Editor of "St. FRANK'S MAGAZINE."

No. 3—EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Big and burly, clumsy, generally untidy. Rugged features, with square jaw, prominent ears, and wide mouth. Attractive-looking, healthy complexion, slightly freckled, determined expression. Eyes, blue-grey. Hair, medium chestnut. Height, 5 ft. 3½ ins. Weight, 11 st. 2 lbs. Birthday, April 18th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Masterful, impulsive, aggressive. Full of confidence, generous to a degree. Staunch, honest, and a friend to be relied upon in an emergency. Very hasty temper, but with a heart of gold.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Goalkeeper, St. Frank's junior eleven. Good cricketer—spectacular batsman. Good swimmer, first-class slogging boxer. Keen on amateur detective work, and writing for the "ST. FRANK'S MAGAZINE." Robust cyclist, and fancies himself as good amateur actor—but isn't.



E. O. HANDFORTH

THE FOURTH At ST. FRANK'S.



No. 2.—JOHN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS.

(Captain, Modern Fourth.)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Powerfully built, broad shoulders, and knotted muscles. Strong face, but genial and very freckled. Fair complexion, and a decidedly snub nose. Wide, humorous mouth. Eyes, grey. Hair, glaring red. Height, 5 ft. 3 ins. Weight, 11 st. 4 lbs. Birthday, September 4th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Capable and self-reliant. Brimming over with energy and enterprise. Inclined to be too ready with his fists. Sunny disposition, and open-handed. Always ready for a fight. A grim enemy, but a faithful friend. A good sort generally.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Skipper Modern House junior football and cricket elevens. Good, all-round athlete. Best boxer in the Modern Fourth with the exception of Ernest Lawrence. Chief organiser of all junior events, under Pitt's generalship. Hobbies: Stamp collecting, model engineering, carpentry.



J. B. BOOTS

No. 4.—ARCHIBALD WINSTON DEREK GLENTHORNE.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Slim, elegant figure, well set-up and perfectly proportioned. Aristocratic features, with finely modelled nose and chin. Languid demeanour, and usually slow in all his actions. Complexion as fresh as a girl's. Eyes, grey. Hair, flaxen. Height, 5 ft. 2 ins. Weight, 10 st. 1 lb. Birthday, November 11th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

A hopeless slacker. Liable to fall asleep at the slightest provocation. Dislikes exertion of any kind. But when necessary can display amazing energy. Popularly regarded as a frightful ass, but is really keen-witted. Dandified and dapper—a regular swell. A knut.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Too much of a slacker to take part in any general sports. Hobbies—Phipps, his valet, his wonderful wardrobe, and his monocle. A taste for story writing, once he has gathered sufficient energy.

NOTE.—The ages of Fourth Form boys vary between 14 and 16, but for obvious reasons no more definite information on this point can be given.



A.W.D. GLENTHORNE

FACTS LET LOOSE

∴ *Our Allsorts Page* ∴

By EUGENE ELLMORE

BERWICK-ON-TWEED.

This is a very remarkable and ancient city. Bernicia, from which it derives its name, was one of the two northern kingdoms which united and became the Kingdom of Northumbria. The first king was Ida (54). A parliament was summoned at Berwick by King Edward I, after his victories in Scotland, at which he announced to the Scots that he intended to depose their King John and become King of Scotland himself. For a long time it was customary to mention Berwick-on-Tweed after England and Wales—thus, "England and Wales and Berwick-on-Tweed," and this is still done in certain proclamations. As recently as 1914 Berwick-on-Tweed issued its own proclamation of war on Germany, which can be said of no other city in Great Britain. Berwick was for long, and in some ways is still, a State within a State.

THE MOST INTELLIGENT RACES.

During the Great War 81,000 native-born Americans, 12,000 foreign-born persons, and 23,000 negroes were subjected to careful tests in order to gauge their mentality, and the National Academy of Sciences reported the results, which have been carefully analysed by Professor Brigham, of Princeton University, who teaches Psychology. He states that the nationalities examined may be graded in the following order as regards their intelligence or mental capacity: English, Scotch, Dutch, German, American (whites), Danish, Canadian, Swedish, Norwegian, Belgian, Irish, Austrian, Turkish, Greek, Russian, Italian, Polish, American negroes. There are some surprises in this list. English and Scotch stand first intellectually, and Poles and negroes last. The most intelligent races in the United States come from northern, and the least intelligent from southern Europe. Professor Brigham

declares that the average level of American intelligence is being lowered, and he states that this deterioration will go on, must go on, whatever the American people may now do. By the unwise policy which they have pursued they had risked their whole future. It is thought that Professor Brigham's conclusions will have important practical results.

IN THE ARCTIC ICE.

Explorers who commit themselves to the ice jungle of the Arctic face terrible dangers. They have nothing solid beneath them. If one of their number dies they can't set up a cairn to mark his place of burial. Nor can they make a cache to store food in against their return. They would never find the place again, for everything is shifting. What is called a "lead," a big fissure in the ice, may form right under your camp, threatening to engulf it, and you, in the terrible abyss underneath. Or there may suddenly be an ice-quake, which makes the ice crack and sparkle and pile up into little gleaming mountains—not so little, either. Old ice is known by its colour, and may be a hundred feet thick. Some of the floes are said to be older than the Pyramids; others were formed but yesterday. There are ice canyons, where you never see the sun, the walls being of a blue tint. The currents of the vast mass of water below cause crevasses and fissures, and some of these cannot be crossed. One may travel for days over ice covered with water up to the knees, and may have to cut a road through when ice is formed on the top half an inch thick. Here there will be ice islands, shaped like mushrooms, which have been cut into by wind and wave. Here also there is "needle ice," sharp crystals, and the four feet of every dog must be tied up in seal-skin or canvas shoes if you don't want to lose them.



IN REPLY to YOURS

Correspondence Answered by
Edward Oswald Handforth

LOOK HERE! Blow it! I'm not going to keep this fatheaded joke up any longer! You all know I'm not your blessed uncle—you all know I'm a junior in the Fourth, and not a real uncle at all! So what's the good? I'm jiggered if I know how you've guessed my giddy secret, though. Church and McClure don't know either. They only grinned like a couple of Cheshire cats when I spoke to them about it. Anyhow, in future I'm going to conduct these columns under my own name. And you can jolly well look out for yourselves if you start any of your cheek, my lads! And you girls had better go easy, too! I'm not standing any nonsense. Just remember that—the whole lot of you!

HANDY.

(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 several weeks—perhaps five or six. Address your letters, or postcards, to E. O. HANDFORTH, c.o. The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, LONDON, E.C.4. E.O.II.)

TWO ENQUIRERS (Walthamstow): The Editor's handed me your letter. I'm not dense, but I can't make head or tail of it. What's all this piffle about me trying some fathead's kisses? Do you think I let chaps kiss me? Please write again!

W. LEWIS (Longdown, Ventnor, I.O.W.): If I haven't got space enough to reply to decent letters, I'm blowed if I'm going to answer your insults.

SMIKE and Co.: Thirteen of you, and you can only write to me on a ragged old scrap of tissue paper! I agree that I'm too manly to waste my time on girls. You're the most sensible chaps I've heard from for a long time.

A. Y. Z. (Penrith): Are you blind? Look on the cover of the Mag. and you'll see

our Motto. If Buster Boots and Lawrence had a fight, Boots would be in hospital for a week. Why, Lawrence is nearly good enough to tackle me.
CARELESS (Leicestershire): Why do you sign yourself "Careless" when your letter is written so carefully? You're a decent chap—I like you. Your remarks about my Trackett Grim stories are all true. But you're telling a whopper when you call yourself a celebrated detective. I believe you're a soldier.

ROBERT SHEPHERD (Stoke Newington, N.16): Your letter is so nice that I can't do justice to it here. So I'm putting it aside and will give you a long reply when I have the space. Thanks awfully for all the spiffing things you say.

FREDA OWERS (Handsworth, Birmingham): Thanks for your little note, Freda. Glad you like the Old Paper so much. I'm afraid this reply will be a bit late—but better late than never. Write again soon, please.

A CONTINUOUS READER (Blackrock, Dublin): Church and McClure aren't any trouble at all—so you needn't sympathise with me. If you think my Trackett Grim stories are awful tosh, you have the distinction of standing alone.

H. N. (Edwalton, Notts): You're no pal of mine to say my Trackett Grim stories are like railway sandwiches. But you can't pull my leg like that!

H. LEWIS (Leyton): I showed your letter to Sopp, of the Fifth, and he hopes you have now recovered your sanity. Do you take me for a monkey? How can I keep my tail up?

WILF (Earlsfield, S.W.): Your young brother reminds me of Willy. I read those puns of yours, and I'm still feeling weak and shaky. If you have any pity in your nature, don't do it again.

VERNON EVANS (Sheffield): You're trying to be funny. Can I tell you how many policemen's feet there are in a Scotland yard? The inquiry is so rood that you deserve the rod. It's time you came off your perch, because you're up the pole.

HARRY (Balham, S.W.): If I dotted every chap who liked Irene, I should never have a rest. My dear ass, everybody likes her. And no wonder—she's the best girl breathing. You wish you had a brother like Willy, eh? My dear chap, you're welcome to Willy himself, for all I care.

JOHN AUSTIN (Gateshead): Neither Church nor McClure have got black eyes, so you needn't be a bit sorry. They've both got well by now.

ARCHIE II (Rotherhithe, S.E.6): Yes—jolly good idea. Run over to St. Frank's whenever you like, and I'll be jolly glad to see you.

W. W. WALL (Chelsea, S.W.): Thanks, Old Timer, for your nice letter. It shall have a worthier reply than I can give you here and now.

A ROCHDALE READER: When you give me something to reply to I'll answer you again.

STANLEY HELLARD (Bridgwater): Thanks for your photographs. You must give me a bit of time to recover from the shock. Then you'll get your reply.

KEN (Felixstowe): I can't give you the long answer you want, although you deserve one. So yours is another letter I'm putting aside to be dealt with later.

R. JOHNSON and D. COCHRANE (Wallasey): You can whistle for your reply until you criticise my Trickett Grim stories a little more decently. Nerve!

J. CARLSEN (Liverpool): Certainly not! If you expect me to excuse such scribble as yours, you'd better go on expecting. I can hardly read a word of your postcard, so how can I reply to it?

BOB (St. John's Wood, N.W.8.): Quite right, Bob! I certainly ought to have more room in the Mag., and I ought to run a serial. If I was only permanent editor, you'd see a difference!

HAROLD (Hove, Sussex): Oh, Harold! I'm surprised at you for saying my plots are stale. And you seem to be another chap with an awful fist. It's like your cheek to blame it on to the weather!

SPLINTER (E.3): Thanks muchly. See reply to KEN, of Felixstowe.

ROSA (Rotherhithe): Yes, I'll ask Irene to write something for the Mag., and perhaps Reggie Pitt will publish it. Are you too old to read the Old Paper? Too old at 17? My hat! Don't you know that lots and lots of readers are grandmothers and grandfathers? Too old? No, not if you were ninety!

ALEC CONNER (Houndsditch, E.1): Yes, Nipper could fight me, but I won't say who'd win. Why waste words over the obvious?

A BOY READER (Plymouth): Blessed if I can make some of you chaps out! Why on earth do you want to know the size of my giddy boots? I don't even know

myself—I've got no memory for such unimportant details.

3YUREEDUR (Bristol): I suppose your name means that you're a three-year reader? I mentioned to Fullwood that you say he ought to have been drowned when he was a pup, and the rotter said such nasty things about you that I had to biff him. Tell your mother that I take my hat off to her. She is a brick.

F. E. PIESSE (Bellingham, S.E.6): Thanks for your letter, Frank. You needn't trouble to twist Teddy Long's nose—I've done it already. I've pulled his ears, too, and blacked one of his eyes. I thought you'd be pleased.

W. CAUSTIN (Chelsea): I haven't asked Archie to lend you a fiver, because I don't believe in borrowing. And I don't believe a word you say about Miss Irene. As for your remarks about Trickett Grim, you can fry your face.

HERBERT (Wroughton, Swindon): Of course I can swim. But I haven't got space here to give you any hints. Sorry, but there you are.

JOYCE (Bermondsey): If you don't like boys, why do you write to me? And how can you call me lazy after looking at this heap of replies? I say, be fair, you know! Yes, Ena is coming to the Moor View School, worse luck! What does the B.A.S. at the end of your name stand for? I hope it doesn't mean Big Awful Silly.

REGGIE PITT II. (Chitterne): Those sketches of yours are simply wonderful—altogether too good to be wasted. I'm going to speak to the other Reggie about them, and you'll hear from me again pretty soon.

JOHNNY WALES (East Ham): If you went to the pictures with another chap's sweetheart you jolly well deserve biffing. I'm not at all interested in your fate, and I can't give you any advice. In any case, I believe you're only pulling my leg.

IRENE MANNERS (Rochdale): I know that Miss Irene isn't in Rochdale, so you can't kid me. Besides, her writing is lovely, and yours is— Oh, well, there's no need for me to be too personal.

J. M. (Accrington): You look quite a decent chap, according to your photograph. I'd have it framed, only Church dropped it in the pickles, and it's gone a bit smeary. You're a bit critical, aren't you? Steely grey eyes and steely blue eyes are practically the same thing. Church says it wasn't your photograph at all that fell in the pickles—but after a second look, I don't think I'll frame it after all.

MURIEL NORMA HAMILTON (Nottingham): So you hate girls appearing in the stories? Well, being a girl yourself,

you ought to know something about your own sex! But don't accuse me of running the girls down. Personally, I think it's jolly nice to have Irene and Co in the offing, as Archie would say.

EGRAD (Bristol): Your criticisms are refreshingly frank, old man. All the better! I agree that those comic pictures of me on the cover are a beastly insult. I don't really make such a mess of things, you know. You needn't worry. I shan't give up Trackett Grim while I'm still getting my unique plots.

JACK (Balham): Trackett Grim is as real as I am—so you've got your answer. Your remarks about Miss Irene are insulting. It's all rot to say she wants taking down a peg or two. And I never crawl after her. I always walk or run.

BERNARD BARKER (Bradford): Sorry, Bernard, but you're dotty. You say you've read the Old Paper for three weeks, and you date your letter August 8th, 1927. Can you tell me who won the Cup Final in 1926? You ought to know.

REGULAR READER (Northampton): The title of the first number of the Old Paper was "The Mystery of Limehouse Reach," but as I didn't appear in that story I can't understand why you want the information.

AN IRISH TOMBOY (Belfast): If you don't know whether you're good-looking or not, I should say you must be very pretty. But I'm not sure—I've just read your P.S. It's like your cheek to compare me to your beastly dog. And even my worst enemy never calls me snappy and bad-tempered.

TRACKETT GRIM (London, S.E.1): Rats! How can you be Trackett Grim? He's with me wherever I go. That Chinese secret society was called the Fu Chang Tong.

J. E. F. S. (Twickenham): Glad to hear you've got over your illness. Hope you're O.K. now. Who told you that my sister Ena bosses me about? What rot! Anyhow, if you had a sister like mine you wouldn't talk quite so big!

JOHN (Walworth, S.E.): Hope the gas is turned on now. If you came to St. Frank's, my lad, I'd teach you not to boast. You'd give me a hiding, eh? I could lick you blindfold, and with one hand. My brain isn't rusty, and I don't want your pity. As for your conundrum, you can boil it. I've put your photograph in a gilt frame and hung it over the mantelpiece—I don't think!

DORIS C. (Leytonstone, London, E.11): Reggie Pitt is now Skipper, so you will be pleased. And so is everybody else, too, just between the two of us. I'm sorry you think the Moor View girls haven't a grain of sense between them. Well, you're a girl yourself, and I wouldn't dream of offending you. But if you're as clever as Miss Irene you ought

to take first prize. Who told you that girls don't wear muslin? Do you live in Iceland?

CHARLES TRISTER (Shoreditch, N.1): I've told Pitt about that joke column idea, and he says he'll think about it. The best way to cure stammering is to talk very slowly, and make up your mind not to falter. Or, better still, don't talk at all.

A READER (East Grinstead): I've just had a row with Buster, and I've ticked him off. So he said that girls can't write for toffy? Don't you worry—I don't allow that sort of thing. According to all the letters I get, the girls write a better letter than the boys. I hate admitting it, but it's the truth. I suppose girls have so much spare time that they can practise more.

INTERESTED (Wisbech): Sorry, old son. I'm afraid Reggie won't allow outsiders to contribute. You see, the Mag. is purely a Junior publication of St. Frank's.

ETHEL GRACIE (Chester): In the first place, I don't believe you're a girl; and in the second place, I believe you live in Shifnal. Still, thanks for your nice letter. Glad you agree that Willy is a cheeky young bounder.

PAT O'FLANNIGAN (Dublin): You're just about as Irish as "Ethel Gracie," and I'll bet you wear the same clothes. In other words, you're both the same. You can't spoof me with that undisguised handwriting. Try again!

PERCY GEORGE PEARCY (Canterbury): You can't believe all you hear. The chap who told you that I write my Trackett Grim stories in my sleep was trying to be funny. I sometimes write Trackett Grim tales in the Form-room, during lessons—but don't sneak, or Mr. Crowell will drop on me. You're quite right, old son. Any fellow who runs down girls is running his own mother down—for she was a girl once. You've got plenty of sense, Percy.

CHUMMY (Oxon): Here, I say! Those sketches of yours are jolly good, but why picture me as though I were an infant? I looked like your pictures when I was eight. Have another try, Phyllis, please. Yes, we're allowed to keep pets, if we like. We wear top hats on Sunday. And when we go to church we go in rank. Reggie Pitt is top of the Form, and Teddy Long is at the bottom. That poem of yours is pretty good, and I've passed it on to Reggie. Perhaps he'll publish it.

R. MACDONALD (Liverpool): You are quite right. I simply love difficulties, so that I can have the pleasure of conquering them. Most of your questions are answered in other parts of the Mag.—so that's that difficulty conquered.

BASIL DUSSAULT (Montreal, Canada): Your list of "best fighters" is wrong. Ernest Lawrence is the pick—he can even beat me. I don't want to say I'm second, but you can't get away from the truth. Buster Boots is third.

VIOLET DOBIE (Eastbourne): Help! Ten questions right off the reel! I have put your letter aside, Violet, and I'll give it a fitting reply at the first opportunity. I have just biffed Church on the nose for grinning at your first question—Do I play marbles or soldiers? Church has bunked.

HARRY DOBIE (Eastbourne): You are just as bad as your sister! (Or perhaps I'd better say just as good.) I've put your letter with hers—no, not in the waste-paper basket, but on the shelf for future attention. I hope McClure doesn't use it to light the fire with. He's fond of these little tricks.

L. P. (Luinneach, Ireland): I think you must have signed your name in Irish—but it looks like double Dutch to me. No, I don't think any of Fullwood's relations are bookmakers, but I'm not sure. I shouldn't be at all surprised.

A RELSON NEE LEADER (Hull): Glad you take my Trackett Grim stories seriously—but you needn't cry over them, you ass, Pitt says he weeps sometimes, but I don't believe it. No, my birthday is not on April 1st. What made you think it was? You want to know which I am best at—ventriloquism, singing, or detective work? Well, it's very difficult for me to give a truthful answer, for if I tell the truth you'll only accuse me of boasting.

TUBBY (Walthamstow, E.17): No, my minor isn't any relation to the William you mention. Levi lives somewhere in the West End—Hampstead, I believe.

SYD L. (Wood Green, N.22): I've just been excused from work in the class-room. I took your letter in there to answer during lessons, but after reading your poetry Mr. Crowell had to excuse me. I looked so white and shaky. I've just read it again, but this time I was prepared, and it's not so bad.

A. J. DYSON (Sheffield): I don't like to say it, but you're as mad as a hatter. Fancy thinking that Irene rules me! Whoever heard of such tosh? What do I think of sisters? As Ena will probably read this, I won't say.

FRANK VOCE, Jr. (Liverpool): Out of your selection of Headmasters, I prefer Dr. Stafford.

TIRED OUT: That's me, and I'm talking to you all. If I've missed telling any of you anything you've asked me about, you can jolly well jog my memory if there's something of any account you still want to know. I'm not going through all your letters again to find out. Not likely!

TRAVEL TALES.

By An Old Boy

(Lord Dorrimore's Weekly Trifle)



NO. 16.—A VISIT TO BAMBURGH CASTLE.

THIS week we will travel no further than Northumberland, in our own British Isles—in our own England. Bamburgh Castle, on the Northumberland coast, now the property of Lord Armstrong, is one of the most ancient and interesting places we have. It was founded as far back as 547, when it was given to Queen Bebbha by Ethelfrid the Destroyer, and it became her stronghold, and was named by her after herself—Bebbanburh, now Bamburgh.

For eight hundred years Bamburgh Castle has been a fortress and a place of arms. Of course, it has been attacked over and over again, but scarcely ever conquered, for it was almost impregnable. The Mercians, under Penda, assaulted it in the seventh century, but in vain. It defied the Danish invaders when they took and sacked Lindisfarne—Holy Island. In 924 Bamburgh fell to Athelstane, and King Aldred had to acknowledge Athelstane's supremacy.

When William the Conqueror ravaged Northumberland in 1070 he could not subdue Bamburgh. In 1346 David Bruce, King of Scotland, was brought to Bamburgh as a prisoner. When Henry IV ascended the throne, Hotspur was made Constable of Bamburgh. In medieval times the castle was defended by three famous women—Matilda of l'Aigle, Phillippa of Hainault, and Margaret of Anjou. It was the last stronghold of the Red Rose.

I was greatly interested in the curious Vale Tipping Tower which covers the main entrance and is a unique feature. The view from the castle seawards over the Farne Islands and over Holy Island to St. Abb's Head is one not soon forgotten.

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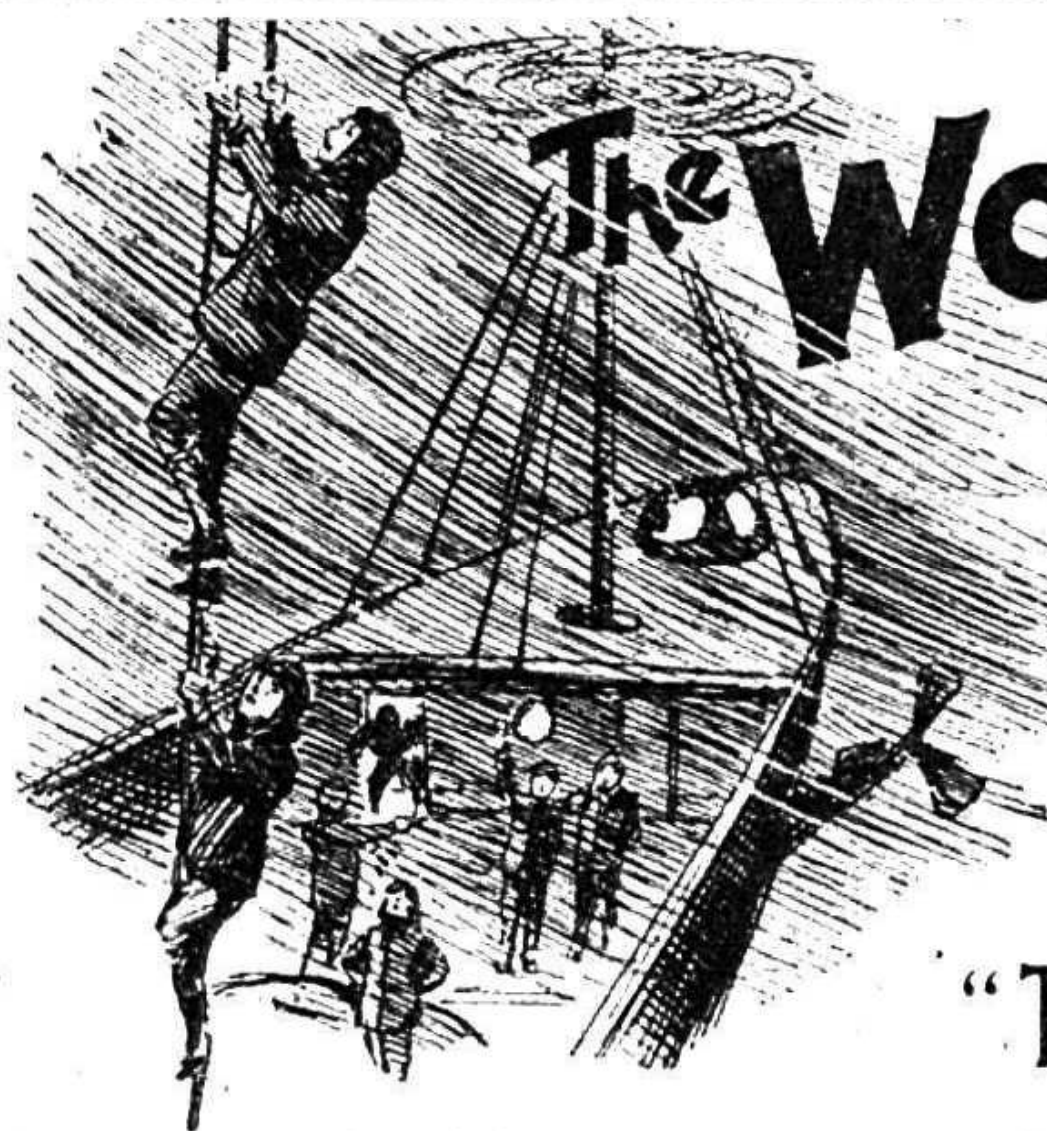
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Some twopennyworth, isn't it—seven stories? Well, that's what you'll find in this week's "Realm." And, if you like first-rate footer, racing and boxing yarns, by tip-top authors, you don't need to go any further than the Biggest Sports Story Paper.

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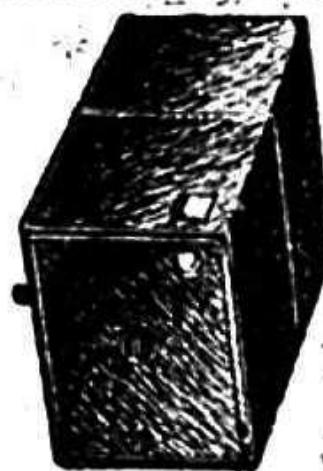
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