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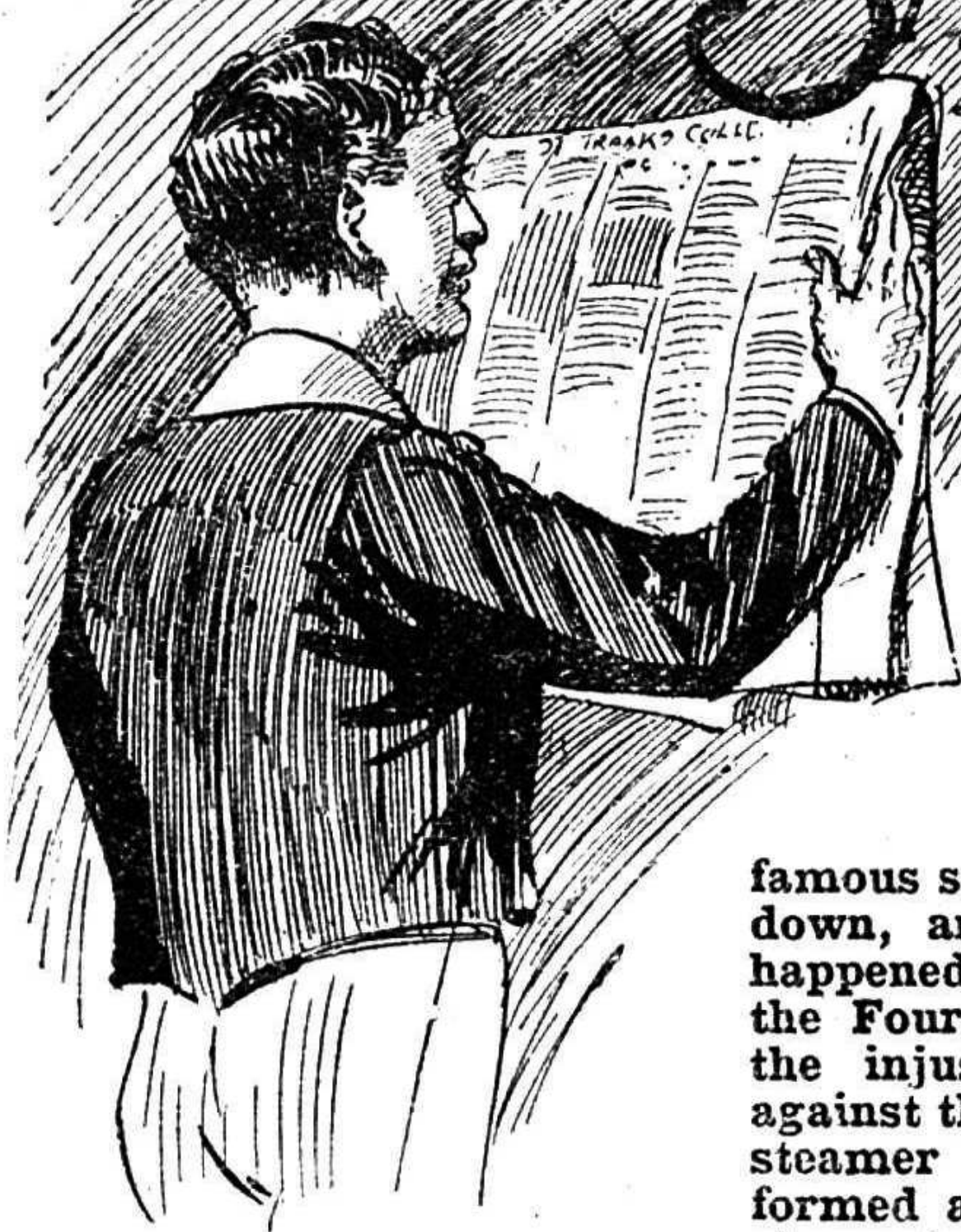
A FINE LONG COMPLETE STORY OF
THE BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S AND HOW
THEY CELEBRATED THE "FIFTH."

THE CASE OF THE VANISHED K.C. I
This Week's Powerful Story of NELSON
LEE versus JIM THE PENMAN.



"Looks something like an orgy, doesn't it?" asked Carter gleefully. "What's going to happen when the people crowd in and see this? It's a fake, of course, but nobody will know it."

SAVED BY THE FOURTH!



A FINE LONG STORY OF
SCHOOL ADVENTURE,
FEATURING THE WELL-
KNOWN BOYS OF ST.
FRANK'S.

For weeks past St. Frank's has been under a cloud, disgraced since the beginning of term by the sinister voice of scandal. At one time the

famous school was on the verge of closing down, and this undoubtedly would have happened but for the loyal determination of the Fourth, led by Reggie Pitt, to prove the injustice of the general prejudice against the school. In salvaging a wrecked steamer near Caistowe, the Fourth performed a public service that would have changed public opinion in their favour

had it been widely known. But those who blindly condemned the school were unwilling to admit their wrong, and the newspaper reports omitted any reference to the splendid achievement of these St. Frank's boys. Still undaunted, Pitt headed a deputation to Fleet Street, and after many rebuffs succeeded in interviewing the editor of the "Daily Sun," and winning over this powerful personage to the cause of St. Frank's. The story you are about to read describes the final triumph of the Fourth and how St. Frank's came into its own once more.

THE EDITOR.

By E. SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

THE LATEST.

CLANG, clang!
The rising-bell sounded throughout the Fourth Form dormitory in the Ancient House at St. Frank's. As a general rule, its note was most unwelcome, but on this particular morning the juniors aroused themselves with startling alacrity.

Reggie Pitt was the first to leap out of bed.

Jack Grey followed him, and even Handforth gave one bound, and proceeded to dress with lightning-like rapidity. It wasn't until he was half-attired that he discovered

he was arraying himself in McClure's garments.

Church and McClure had followed their leader with the same amazing energy. And other juniors were dressing with a grim, concentrated swiftness which scarcely allowed of any lucid conversation.

For some extraordinary reason, it seemed that the whole Fourth was simultaneously imbued with the famous Kruschen feeling. They leapt over beds in their stride, and performed other acrobatics equally astonishing.

"You've got my bags!" gasped McClure wrathfully.

"Who? Me?" snorted Handforth. "Great pip! I'm half-dressed in your rotten togs!"

You silly fathead! Why didn't you tell me?"

"Why didn't you look?" retorted McClure. "You jump out of bed and dive into my things before you're fully awake. Hi, steady! I say, you'll absolutely ruin——"

McClure paused in horror. Handforth was tearing the unwanted clothing off to the accompaniment of significant ripping sounds. His main idea seemed to be speed.

"Just my luck!" he panted. "I'd made up my mind to be first down—and now I'm dished! Here you are—take your beastly clobber! I wouldn't be seen dead in it!"

"You've torn all the seams!" howled McClure indignantly.

Handforth took no notice of his chum's troubles, but proceeded to dash into his own clothing at lightning speed. But he really lost a lot of time by this haste. In the first place, he put his shirt on inside out, and then discovered to his dismay that his trousers were back to front. It was certainly a case of more haste less speed.

As a result, the first junior to leave the dormitory was Reggie Pitt, for Reggie had dressed calmly and deliberately and with apparent ease. He was closely followed by Jack Grey, Sir Montie Tregellis-West, and Tommy Watson. They descended the stairs in a bunch.

"Well, we're first, anyway," said the Fourth skipper. "And now for the giddy papers. This morning, my sons, is the Day of Fate!"

"Dear old boy, I'm inclined to agree," panted Sir Montie. "Begad! This rush is simply shockin'—it is, really! I never remember dressin' with such unseemly haste. I look an absolute sight, you know!"

"That's nothing—can't help nature!" said Pitt cheerfully. "And what does it matter what you look like? To-day, O vain one, is an occasion of great importance, and such matters as personal adornment weigh a mere trifle in the balance of destiny!"

"Blow destiny!" said Tommy Watson bluntly. "Where's the 'Daily Sun'?"

"He's very shy this morning—he's hiding behind the clouds," said Pitt. "And I don't wonder—if he isn't ashamed of himself, he ought to be! We've hardly seen him for a week——"

"I'm talking about the newspaper, you ass!" interrupted Watson.

Pitt knew this all the time, but it pleased him to be humorous. He couldn't be anything else. For Reggie was a junior who always had an unlimited fund of cheerfulness.

The Fourth's startling energy was not so mysterious as it seemed.

On the previous day a specially selected crowd of juniors had travelled to London—intent upon waking up the newspapers. The Fourth had been doing some big things recently, and the London papers had made no reports whatever. Yet they had been

willing enough to condemn the famous old school at the time of the scandal at beginning of term.

St. Frank's had a bad name for weeks, and large numbers of seniors had been taken away by their parents, and placed in other schools, or kept at home. The Fourth was the only Form which remained intact, but this was solely owing to the virile leadership of Reginald Pitt.

And during these days of trial and stress the juniors had fought a grim battle against adverse public opinion. It had been a hard time for the Fourth. But they had come out on top.

For, at last, the name of St. Frank's was cleared.

The juniors had succeeded in their great object. They had gained the publicity they desired. For only the previous night the managing Editor of the "Daily Sun"—the greatest of all the popular morning newspapers—had promised to give great prominence to the St. Frank's cause.

Thus the Fourth's unusual energy.

All the fellows wanted to get down, in order to examine the morning paper. Reggie Pitt had expressly ordered a copy of the "Daily Sun" for every junior study. He had thoughtfully hit upon this scheme the previous night—bribing Tubbs, the page-boy, to cycle early into Bannington for the purpose of obtaining the necessary copies.

"Here, you are, Master Pitt!" grinned Tubbs, as the juniors swept down into the lobby. "I thought you'd be down first, young gent. I've put a paper in each study, like you told me, and 'ere's a extra one for you. My! You won't arf be pleased, Master Pitt! Right acrost the page—great 'eadlines——"

"Let's have a look!" interrupted Pitt eagerly.

They seized the paper and gazed at the headlines with sheer joy. Previously all newspaper publicity regarding St. Frank's had been detrimental to the old school.

But Mr. Stephen Cross, the managing Editor of the "Daily Sun," had kept his word. This famous newspaper, with its enormous circulation over the entire length and breadth of the United Kingdom, was telling the truth about St. Frank's at last.

And the name of the famous old school was cleared.

CHAPTER II.

SOMETHING LIKE PUBLICITY.



JOHAN BUSTERFIELD
BOOTS chirruped with undiluted joy.

"Fine!" he exclaimed gleefully. "I couldn't have done it better myself! This is the real goods—the genuine, unadulterated stuff! This article is publicity with a big 'P'!"

And Boots, who was something of an authority on the subject, knew what he was talking about. He was gazing at the "Daily Sun," and Percy Bray and one or two other Modern House juniors were with him.

The old Triangle, in fact, presented a startling sight.

Knots of fellows were standing everywhere, and newspapers were in evidence from one corner of the Triangle to the other. Never before had so many papers been seen. The whole school was literally littered with them.

And joy abounded.

For right across the main news sheet of the paper, in huge type, ran this legend:

"THE TRUTH ABOUT ST. FRANK'S COLLEGE."

And underneath this were the headlines on the left-hand side of the page, spread over four columns—"The Good Name of a Famous School"—"The Amazing Grit of the Fourth Form."

The article itself, which followed below, filled the four columns, and was bold, plain-spoken, and generous. It made it perfectly clear to the whole world that the good name of St. Frank's was cleared, and that the famous old school was unsullied by any evil.

The full story of the Fourth's heroic effort in saving the s.s. Trident from destruction on the rocks of Shingle Head, was set out in detail. And the writer of the article—undoubtedly Mr. Stephen Cross himself—made it abundantly clear that the Fourth was a set of clean, wholesome British boys.

The old scandal was referred to, and the true story told—for Reggie Pitt had supplied the full and true details. These were now published for the first time. Hitherto, the story had been a wild exaggeration of the truth.

And at last the whole country was able to judge for itself, and there was not the slightest shadow of doubt that this supreme publicity would restore St. Frank's to its former glory. Those who had condemned the old school would now feel very small indeed, and, if they had any decency at all, would regret their hasty and ill-considered judgment.

Many parents had removed their sons in a kind of panic, without inquiring too closely into the facts of the case. Other big schools had boycotted St. Frank's consistently. Redcliffe College, Hazlehurst College, Carcliffe School, Helmford College, Bannington Grammar School—these, and several others, had "cut" St. Frank's dead during the past weeks. Football fixtures had been cancelled, and other indignities had been heaped upon St. Frank's.

"I should think these chaps will feel ashamed of themselves now!" said Bob Christine grimly. "My hat! Some of the

Hazelhurst and Helmford chaps will go green when they read this paper! After all the rotten things they've been saying about St. Frank's, they're proved to be wrong!"

"We shall have 'em swarming round us like flies," declared Boots. "They'll come here begging to be forgiven. Well, I suppose we'd better do the decent thing and let matters go on in the same old course. There's no sense in harbouring ill-feeling."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Reggie Pitt. "The sooner the scandal is dead and forgotten the better. And don't forget that the other newspapers will fall into line now. The 'Sun' has started the ball rolling, and all the evening papers will be jumping over themselves to give us some more ripping publicity. My sons, we're cleared!"

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for St. Frank's!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Fourth!"

The enthusiasm was tremendous. Even the seniors were thoroughly excited. The masters pretended not to show their animation, but failed. They were just as keen as the boys themselves. Mr. Stokes, indeed, came out into the Triangle and actually led the cheering. But Mr. Stokes was different to the others—he was like one of the boys.

Dr. Malcolm Stafford read the "Daily Sun" article with whole-hearted delight. He knew that he had to thank the Fourth for this wonderful vindication. And the headmaster could see the end of the suspense in sight. After this term, St. Frank's would have regained all her old prestige, and would again take her place in the first rank of British public schools.

For once, Chambers of the Fifth rose to the occasion.

Cuthbert Chambers was generally regarded as several kinds of an ass. He was chiefly famous for his conceit and his swelled head. But great moments sometimes bring out the best in a fellow—and Chambers certainly proved that his head contained something more than water.

For he conceived the idea of sending off a big batch of telegrams to every Fifth-Former who had left the school—telegrams urging the absentees to return without delay.

Chambers even took his scheme to Fenton of the Sixth. And the captain of St. Frank's not only approved of the idea, but copied it. He sent telegrams to all the Sixth-Formers who had departed. For it was Cuthbert's idea to bring back every single senior who had deserted. St. Frank's was cleared of every vestige of scandal, and unless the absentees returned they wouldn't be worthy of their Alma Mater. This was the general view.

There was general rejoicing throughout the school during the morning, and lessons were more or less of a farce. Even the strictest

Form-master allowed his class to do very much as it liked.

For it was generally agreed that this occasion, at all events, was a red-letter day in the history of the famous college.

CHAPTER III.

TWO ROTTERS.



CLAUDE CARTER, of the Ancient Fourth, lounged about the old stile in Belton Lane.

It was rather chilly, for the November morning was raw and damp. Carter was

attired in his ordinary Etons, with a heavy overcoat over them. Now and again he peered impatiently down the lane.

It was midday, and morning lessons had only been over a short time. Carter was thinking about the general excitement which was stirring St. Frank's—and he wasn't particularly pleased.

He was a comparatively new boy, having arrived at St. Frank's at the beginning of the new term. The fact that he was on very intimate terms with Fullwood & Co proved his character. And he had taken rather a delight in performing all sorts of despicable actions of late in order to besmirch the fair name of St. Frank's.

He didn't like the article in the "Daily Sun" at all. It annoyed him. Further scandal would have pleased him more than anything else. For some extraordinary reason, Carter delighted in evil mischief. The more trouble he could stir up, the better he was pleased. He had not the slightest pride in his school, and the recent scandal at St. Frank's had given him undiluted pleasure.

A figure came striding briskly up the lane, and Carter watched the newcomer's approach with interest. He was a smallish young man, with a jaunty stride and an air of importance about him. He wore an insignificant moustache on his upper lip, and he was apparently one of those young men who believed themselves to be superior beings.

"Hallo, Tupper!" said Carter, as he held out his hand.

"Have you got that thirty bob?" asked Mr. Tupper bluntly.

"You needn't be in such a hurry about it—I'm not going to swindle you!" growled Carter. "Here's your giddy money. I had a bit of luck yesterday, and I've not only cleared myself, but I'm a couple of quid in pocket."

"You backed a winner?"

"Yes—Marathon, at a hundred to eight."

"Good luck to you!" said Mr. Tupper, as he took two notes from the junior. "That's all square now—thanks! If you'd like me to put anything on for this afternoon's races—"

"Well, you can do me a favour, if you like," said Carter, handing over another pound note. "You might see that this quid goes on Jumping Bill, for the three-thirty—"

"You're chucking your money away!" interrupted Mr. Tupper impatiently.

"But Jumping Bill is the best tip of the day—"

"Don't you believe it," said the young man. "He doesn't stand an earthly. And what's the price, anyway? Two to one! Why, he's not worth risking your money on! Take my advice, and don't touch it. If you want to have a splash, put two quid on Rough Rider."

"Rough Rider!" echoed Carter. "That rotten donkey!"

"You can call him a donkey if you like; but he's going to win!" declared Mr. Tupper knowingly. "Being on the 'Gazette,' I get to know these things. As a matter of fact, I was chatting to one of the trainers' assistants only yesterday. Rough Rider is in the betting at twenty-five to one—and you can take it from me that you're on a cert."

"Thanks awfully!" said Carter eagerly. "You're sure?"

"Positive—I'm putting a fiver on him myself!"

"All right—here's another two quid," said Claude. "That makes three—it's all I've got. I think you'd better put the money on thirty bob each way—"

"Don't be a young fool," interrupted Mr. Tupper. "What do you want to throw pounds away like that for? Put the whole three on to win—and you'll clear a small fortune."

Carter was convinced, and agreed. He had had quite a lot of luck through Mr. Tupper's tips, and Mr. Tupper had always taken a percentage of the winnings for himself. The young man was a junior reporter on the "Bannington Gazette," and he was apparently in touch with a number of shady characters in the town. For it was scarcely probable that he knew any really respectable trainers or trainer's assistants.

"Seen the 'Sun' this morning?" asked Mr. Tupper, as he prepared to go.

"Yes, I have!" growled Claude. "A lot of rotten spoof! Pitt did it, you know—went up to London, and fooled the editor."

"I thought as much," said Mr. Tupper, nodding.

They discussed the subject for some little time, and it was abundantly clear that Mr. Tupper himself was by no means pleased at the tone of the "Sun" article.

The pair parted at length, and Mr. Tupper retraced his steps towards the village. Just before reaching the bridge, he encountered a cheerful junior of small size who was progressing along the lane in a somewhat remarkable fashion. The small junior, in fact, was walking sideways like a crab, and

dragging his feet on the rough road in a most peculiar shuffle—and showing a lamentable disregard for his shoeleather.

Mr. Tupper was about to pass when the small junior looked round, and at once assumed a more human attitude. He was Willy Handforth, of the Third, and he regarded Mr. Tupper with a kind of joy.

"Hallo!" he said cheerfully. "Been getting more copy?"

"Not much good my getting copy, when they print such piffle in the 'Daily Sun,'" retorted Mr. Tupper sourly. "But I didn't speak to you, kiddy! Run along, and don't be cheeky!"

Willy grinned.

"Feeling a bit sore, eh?" he asked calmly. "I don't wonder at it! You're the brilliant scholar who came up to St. Frank's at the time of the scandal, and faked up a lovely yarn for the 'Gazette'——"

"What do you mean—faked up?" interrupted Mr. Tupper angrily.

"What I say," replied Willy. "You faked it up. It wasn't true at all—it was a whole string of giddy fibs! But you're dished this time, old lad! The 'Daily Sun' has shown you up—you and your giddy 'Gazette'! You and your fakes!"

Mr. Tupper turned purple.

"You cheeky young toad!" he snorted. "My article was the truth! And, what's more, I'm going to tell the truth again! All that whitewash in the 'Sun' won't be allowed to stand! You know as well as I do that St. Frank's is rotten to the core——"

"Say that again!" interrupted Willy grimly. "If you do, I'll punch your nose flat into your dirty face! Go on—say it again!"

CHAPTER IV.

WILLY'S WATERLOO.



MR. TUPPER scowled. "Are you talking to me?" he demanded thickly.

"I'm talking to something that looks nearly human," replied Willy, with biting sarcasm. "Yah! All you can do is to write filthy articles for your giddy rag! It's a wonder your editor keeps you on the staff!"

"You impertinent little whipper-snapper!" roared the reporter. "St. Frank's is rotten to the core—a beastly collection of young snobs and evil-living——"

Crash!

Willy was as good as his word. He was a mere shrimp compared to Mr. Tupper, but what he lacked in size, he compensated for

in aggressiveness. The famous Handforth warrior strain was very highly developed in Willy.

Mr. Tupper staggered back under the bewildering force of a mighty biff on the nose. He gave one yelp of surprise and pain, and before he could make any attempt to defend himself, Willy followed up his advantage.

Crash! Biff! Slam!

He fairly leapt at the cad, and hit out right and left. Mr. Tupper received severe punishment. And at the same time he was aware of a blinding sense of utter humiliation. That he—a fully-grown man of twenty-five—should be knocked about by a mere fag was altogether too much.

And when Mr. Tupper recovered his scattered senses, he attacked. He did so in a manner peculiarly his own. Willy was a most elusive youngster, and he kept well away.

So Mr. Tupper upset all the fag's calculations by suddenly driving out with one of his feet. It was, indeed, a cowardly, contemptible action. Willy hadn't been prepared for any such disgusting exhibition of foul play.

Crash!

Mr. Tupper's heavy, winter boot caught Willy on the right shin, and the fag crumpled up with a sharp cry of agony. For the moment he was completely out of action. Indeed, he half-believed during that first moment that his leg was broken.

"Now, you little beast, I've got you!" snarled Mr. Tupper.

He pulled Willy up from the ground, and then commenced knocking him about in the most atrocious manner. Mr. Tupper had lost his head, and he was so enraged that he hardly realised the enormity of his offence. Not that this provided him with the least possible excuse.

Certainly Willy had been the aggressor—but he had fully warned Tupper in advance. So the young man had only himself to blame. And now he was acting in a manner which bereft him of every vestige of an excuse.

He had seized one of Willy's arms, and was twisting it in such a manner that the fag was helpless. And while he held him thus, he punched at Willy's face with brutal, uncalled-for force. Within a few seconds the fag's visage was a ghastly sight.

The hero of the Third had met his Waterloo!

And it was at this moment that three cyclists appeared down the lane. They were Handforth & Co., of the Fourth. Their arrival was timely. Had they not appeared, Willy's fate might have indeed been grave. For Tupper was so mad with rage that he was like a wild thing.

"Great pip!" said Handforth blankly.

He practically fell off his machine, and allowed the latter to run into the hedge. Church and McClure dismounted, rather more sedately—but they lost no time, even so.

"Let that kid alone!" roared Handforth furiously.

Mr. Tupper turned, aware of the new arrivals for the first time.

"Mind your own confounded business!" he snarled.

"You—you contemptible worm!" hooted Handforth. "You're half-murdering that

McClure picked him up, and dragged him aside.

In a flash they commenced first-aid tactics. There was a ditch near-by, and it fortunately contained clear running water. For in this month the ditches were no longer stagnant.

Mr. Tupper was scared now. He was just beginning to realise the villainous nature of his attack. And he had no reason to love the St. Frank's Fourth, in any case.

For all the juniors knew that he had made the bitterest of all attacks on the old school at the time of the scandal. He had been sent to the scene by his editor, and instead

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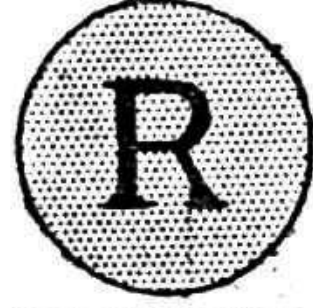
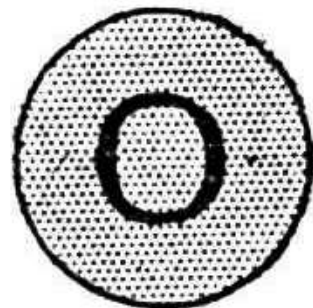
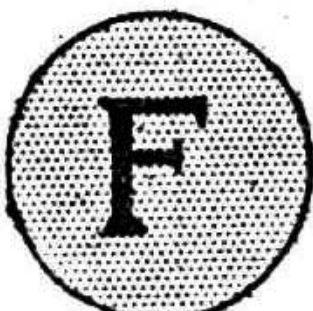
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"ag! My goodness! His face is covered with blood! You—you dangerous cur!"

Mr. Tupper breathed hard, partially sobered.

"The young fool checked me!" he panted.

"That's no excuse—you're nothing better than a ruffian!" snorted Handforth. "Quick, Church—take the kid away and wash him, or something! I'll deal with this rotten bully!"

Willy had fallen into the muddy lane. His shin was still hurting him so much that he couldn't stand properly. And his face had been battered to such an extent that he was partially stunned. Church and

of gleaning the actual facts, he had based his report on all the gossip and scandal and tittle-tattle he had been able to get hold of. And that report in the "Bannington Gazette" had been the forerunner of all the antagonistic articles in the London Press.

So Mr. Tupper was by no means a popular character in Bellton and district. Indeed, it was not until recently that he had ventured to come near, and now only for the purpose of inciting a few foolish juniors to perform the very acts which Mr. Tupper condemned so scathingly in his reports. The young man was a thorough-paced hypocrite to the backbone.

"Now, then," said Handforth grimly, "you're going through it!"

The leader of Study D was deliberately rolling up his sleeves in that cold, calm manner of his which was so well-known at St. Frank's. Mr. Tupper stepped back, scowling.

"I tell you the kid cheeked me——" he began.

"I say, Handy," roared Church, with excitement, "this is Willy; it's your minor! He's half killed!"

Handforth started violently.

"My minor!" he echoed, with a gulp in his voice. "By George!"

The news came to him as a complete shock, for he had failed to recognise Willy at first. And now he turned to the quailing Mr. Tupper with a light of danger in his eyes.

CHAPTER V.

SOMETHING TO BE GOING ON WITH.



WILLY looked rather dazed.

"That's all right, thanks!" he muttered. "Don't keep jabbing that giddy handkerchief in my face! And take that thing off my eye! I can't see at all!"

"Sorry, old son!" said Church gently. "There's nothing on your eye; it's simply bunged up. Your nose is swollen, too. Your lip's cut, and there's a nasty dent on the side of your face!"

"The cad—the beast!" muttered Willy indignantly. "I'd have whacked him, only he started kicking. I—I believe my shin's busted!"

He looked round with his good eye and grinned. It was rather a painful effort, and made his face go sort of sideways.

"Good!" he murmured. "Ted's on the job! One of you chaps had better go and ring up the hospital and tell 'em to send an ambulance. Or better still, get the mortuary ready."

Handforth was indeed looking very dangerous.



Mr. Tupper's heavy winter boot caught Willy on the right shin, and the fag crumpled up with a sharp cry of agony.

"You beastly cad!" he said, his voice deadly quiet. "You ruffianly rat! Attacking my minor like that, and half killing him! I'm going to smash you up!"

"Look here——" began Mr. Tupper desperately.

Crash!

Handforth's right shot out, and Mr. Tupper's punishment commenced. He wasn't quite sure whether an earthquake had happened or whether somebody had dropped a bomb. He only knew that he was the victim of a devastating bombardment.

For a few moments Mr. Tupper had had an idea that he could treat this schoolboy as he had treated Willy. In his panic he kicked out Willy. But Handforth had the enormous advantage of being warned. He knew what to expect. And it was easy enough to avoid the man's cowardly tactics.

Willy, on the other hand, had been totally unprepared for such caddish behaviour. Otherwise Willy might have easily held his own against this well-dressed ruffian.

"Take that!" said Handforth grimly.

Biff!

Mr. Tupper took it—a glorious uppercut which nearly lifted him off his feet. And Irene Manners, turning the bend in the lane, was just in time to see the blow go home. Doris Berkeley and Tessa Love

and Ena Handforth were with her. The four Moor View School girls came to a halt.

"Oh, a fight!" exclaimed Doris gleefully.

"My brother, of course!" said Ena. "I might have known it. When Ted isn't fighting he's preparing for one. About the only time he's safe is when he's asleep!"

The girls walked up slowly, and they were provided with some really excellent entertainment. Mr. Tupper and Handforth knew nothing of this fresh audience, and they were going at it hammer and tongs. For the reporter had recovered himself sufficiently to make a show.

It was a disgraceful show, certainly, but Handforth was quite capable of dealing with it. Time after time Tupper attempted to kick, to clutch, and to do anything and everything contrary to the unwritten laws of sportsmanship. For his pains he only received crashing blow after crashing blow.

He was indeed receiving the hiding of his life.

Irene strode up with set lips, and Willy Handforth, spotting her, half rose to his feet. He clutched at Irene's sports coat, and held on to it.

"Hold on!" he said gruffly. "No interfering, mind!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Irene, gazing at Willy aghast.

"Yes, I know: I'm a bit of a wreck, but don't take any notice of that," said the fag. "That rotten cad kicked me in the shin, and then sloshed me before I could recover. Ted's just paying him out!"

"Yes, I can see that!" replied Irene slowly.

"If you try to stop him——"

"You needn't worry; I wouldn't dream of stopping him!" interrupted Irene hotly. "That fellow is a beast! I don't know very much about fighting, but I can see that he's not playing the game. I want to see Ted knock him clean out."

Willy stared, and gave a gasp of joy.

"Good for you, Miss Irene!" he exclaimed. "I always thought you were a bit of a prim young lady. I'm jolly glad to find that you can watch a fight and enjoy it."

"Ted's winning!" said Ena, in her calm way. "My goodness! That was a beauty! I shall have to remember that one. It might come in useful on Ted himself!"

Handforth, indeed, was putting the final touch to his earlier work. Mr. Tupper was nearly finished. He was sagging somewhat drunkenly at the knees; he was beating the air idly with his hands. His defence was completely at an end.

One more blow was enough—a beautifully placed punch on the jaw. Mr. Tupper reeled over backwards, sprawled full length in the lane, and rolled over and over. He had received the thrashing he deserved.

CHAPTER VI.

TUPPER'S REVENGE.



EDWARD OSWALD
HANDFORTH
breathed hard.

"Now you can crawl off and get into your burrow!" he said witheringly. "You're not human at all—you're only an insect! Things like you ought to be exterminated with a garden spray!"

"Good old Ted!" exclaimed Willy. "You came along just at the right moment. Thanks, old man——"

"Don't thank me, you young ass!" growled Handforth. "Just like your fat-headed carelessness—letting him kick you—— Oh, my gracious! I—I didn't know——"

He paused abruptly, staring at Irene and Co. in confusion.

"Jolly good!" said Doris warmly. "I've never seen you biff better, Ted! That last one was a regular beauty. If any man ever deserved a licking this one did!"

"Well, he's got it!" said Ena, as Mr. Tupper lifted himself up and slunk away. "I feel like going for him myself!"

"He's a regular brute!" declared Tessa.

But Handforth hardly heard them. He was gazing at Irene. He knew that she disapproved of him fighting, and Irene was the pick of the whole bunch, so far as Handforth was concerned. He certainly wasn't in love with her, as so many of the juniors facetiously suggested. But Handforth liked Irene quite a lot, and he regarded her as his best girl chum. There was no nonsense about Edward Oswald.

"I—I say, Miss Irene. I simply couldn't help sloshing him, you know," said Handforth awkwardly. "He kicked Willy in the shin, and half killed the poor kid. It was just a matter of duty. I had to give him a good hiding!"

Irene smiled.

"Don't be so silly, Ted," she said. "I think it was perfectly right of you to punch the blackguard."

"But—but you don't like fighting," said Handforth, staring.

"In a case like this, fighting is necessary," replied Irene. "I don't like you knocking poor Church and McClure about for nothing, Ted. I don't like you hitting out without any proper cause. There's a difference, you know."

Irene was a very level-headed girl, in addition to being charmingly pretty. She was by no means prim and severe, as some of the fellows believed. But she had her own way of looking at things, and it was generally a sensible way.

"That's the kind of cad the chap is," said Church contemptuously.

He indicated Mr. Tupper with a nod of

the head. The latter had now paused, and was shaking his fist viciously in the direction of the juniors. He probably felt that he was at a safe distance.

"I'll make you smart for this!" he shouted thickly. "I'll prosecute you for assault! I'll have you before the local justices. I'll make you pay for this outrage!"

"My hat!" roared Handforth. "He hasn't had enough!"

He made a move in Tupper's direction, but the fellow moved away.

"You haven't heard the last of this!" he snarled. "Don't forget I'll have my revenge!"

"Indeed!" said a voice at Mr. Tupper's rear. "What have these boys been doing to you, young man? If you have any complaint to make, and it appears you have, you cannot do better than make it to me."

Tupper turned abruptly, and found himself facing Mr. Beverley Stokes, the house-master of the Ancient House.

"These young brutes have assaulted me!" shouted Mr. Tupper.

"That's not true, sir!" declared Handforth, running up. "I did it—I gave him this hiding! The other chaps didn't touch him. I've just licked him!"

"And you apparently did the job quite thoroughly, Handforth," said Mr. Stokes, casting a critical eye over the vanquished. "Why did you commit this—this somewhat drastic act?"

"Because he's a young hooligan!" shouted Tupper.

"I did it, sir, because the fellow kicked my minor on the shin," replied Handforth steadily. "I caught him in the act, and I simply went for him. That's all!"

"Well, sir," said Mr. Stokes, turning to Tupper.

"Go to the deuce—all of you!" rasped the fellow, turning on his heel.

Mr. Stokes made no comment. But he examined Willy, and the nasty gash on the latter's shin, surrounded by an ugly bruise, told its own story. Mr. Stokes was a sportsman.

"We'll say nothing more about the matter boys," he exclaimed cheerfully. "I'm sorry, Handforth minor, to see you in this condition and I think perhaps you'd better have a day or two in the sanatorium—"

"Not likely, sir!" snorted Willy. "I'm all right. At least, I shall be after I've had a wash. Don't shove me in the sanny, for goodness' sake!"

Mr. Stokes smiled.

"Well, we'll see," he replied. "Come and report to me before afternoon lessons. If I think you look strong and fit, I'll allow you to remain out and about; and we'll forget all about this little affair."

But if Mr. Stokes forgot it, Mr. Tupper didn't. His main idea, as he went back

to Bannington, was revenge. He tidied himself up as much as possible, and then reported for duty in the editorial office of the "Bannington Gazette." He was, in fact, late, and in some little anxiety on that account. After all, Tupper was only a junior reporter, and not a very trusted one at that. He knew very well that his position was by no means solid, and the editor's temper was rather short.

The "Gazette" was an established journal, typically provincial in tone and general get-up. The St. Frank's juniors described it as "a mouldy old rag"—and in many respects this was correct. For the "Bannington Gazette" was wretchedly printed, and generally contained little else but local news—all of it dry and uninteresting.

The offices were grubby and dingy—the printing works being in the rear. And Mr. Tupper was rather disappointed when he sidled in to discover the editor waiting for him. This gentleman was a small, wizened individual, named James Poole. And as he was the sole proprietor of the journal, he always kept a sharp eye on his staff.

He peered at Mr. Tupper fiercely over the tops of his spectacles.

"You are late!" he rapped out. "Didn't I tell you to be back early, in order to make a report of the Vicarage flood?"

Mr. Tupper looked indignant. He bristled with righteous anger. He had his excuse all cut and dried.

CHAPTER VII.

ARCHIBALD'S TELEPHONE CALL.



"**S**ORRY, sir—not my fault!" said Tupper hastily. "I was detained by some of those young hooligans of St. Frank's—"

"Good gracious me!" ejaculated Mr. Poole, rising from his chair, and coming to the reporter's side. "What on earth have you been doing to yourself, young man? You're in a shocking condition!"

"Yes, sir! I—I—"

"Shocking condition!" said the Editor. "You've been fighting, sir! I won't allow this sort of brawling among members of my staff! What have you got to say for yourself, Tupper?"

The editorial office was a dim, cobwebby apartment, and it was only after Mr. Poole had come close that he clearly saw the extent of the damage. Mr. Tupper was a perfect sight. One eye was closed, the other was only keeping open by stern effort—and was, in fact, in course of liquidation—his nose was much larger than it should have been, and there was a curious twist to his mouth. In short, Mr. Tupper was no beauty.

"I haven't been fighting, sir!" he said indignantly. "It was those boys—the St.

Frank's ruffians! They set on me without the slightest provocation, and this is the result!"

Mr. Poole frowned darkly.

"Those boys are an infernal nuisance!" he snapped irritably. "Didn't you make any attempt to defend yourself?"

"Yes, sir—of course," replied Tupper. "But there were six of them against me, and I had no chance. With your permission, sir, I thought about writing a report of this affair for this evening's edition. Those St. Frank's boys are getting beyond all endurance, Mr. Poole!"

The editor fumed up and down.

"Scandalous—atrocious!" he barked. "So they have dared to lay hands on a member of my staff! By Heaven! I'll make them suffer for this! Yes, Tupper, you shall write that report—certainly you shall write it! Do it at once. Go to your table, and get out the strongest story you can! We ought to sell an extra edition this evening!"

"That's just what I thought, sir," said Mr. Tupper eagerly. "I'm always thinking of the paper, sir, and it's about time those boys were put in their place. The school ought to be closed, sir!"

"So it ought—so it ought!" agreed Mr. Poole. "Those boys are becoming a public scandal. They're nothing more nor less than a disgrace to the district! I detest boys—always did! Well, don't stare—get on with your work! You haven't got the whole afternoon, confound you!"

Tupper, who was well accustomed to his chief's temper, hastily went to his desk, and got busy. And before half an hour had elapsed he had evolved a highly-imaginative narrative—the greater part of which, indeed, was pure invention. He submitted the manuscript to Mr. Poole, and breathed with relief when the latter passed the copy with a grunt of approval.

"Splendid!" said the editor. "You are improving, Tupper—your style is much better nowadays. You are quite certain the incident happened exactly as you have described?"

"Yes, of course, sir—exactly," said the reporter.

"Good! Then take it down to the works, and tell them to set it up at once. We'll cause a sensation in Bannington to-night, young man!"

In the meantime, afternoon lessons were in progress at St. Frank's. A few minutes before they were due to finish Morrow, of the Sixth, looked into the Ancient Fourth class-room.

"Glenthorne is wanted on the telephone, sir!" he exclaimed, as Mr. Crowell looked at him inquiringly.

Archie Glenthorne rose to his feet.

"Oh, I say!" he protested. "I mean, dash it all, sir! I can't help it if some bright lad takes it into his head to encroach upon the good old lessons. I haven't the faintest idea who the chappie can be, sir."

"On the last occasion of this sort the caller was a tradesman—a tailor, I believe," said Mr. Crowell severely. "Well, we won't argue—you can go, Glenthorne. But in future you will see that this sort of thing does not happen."

"Absolutely, sir," said Archie. "As a matter of fact, I'm positively groping about in the good old dark! I mean, what about Phipps? Phipps generally attends to telephone messages and all that sort of bally fag—"

"Phipps is out," interrupted Morrow, grinning. "And if you don't hurry up, my lad, the connection will be cut off."

Archie hurried off without further ado—at least, he made his way at an even pace towards the prefect's room. In his opinion, this was hurrying. Usually he progressed with the utmost languor.

"Hallo! Hallo!" he exclaimed, placing the receiver to his ear. "So there you are, what? I say, it's dashed inconsiderate of you to ring up now, laddie! I mean, those neckties, and all that—"

"Is that you, Master Archie?" came a youthful voice.

"Good gad!" said Archie. "Then you're not the outfitter?"

"No—I'm Jim," said the voice.

"Oh, Jim?" repeated Archie vaguely. "Good old Jim, what? Jolly pleased to see you, old sunbeam! That is, in other words, it's priceless of you to ring me up, and all that sort of rot. But I must confess, laddie, that I haven't a dashed idea who you are."

"Jim Briggs, sir," came a chuckle over the wire.

"Oh, rather!" said Archie, light dawning upon him. "The cheerful laddie who used to clean the old footgear up at the pater's place. Jim, of course! How are you, Jim? Haven't seen you for ages."

"I'm working on the 'Bannington Gazette' now, Master Archie," said Jim Briggs. "In the printing works, you know. And I've got something to tell you that will give you a bit of a shock."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ORDER OF THE BOOT.



ARCHIE GLENTHORNE looked alarmed.

"Oh, come!" he protested. "Dash it all, that's frightfully steep, don't you know! After a perfectly foul session in the dashed class-room, you positively ring me up to deliver a shock! Scarcely playing the game, I mean."

"Well, I asked for you, Master Archie, because you know me," replied Jim Briggs. "You see, I'm one of the compositors—"

"Jolly good!" said Archie. "Jim, old dear, you're getting on. I don't know what a"

compositor is, exactly, but a few congrats, old sweep! Kindly allow me to——"

"I wish you'd let me speak, Master Archie—it's important," interrupted the other. "Do you happen to know a man named Tupper?"

"Tupper?" repeated Archie. "Oddslife! What a perfectly poisonous name! Kindly allow me to inform you, old chestnut, that I absolutely wouldn't know a chappie with a frightful handle like that!"

"He's on our staff, Master Archie," said Briggs. "One of the reporters, in fact. He came here this afternoon properly bashed about, and claims that he was assaulted by some of you young gents."

Further light dawned upon the startled Archie.

"Gadzooks!" he ejaculated. "Of course! I remember now. So Tupper is the horrible merchant who kicked young Willie in the shins? That man, said Archie, is a chunk of fungus, laddie! He's a cad, a coward, and a dashed blackguard! I trust you never hobnob?"

"Never, sir—I hate him!" came the voice of Briggs.

"Good lad! Wise chappie!" said Archie approvingly.

"What I want to know is, sir—was Tupper attacked by half a dozen of you young gents, and brutally knocked about?" asked Briggs.

"When it comes to the knocking about part—absolutely," replied Archie promptly. "But it wasn't brutal, old Tulip—it was a mere matter of justice. This fearful toad positively kicked one of our fags in the shins—about the most cowardly attack any chappie could make. So Handforth sailed in, and delivered a few of his best assorted."

Archie gave a few details of the affair, trying the patience of Jim Briggs very sorely. But the young compositor was elated. He had guessed correctly. Tupper's story was a string of falsehoods! And Jim, who had spent two years at Glenthorne Manor, in the employ of Archie's pater, was very anxious to set this unfortunate matter to rights.

"I'm glad I 'phoned up, sir," he exclaimed. "Tupper's written a report, and it's being set up in type now—a horrible libel on St. Frank's. He claims that he was attacked without provocation."

Jim, who had seen the report—his fellow-compositors were even then setting it up in type—gave Archie the gist of it, and advised him to see that something was done.

"There's one just over an hour, Master Archie," said Jim. "We shall be running off the paper then, and we can't stop presses once they're on the go. You won't let on that I gave you the information, will you? It might get me the sack, sir."

Archie promised, and a few moments later he rang off in a state of great alertness. His usual inertia had gone. For when

Archie liked, he could be as brisk and active as anybody.

And he took the best possible course.

He went straight to Reggie Pitt. Lessons were over by now, and Reggie and Jack Grey were in Study E. Archie quickly told the Fourth-Form skipper what was in the wind.

"I say, this is serious," exclaimed Pitt grimly. "To-day, too—to-day of all days! Just when St. Frank's has cleared her name—and when everybody is talking about her! If that lying report comes out, it'll do an awful lot of harm."

"Absolutely," agreed Archie. "It seems to me, dear old banana, that something positively ought to be done. How about getting up a good old fighting corps, and dashing to Bannington? Anything for the cause, what? It might be a bright scheme to smash up the printing machines!"

"I don't think we'll do anything quite so drastic as that!" said Pitt crisply. "But we'll certainly dash into Bannington without delay, and interview the editor of the 'Gazette.' He's the man we want! We'll tell him the truth of this affair, and defy him to publish that faked-up yarn. Jack, buzz next door, and fetch Handforth and Co. in here, will you? Then tell Watson and Tregellis-West—and De Valerie and a few of the others. We can't wait for tea—this job has got to be done on the instant."

Jack hurried, but it wasn't necessary for him to enter Study D, for Handforth and Co. were just passing along the passage.

"He's all right now," Handforth was saying. "A bit knocked about, and he limps a trifle, too—but Willy's as hard as nails, and he can stand anything. You fellows needn't worry—Eh? Speaking to me?" he added, as Jack Grey caught him by the arm.

"You're wanted—skipper's study!" said Jack briefly.

"Rats!" said Edward Oswald. "We're just going to have tea——"

"Can't help that—Tupper has made a lot of mischief in Bannington, and we've got to go along and kill it," interrupted Jack. "Reggie will tell you all about it. I've got to buzz along and get the gang."

Handforth needed no second bidding. He could scent war in the air. And whenever it came to a matter of battle, Edward Oswald was generally in the vanguard. He burst into Study E like a bull.

"What's this about Tupper?" he demanded grimly.

Reggie Pitt told him, and Handforth bristled with anger. He was still bristling when the rest of the juniors came in. They were all looking excited and concerned.

"It's no good using any half-measures!" said Handforth fiercely. "We've got to raid the 'Gazette' office, and upset the whole apple-cart! If that rotten report

comes out, there'll be a further brew of scandal!"

Reggie Pitt looked determined.

"Don't worry," he said quietly. "That report won't come out!"

CHAPTER IX.

MR. TUPPER IN TROUBLE.



MR. JAMES POOLE started like a frightened squirrel.

Without the least warning the door of his office had burst open, and a perfect flood of junior school-

boys proceeded to pour into the apartment. The placid peace of the "Bannington Gazette" office was torn into shreds.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Mr. Poole.

His spectacles quivered precariously on the end of his nose, and he adjusted them with some haste. And before he could rise to his feet, he was confronted by a particularly aggressive-looking junior, who leaned over the other side of his desk.

"Now!" said Handforth, in a voice that contained all sorts of sinister threats. "Now, Mr. Puddle! What about that rotten article? What about that cad of a Tupper—"

"What is the meaning of this?" interrupted Mr. Poole sourly. "What do you boys want here? Get out of this office, you infernal young scamps! I won't be disturbed like this!"

"Won't you?" said Handforth scornfully. "You'd better realise, Mr. Puddle, that you're in our hands—"

"My name is not Puddle!" shouted the Editor.

"Well, Pond, then—"

"My name is Poole, sir—James Poole!"

"I knew it was something to do with water!" said Handforth impatiently. "But what does it matter? Why quibble over a beastly word? We've come here to wreck your premises—"

"I'll call the police!" stormed Mr. Poole. "Unless you boys get out of this office within the next ten seconds, I ring up the police-station—"

"Wait a minute, Mr. Poole—go easy, Handy!" interrupted Reggie Pitt. "You're going to work the wrong way. We've come here on a peaceful mission, and—"

"Peaceful?" interrupted Handforth, staring.

"Peaceful!" repeated Reggie. "It all depends upon Mr. Poole whether war is declared. If he prefers to be reasonable and just—"

"There is no question of preference whatever!" barked Mr. Poole. "You have stormed this office like a gang of young hooligans, and unless you get out at once

I will have you thrown out. That is the matter in a nut-shell. Are you going now, or shall I—"

"The first thing, Mr. Poole, is to keep calm," put in Pitt. "We have heard from a reliable source that one of your reporters—a man named Tupper—has written up a false report concerning a fight which took place this morning. We've come here to stop the publication of that libel."

Mr. Poole was quite cold with rage.

"Oh, indeed!" he exclaimed, his voice quivering. "Indeed! You have come here to stop the publication of my paper? Splendid! A wonderful exhibition of enterprise! You confounded young puppies!" he roared, with sudden violence. "I've had enough of this impertinence—"

"Keep your temper, sir—keep your temper!" said Pitt calmly. "In a nut-shell—do you intend to publish that report or not?"

"I do!" replied Mr. Poole curtly. "And I might as well inform you that the report is a very complete one. It describes the outrageous assault in full. Make no mistake, I do not intend to whitewash you boys, as the London papers are doing—"

"All we want, Mr. Poole, is the truth," said Pitt quietly. "Tupper has given you a false report of that fight. We've come here to give you a true account of the affair."

And, although the Editor raged and protested, Pitt gave him all the details. He point-blank refused to believe a word. He had cooled somewhat, but he was an obstinate gentleman.

"This story does not interest me in the slightest," he said curtly. "In any case, it is too late now. The paper is in the press, and the first copies are already being run off."

The next few moments were critical. Handforth wanted to invade the printing works and wreck the machinery. He was only kept in check by the tact of Church and McClure. And then Tommy Watson uttered an ejaculation as he peered over the top of the gauze screen on the door.

"Quick—there's Mr. Stokes!" he exclaimed. "Old Barry saw the fight, didn't he? Why not bring him in here—"

"He didn't actually see the fight, but he heard Tupper's rotten threats after it was over!" said Church quickly. "Better bring him in—perhaps he'll convince Mr. Poole that we're telling the truth."

And so, a few moments later, Mr. Beverley Stokes was literally seized by force in the Bannington High Street and dragged into the "Gazette" office. Barry—as the juniors affectionately called him—soon grasped the situation.

"You don't believe these boys, eh?" he said briskly. "Does that mean to say, Mr. Poole, that you wouldn't believe me?"

The editor was rather startled.

"Not at all," he said hastily. "You are one of the masters, I believe? Naturally, sir, I should accept your word without reservation. But you cannot mean to assure me that you uphold these young scamps—"

"Tupper is a cowardly blackguard!" interrupted Mr. Stokes. "The thrashing he received was thoroughly deserved. The man is nothing more nor less than a cur. Not content with insulting one of my junior boys, he kicked him in the shins, and generally behaved like a ruffian."

And Mr. Stokes in a few well chosen sentences, gave the editor such a vivid account of the affair that further scepticism on Mr. Poole's part was impossible. The editor, in fact, was convinced.

His anger died away at once, and he became a changed man.

"Is it possible that I've been misjudging you boys all this time?" he asked huskily. "Good gracious me! I am sorry—deeply sorry if such is the case. I can assure you, Mr. Stokes, that this matter shall be adjusted."

Mr. Poole was anxious to set things right, and he gave his positive assurance that the "Gazette" would appear minus the false report. And the juniors departed in triumph. Handforth was about the only fellow who felt a pang of disappointment.

"Jolly decent of the old rotter to come round like that, of course," he admitted. "All the same, it's a swindle. I thought we were going to charge into the printing works and bust up a few machines! I didn't even have the pleasure of dotting the old boy on the nose!"

In the meantime, Mr. Tupper was having a most painful interview with his chief. Details are unnecessary. It is quite sufficient to say that when Mr. Tupper took his hat from the rack, he did so for the last time.

In brief, the rascally young reporter had received the order of the boot.

CHAPTER X.

SAVED BY THE FOURTH.



CUTHBERT CHAMBERS looked very pleased with himself.

"It only shows," he said casually; "it only shows that when you get a masterful fellow on the job, things

get done. Here we are again, with the Fifth Form absolutely intact."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Fifth!"

Chambers was addressing the Form. Three days had elapsed, and they had been three days of subdued excitement for the whole school. Absentees had been returning in twos and threes at all times of the day.

And the Fifth, at least, had rallied loyally to the call.

The publicity in the "Daily Sun" had wrought a miracle.

St. Frank's was no longer a school with a bad name. Other newspapers had copied the "Sun," and no praise could be high enough nowadays for the famous old public school. Everybody was talking about the grave injustice which St. Frank's had been suffering from.

Dr. Stafford was delighted—and rather startled—to receive countless applications by letter, telegram and telephone, from enthusiastic parents. It seemed that everybody wanted their sons to come to St. Frank's. Popular opinion is a queer, erratic quantity. At the least provocation, it will veer round like a weathercock, and confound all the prophets.

A brief week ago St. Frank's had been discussed with scorn. To-day the old college was the most celebrated in the country. If nothing else, this dramatic reversal of opinion clearly proved the astounding value of newspaper publicity. The "Daily Sun" had started it, and since then the affair had been like a snowball, gathering force daily.

But at St. Frank's, at least, it was generally admitted that the saving of the school was due entirely to the plucky, unceasing efforts of the Fourth. Even Chambers had to admit it—although it caused him a bit of an effort to do so.

"You can't get away from the fact that these Fourth Form youngsters started the ball rolling," he said grudgingly. "Of course, the Fifth had done some wonderful things these last three days. We were a spent force—with half of you fellows away. But now we're at full strength again."

"Nothing very wonderful in that, old man," said Stevens. "We've come back because our people have sent us back. Goodness knows, I don't like giving credit to these cheeky Fourth Formers—but in this case they're deserving of it. They've saved the school."

"Just what I thing," nodded Simms. "And it isn't the Fourth so much as the Fourth's skipper. Pitt's been behind all this activity—he's the chap who's worked the strings. That kid's smart."

Even the Sixth Formers were saying the same sort of thing. Reggie Pitt was undoubtedly the most popular fellow in the school. And he deserved to be. For it was certainly due to his unceasing activity that the period of stress and trial had been brought to an end.

One or two members of the Sixth had failed to return—but it was known that they would resume their old places in the school in the course of the next few days. The others had already arrived. St. Frank's was busy and lively once again.

Empty studies, deserted passages, and neglected playing fields, were no longer the order

of the day. It was immense relief after the dismal slackness of the past weeks.

Dr. Stafford made a point of addressing the school in Big Hall. And he unstintingly gave credit to the Fourth.

"We must all admit that the Junior School has shown us the way to be staunch," declared Dr. Stafford. "We have to thank the juniors for the present happy position. But for the efforts of a few chosen boys, this welcome publicity would never have come. And I should like to take this opportunity of publicly thanking Pitt, of the Fourth Form, for his——"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Reggie!"

"Three cheers for Pitt!"

The cheers that rang out were startling in their volume and intensity. Reggie stood there, in the ranks of the Fourth, flushed and confused. He hadn't been expecting any such public ovation as this—and certainly didn't want it.

"I have always had a high regard for Pitt," went on the Head. "Since becoming Captain of the Lower School, he has proved himself to be not only capable, but virile in the extreme. It is boys of his type that grow up to be great men. I am proud of Pitt, and I am no less proud of the entire Fourth Form. These boys have remained loyal throughout the entire time of stress, and they have not only helped the school by their loyalty, but in a much more material way, too. I do not forget their efforts to raise money—so that St. Frank's could carry on. Fortunately, there is no longer any necessity for such assistance. Our school is now on a sound basis, and I feel convinced that we are on the eve of a greater period of prosperity than ever before."

"Hurrah!"

"Good old St. Frank's!"

"Three cheers for the Head!"

"There is just one other little point I should like to mention," continued the Head, when he could make himself heard. "We are on the threshold of a celebrated anniversary—as you will all guess, the Fifth of November."

"Good old Guy Fawkes!"

"Shall we have fireworks, sir?"

"I have decided that the Fifth of November shall be a day set apart for celebrating our regained prestige," said Dr. Stafford. "We shall have a firework display of unusual magnificence, and the occasion will be set apart as a whole holiday for the entire school——"

And after that, of course, the Head simply couldn't say another word. He was cheered to the echo. The Fourth was cheered, too, Guy Fawkes was cheered. And, in fact, the cheering was so general that the fellows made themselves hoarse before they desisted.

CHAPTER XI.

CARTER'S CUNNING.



"HALLO!" said Claude Carter, coming to a halt.

He was in the quiet part of Bannington High Street, and he had come to a stop facing Mr. Tupper—a forlorn, dejected-looking Mr. Tupper compared to the jaunty young gentleman of a few days ago.

"You can go and hang yourself!" said Mr. Tupper sourly. "I don't want anything to do with you infernal schoolboys! I've had enough trouble——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Carter. "That's a bit steep, isn't it? You don't class me with those fools who make such a fuss of that cad, Pitt? I'm with you, Tupper, old son—I'm as much against St. Frank's as you are. I'd like to see the rotten school smashed up! You don't think I enjoy living in the hole, I suppose?"

Mr. Tupper looked less fierce.

"Oh, well, I suppose you're different," he growled. "I got the sack through your beastly pals——"

"They're not my pals," interrupted Carter tartly. "All this fuss about St. Frank's makes me sick. The Fourth Form has gone mad. All the chaps can do is to boost the school sky high! I'd give anything to bring about another scandal, and see the old barn closed up for good!"

Claude Carter, apparently, was not possessed of that loyal and staunch spirit which had so characterised the Fourth of late. He was an exception. Even such well known cads as Fullwood and Co. were feeling rather pleased at the recent turn of events. For, in their hearts, the young rascals of Study A were rather fond of the old school.

"Another scandal, eh?" said Tupper eagerly. "That would be rich, just after all this sickening whitewash, wouldn't it? But it's no good talking—there won't be another scandal."

"There might be—you never know," said Carter thoughtfully. "What about to-morrow?"

"Well, what about it?"

"It's the Fifth—and we're having all sorts of kiddish celebrations—fireworks and bonfires and guys," said Carter. "Most of the chaps have gone off their rockers, I think. There'll be visitors by the score—fathers and mothers and aunts and uncles

ANSWERS
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and friends galore. It's going to be a kind of celebration."

"I'm not interested," growled Mr. Tupper.

"But think what a fine chance it would be to work something!" said Carter cunningly. "Another scandal, for example. Even a repetition of the old one would be good enough. Perhaps we can work something if we think hard enough. Are you busy just now?"

"Do I look busy?" asked Tupper bitterly. "I've lost my job, and can't find another. I expect I shall have to clear out before long—there's nothing doing in this rotten town. But, by Jingo, I'd like to get even

Ralph Leslie Fullwood. "I've lost enough money on the gee-gees lately. And if it's a game of cards you're after, we don't feel inclined——"

"Nothing so tame as that," interrupted Carter. "Look here, I'll put it in a nutshell. I'm sick of this advertising piffle. I'd like to see St. Frank's in a worse pickle than before——"

"Oh, rot!" interrupted Gulliver. "I'm jolly glad that we're back in the old rut. It wasn't nice, I can tell you, to be jeered at wherever we went. I'd rather be looked upon with respect. I'm jolly glad that scandal is killed and done with."



One more blow was enough—a beautifully placed punch on the jaw.

with those school kids first! I'd starve for a week for the satisfaction of seeing St. Frank's in disgrace again!"

The pair fell into deep conversation, and by the time they parted, Mr. Tupper was looking intent and eager. He had completely lost his hang-dog expression. And Carter returned to St. Frank's with a very self-satisfied expression on his face. He immediately sought out Fullwood and Co. in Study A.

"Are you fellows game for a spree?" he asked bluntly.

"All depends what the spree is," replied

"Same here!" said Fullwood and Bell.

Claude Carter frowned. "This wasn't very encouraging, but he stuck to his guns. He laughed scornfully.

"Getting soft and simple nowadays?" he sneered. "Nothing would please me better than to upset these smirking snobs. My idea is to get up a big champagne party——"

"A what?" asked Fullwood, staring.

"A champagne party—with cigars and gambling, and all the rest of it," said Carter. "We could hold the party to-morrow——"

"You're mad!" interrupted Fullwood.

"It was a champagne party that caused all the trouble at the beginning of term. Besides, it would be fatal to hold an affair like that on the Fifth—with the school crowded with visitors. We should be spotted."

Carter nodded.

"That's just the idea," he said calmly. "My plan is to hold this party in the evening, while all the crowds are outside looking at the fireworks. Then the party can be 'accidentally' bowled out, but we shall be safe, because we'll scoot, and leave no traces of our identity. But there'll be the champagne and the cigars, and all the rest of it."

"But what's the idea of it?" asked Fullwood curiously.

"Think of the scandal!" said Carter. "It would be worse this time than before—because everybody is fooled into believing that St. Frank's is a kind of model school," exclaimed Carter. "It would mean the ruin of the place—"

"You rotter!" interrupted Fullwood grimly. "I don't pretend to be extra good, but, by gad, I wouldn't join your rotten game, I can tell you! You'd better chuck it up, my son."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Gulliver and Bell.

"Yes, but look here—" began Carter.

"We're not particular, but we draw the line somewhere," interrupted Fullwood curtly. "Clear out of this study, you beastly cad! There's been enough trouble at St. Frank's without you making it worse!"

And Carter departed—disappointed, but in no way squashed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GLORIOUS FIFTH.



ST. FRANK'S fairly hummed.

In fact, the school not only hummed, but positively exploded now and again. Willy and Co., in particular, were busy with crackers and squibs, and one crossed the Triangle at one's peril.

It was the evening of the celebrated Fifth.

All day long St. Frank's had been reveling. By great good fortune, the weather was fine. Cold, with a chill nip in the air, but a clear, windless day. And the evening was proving to be ideal for fireworks and bonfires and all the other details of the occasion.

Visitors had been arriving all the afternoon. A surprising number of parents had found time to run down. On any ordinary Fifth they wouldn't have taken the trouble. But this was more than a Guy Fawkes celebration. It was a day of rejoicing to mark the triumph of the school over the demon of scandal who had at last been slaughtered.

The fellows were enjoying themselves immensely.

The fags were having the time of their lives. Crackers and squibs and such-like delights were officially banned. Not that this made the slightest difference to Willy and his gang. They broke rules and regulations with a sang-froid that was educating to watch. And for hours, the Triangle and the junior passages and studies of the Ancient House and Modern House had been echoing with the explosions of various miniature bombs.

Most of the fags were content to let off the fireworks in the orthodox manner. But Willy Handforth was nothing if not original. He preferred to improve on the existing material.

For example, he nearly blew Chubby Heath and himself to pieces by constructing a special explosive horror out of four Roman candles, a dozen squibs, fourteen jumping crackers and a rocket. The thing went off in the Third Form passage, and quite a number of people thought a new war had commenced.

The casualties, however, were slight. Willy only lost half an inch of skin, and Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon had their eyebrows singed off. But these were mere trivial details, and not to be counted.

Some of the juniors had not only exhausted their pocket-money, but also their main supply of fireworks. Thus, a few were reduced to the almost contemptible condition of striking red and green matches. This was widely considered to be the lowest possible form of firework entertainment. When a fellow struck red matches, he was obviously at the end of his resources.

Tea had been over for some time, and active preparations were now being made for the big events of the evening. Seniors and juniors were crowding out on to the playing-fields. For it was here that the great display was to be given—flights of rockets, Roman candles, and various set-pieces were on the programme.

There was a bonfire, too—the biggest bonfire that the school had ever officially provided. Naturally, there were all sorts of guys—but the Fourth had a very special one up their sleeves.

And as soon as the bonfire was well alight, the star guy of the evening made its appearance. He was a formidable-looking fellow—and the Fourth was proud of its handiwork.

For this particular guy, instead of being a mere scarecrow stuffed with straw with somebody's ancient suit buttoned over it, was a most elaborate conception.

The guy represented the Demon Scandal—and he was to be consumed in the flames to signalise the end of the bad days. The demon was a weird, grotesque-looking monster of gigantic proportions. The figure was a brilliant red in colour, with repulsive features, staring eyes, and great pointed ears.

He had a tail, too, and he was hoisted upon the fire by any number of willing hands.

There was a great deal of enthusiasm, and the juniors vigorously cheered the destruction of Scandal. And the visitors were impressed, too.

"Very apt—very well thought out!" declared Sir Edward Handforth approvingly. "Good heavens! What on earth—"

He broke off suddenly, for the guy had commenced sending forth hissing spurts of red and green and yellow fire. The flames had gained a good hold, and the display was voted to be top-hole.

"Enjoying yourself?" asked Mr. Stokes cheerily, as he passed Reggie Pitt.

"Rather, sir!" replied Reggie. "I think we're all pretty happy this evening. After this we shall be able to settle down comfortably. And there'll be football, too—I'm longing for another game, sir."

"Same here!" agreed Mr. Stokes. "Nothing like footer to buck a fellow up. When do we get the star turn of the evening? When do the rockets go up?"

"In about twenty minutes, I think, sir," replied Pitt.

He passed out of the playing fields into the Triangle—which was now more or less deserted. One or two figures were moving about, but nobody took any notice of strangers on an occasion like this. For the school was literally teeming with visitors, to say nothing of endless local people who had dropped in to see the firework display.

Nevertheless, Reggie Pitt paused, and frowned. For a brief moment, he had caught sight of two figures walking away towards the shrubbery. They had been illuminated for a brief moment by the bursting of a preliminary rocket. And Reggie Pitt recognised the pair as Claude Carter and Mr. Tupper.

"Fishy!" murmured Reggie grimly. "Yes, by Jove, fishy!"

CHAPTER XIII.

REGGIE ON THE ALERT.



SUSPICIONS flitted through Reggie Pitt's mind.

He knew Carter's character, and he was well aware of Tupper's. It was surprising enough that the

latter should be within the school grounds. After the recent events, one would have thought that Mr. Tupper would give the school a wide berth.

But his association with Claude Carter would possibly provide some sort of explanation. The close way in which the pair were talking hinted that mischief was brewing.

At all events, Reggie Pitt acted on a sudden impulse, and followed the pair towards the shrubbery. He didn't usually shadow people in this way, but he was acutely suspicious of Mr. Tupper.

"That fellow's got a grudge against St. Frank's," Reggie told himself. "He was sacked because of that affair the other day. And Carter loves St. Frank's about as much as he loves poison. This little garden party needs watching."

He was very cautious as he followed.

His quarry didn't actually go into the shrubbery, but skirted it. And, finally, the pair came to a halt outside the window of a room at the rear of the Ancient House. Reggie knew at a glance that this room was usually used by the juniors as a dark-room for photographic purposes. Consequently, it was little frequented, and on such an evening as this would be deserted.

Mr. Tupper and Carter hopped nimbly over the sill, and vanished inside. The window had been open—prepared in advance, obviously. Pitt crept up cautiously, wondering.

"It's all right—the others will be here in five minutes," Mr. Tupper was saying. "You're quite sure it's all safe?"

"Safe as houses," replied Carter calmly. "All you've got to do is to saunter round here with two or three highly respectable natives at exactly half-past eight. Everything will be prepared, and there can't possibly be a hitch."

"But what about when I give the alarm?" asked Mr. Tupper. "If we're at the window, how will you all escape?"

Carter grinned.

"That's the beauty of using this room," he replied. "You and the rest will catch just a glimpse of us—you'll see our school caps, but we shan't let you see our faces. And before you can get in, we'll vanish."

"How?"

"Through the door, of course," said Carter. "It leads straight out into an enclosed yard on the other side of the building. In fact, it's the only way to get to this room. Everything will be dark, you see, so all we've got to do is to nip over the wall, and mingle with the crowd. Nothing easier. Understand?"

"Yes; it's first rate!" declared Mr. Tupper gloatingly. "You'll escape; but the evidence will be left! Within five minutes the place will be ringing with the news—and then for some lovely publicity! We'll teach these kids who's master of the situation!"

Reggie Pitt had heard, and his suspicions were confirmed. There was something very significant about these secret arrangements. But Reggie didn't quite catch the idea yet.

He ventured a little nearer, and cautiously peered over the window-sill into the room. Then he started. Mr. Tupper and Carter were standing against a table. The only light was provided by an electric torch, which Claude was in the act of flashing upon the centre of the table.

"It's all ready, you see," he grinned. "Looks nice, eh?"

"Great!" chuckled Mr. Tupper.

Even Reggie was startled out of his usual calm. The table was in an extraordinary condition. There were bottles of champagne, whisky, gin, half-empty glasses, and a syphon of soda. Cards were strewn about the table, too, to say nothing of ash-trays and boxes of cigarettes and cigars.

"Looks something like an orgy, doesn't it?" asked Carter gleefully. "What's going to happen when the people crowd in and see this? It's a fake, of course—but nobody will know it."

He flashed the light out, and Reggie Pitt held his breath. For a second he thought about revealing himself and confronting the two rascals at once. Then another idea came to him, and he remained perfectly still.

A fake! A carefully prepared "orgy"! The cunning of the plot was obvious. Nobody would doubt the genuineness of this disgraceful affair; and all the good work of the Fourth would be destroyed at one blow.

Parents and relatives were at the school in dozens. They would see this scene, and their freshly regained confidence in the school would be dispelled at the first glance. What would be the inevitable result? There could be one only. St. Frank's would lose half its scholars at a single blow.

"The cad! The miserable, contemptible cad!" muttered Pitt fiercely. "It wouldn't be sneaking to expose him—he doesn't deserve to remain in the school! He's been a rotter ever since he arrived!"

It was fortunate that Pitt had blundered into this plot, instead of Handforth. The latter would certainly have acted on the spur of the moment, and thus left the identity of the plotters undiscovered. Reggie Pitt was more level-headed. He always thought before he acted.

And he thought now—swiftly, keenly.

And while he was thinking he heard a few more things, too, and stored them away. This affair was what Ulysses Adams would have described as a "frame-up." It was a carefully prepared plot to bring fresh disgrace on the school.

In the nick of time, Pitt slipped away from the window. Some forms were approaching, and he hadn't been aware of it until they were almost upon him. But he eluded discovery.

And the plotters went ahead, sublimely ignorant of the hitch in their carefully planned schemes.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CLIMAX.



MR. TUPPER clapped enthusiastically. "Good!" he declared. "One of the best bits I've seen."

He was watching the fireworks, and he had got into conversation with one or two gentlemen from

London, who, fortunately for Mr. Tupper, did not know his identity or record.

They were some of the boys' relatives, and were really enjoying themselves. Being old boys themselves, they were intensely proud of the fact that St. Frank's had emerged triumphantly from its ordeal.

Mr. Tupper was playing his part well.

Having applauded warmly, he strolled off, knowing that he could easily pick out these three or four gentlemen at a glance when he wanted them. It was just 8.25, and the time for the disclosure was near at hand. Mr. Tupper didn't go far. He departed into the shadows, and kept his eye on the little group he had recently been talking to.

He waited three minutes, and then came bustling up.

"Gentlemen, I'd like you to come with me a moment!" he panted anxiously. "I think there's something wrong—something queer going on. I don't like the look of it at all!"

"What are you talking about, my friend?" asked one of the others—a somewhat pompous individual who was none other than Chambers' uncle.

"I fear some of the boys are taking advantage of the occasion," replied Mr. Tupper vaguely. "I may be wrong—I hope I am—but I could swear—No, I don't like to say anything further, in case I am wrong."

He had successfully piqued the curiosity of the little group, and the four gentlemen looked at him rather strangely.

"Perhaps you will come with me?" asked Mr. Tupper quickly. "Just to the rear of the Ancient House, that's all. You can then see them with your own eyes. If I am mistaken, I shall apologise most profusely for the trouble I am giving you."

"Man alive, what is this mystery?" demanded Chambers' uncle.

But Mr. Tupper wouldn't say. He was cunning enough to realise that a bald statement would possibly result in a scoffing remark or two, and the matter would then be ignored. But he had aroused the curiosity of these gentlemen, and that was sufficient.

They hesitated a moment or two, and then accompanied Mr. Tupper across the Triangle, past the shrubbery.

"I don't like it at all—it looks very unhealthy," Mr. Tupper was saying. "The school has only just recovered from the previous scandal, and it would be an awful blow if another one cropped up—particularly to-night."

"Another scandal?" repeated one of the others. "Oh, impossible!"

"I'm not so sure, sir—I hope not, anyhow," said Mr. Tupper. "But you'll be able to judge for yourselves in a moment—There you are! That window! I was passing it a few minutes ago, and—"

He broke off, and crept cautiously near the window. The others, now thoroughly curious, followed. There came the distinct

sound of glasses clinking, and money rattling.

And as the investigators approached the window, the heavy curtains were thrown aside, and a youthful figure appeared, outlined against the light behind. It could only be seen that he was a junior in Etons.

"Too much smoke in here, you chaps," he said distinctly. "And not so much noise, either. You're nearly drunk, Tom, you ass! Better go easy on that whisky next time!"

"Good gracious me!" ejaculated Chambers' uncle, aghast.

The figure vanished from the window, but left the curtains drawn aside. A hazy mass of smoke was pouring out. Wafting into the still air, some of it came across to the group of watchers.

"By Heaven! This is a replica of the disgusting affair which caused the scandal at the beginning of the term!" exclaimed one of the relatives angrily. "This school is no better than it was! And I thought——"

"I'm afraid we've all been deceived, sir," put in Mr. Tupper. "I live near by, you know, and I can tell you a few surprising things about St. Frank's if I like. The school is a hotbed of vice—a disgrace to the whole country! This scene is nothing compared to what happens sometimes."

"We'll find out the truth of this at once!" snapped one of the others.

He strode forward, and at that moment a figure appeared at the window again, as though to close the curtains. But he paused, and stared out into the gloom.

"Cave!" he gasped abruptly. "We're spotted! Bunk, you chaps!"

He backed into the room, and there came a confusion of sounds. Chairs being pushed back, glasses breaking, and money falling. Then the light went out with a snap, and the shuffling of feet sounded.

It was all done very naturally.

The newcomers, positive that they had surprised a forbidden party, hurried up to the window and peered in. All was dark. Mr. Tupper quickly leapt over the sill, and into the room.

"I've got an electric torch with me, fortunately," he said, flashing on the light. "I thought so—they've escaped! That's a pity! Phew! They meant to have a real spree this time!"

Mr. Tupper's torch revealed all that was necessary.

The bottles, the half-empty and broken glasses, the scattered playing-cards, the overturned chairs—everything, in fact, pointed to one obvious and terrible conclusion.

A party of fellows—presumably juniors—had been taking advantage of the school's preoccupation to hold a drinking and gambling party! The very self-same disgraceful behaviour that had caused the original scandal! It was a startling discovery.

Mr. Tupper had acted throughout as though he were a disinterested visitor, and nobody suspected that he was one of the chief movers in the plot. It was Mr. Tupper's plan to quietly efface himself now—and leave the rest to these shocked gentlemen who were already crowding into the room.

The evidence was conclusive. The rest of the affair would be easy. Mr. Tupper could see it all. There would be an immediate inquiry, a sensation throughout the whole school, and a fresh scandal. The culprits would not be discovered; but that was a matter of little importance.

The damage to the school itself would now be irreparable!

CHAPTER XV.

TRAPPED!



CLAUDE CARTER had done his part well.

Considering that he had evolved the whole scheme in his own mind, it was only natural that he should act his part well. As the lights in the room went out, Carter made a rush for the door.

Others were there before him, and they all pressed out into the short passage which lay beyond. The only other exit was into a small yard. For this room was a curious place, and had been originally built as a kind of isolated detention chamber for unruly scholars. But that had been many years since. Such methods were not in favour now.

And Carter had quickly realised the advantages of such a room. The exit was bound to be free from observation. And he and his fellow-conspirators could easily nip across the yard, scale the wall, and mingle with the general crowds.

The whole thing was cut and dried.

But Carter made one trifling miscalculation. He regarded the isolation of the place as a supreme advantage. He failed to realise that it might be a fatal disadvantage.

He was fairly gloating with triumph.

Everything had gone gloriously. He had seen the group of men approaching, and knew that the rest was inevitable. Carter himself was safe—he had been seen, but not recognised. Standing at the window, he had been but a mere outline—for the light had been in his rear. Not one of the men would be able to give a name.

And now the rest was simply a question of bolting.

But it wasn't quite so easy as Master Carter believed. To bolt in a really efficient manner, it is one of the first essentials that the coast should be clear. In this case, the coast wasn't clear at all. It was, indeed, as Archie afterwards remarked, absolutely hazy.

Carter and his henchmen—mysterious individuals so far—reached the yard all right. There was nothing difficult about that. Anybody could reach the yard. The next thing was to do a quick hop over the low wall.

But this quick hop was never accomplished.

For, as the plotters scattered across the yard, a considerable number of mysterious figures appeared. They came into being like ghosts, emerging eerily from the surrounding gloom.

Altogether there were six plotters, including Carter.

But it seemed as though there were at least sixty ghosts in that yard. They closed upon the hapless half-dozen with dramatic precision. And they didn't utter a sound. There was something horribly sinister about the whole dark business.

Claude Carter himself felt his heart give a jump.

"What the— Who—"

He really hadn't time to ask any polite questions. These strangers were by no means courteous. They didn't surround Carter in a gentle manner. They adopted far more drastic measures.

Carter's feet were suddenly whisked from under him by means of a neat trip, he crashed on his back, and the next second the dazed young rascal was startled to find somebody sitting on his chest. Two others were trying to make themselves comfortable on his legs, and both hands were held by other enemies.

"Got you, my lad!" came a voice that made Carter shiver. "So you thought the little plan was working sweetly, eh? You shouldn't be too sure, old son."

The words were uttered by Reginald Pitt, and Carter gulped.

"You're mad!" he blustered. "What's the idea of this? I—I just came into this yard because I thought I heard something—"

"You lying rotter!" roared Handforth. "You just came out of that doorway, and if you don't get the sack for this, I'll go to the Head and tell him he's not fit for his job!"

Handforth spoke loudly. His vehemence was rather unnecessary. But he had been bottled up for ten whole minutes, and the strain had been appalling. And he was disappointed with the climax, too. He had pictured a terrific scrap, but he hadn't got in a single punch.

Pitt had collected the juniors together—after giving them a brief idea of what to expect.

Carter's companions were a motley collection.

All of them were Bannington boys—gutter urchins mostly, from the lower section of the town. They had been selected by Mr. Tupper, and sneaked into the school grounds some time earlier. They were all

wearing school caps, with the St. Frank's colours.

More than this had not been necessary. Those gentlemen, glancing through the open window, had caught a brief glimpse of figures round the table—figures wearing the school colours. And then the light had gone out. Carter had borrowed those caps from the Ancient House cloak-room, and it had been his intention to replace them straight away.

But such a thing was now impossible. The plot had been upset, and there was every indication that grave trouble lay in store for the chief plotter. Claude Carter had had the wind up on many an occasion—but never quite so vertically as now!

CHAPTER XVI.

ALL SERENE.



DR. STAFFORD turned smilingly as Fenton raised his cap.

"Enjoying yourself, Fenton?" asked the Head genially. "I must remark these fireworks are excep-

tionally attractive— Why, good gracious, Fenton, what is the matter? You are positively pale!"

"I want you to come, sir—quickly!" said Fenton, with a husky note in his voice. "Something's happened, sir. Mr. Chambers is asking for you."

"Mr. Chambers?" repeated the Head.

"Yes, sir—he's the uncle of Chambers, of the Fifth," said Fenton impatiently. "There's some trouble round at the back of the Ancient House. Party of some kind—smoking and card-playing and drinking—"

"Good heavens!" said the Head abruptly.

He followed without another word, all his cheerfulness gone. Three or four minutes later he was staggered. He stood at the window of the dark-room, gazing inside at the scene—a scene which explained itself. By this time the electric light had been switched on, and the glare of it illuminated every corner of the apartment.

"What does this mean, sir?" demanded Mr. Chambers tensely. "I came down to St. Frank's under the impression that the school was thoroughly clean and wholesome, and I find this appalling orgy in progress!"

The Head compressed his lips.

"I scarcely know what to say, Mr. Chambers," he replied quietly. "Needless to say, I shall investigate this matter thoroughly—"

"Investigate it, sir?" interrupted the other. "It needs no investigation! The whole truth is palpable at the first glance—"

At this moment a number of figures came hurrying round the angle of the House, and they proved to be a crowd of juniors—forcing half-a-dozen wretched prisoners in front of them.

Dr. Stafford, Fenton, and the others watched the new arrivals with mystification. But they were not left long in doubt.

"Here you are, sir!" said Reggie Pitt cheerfully. "I think these bright specimens will throw a light on the affair. It's not what it seems, sir. Just a fake, you know."

"Upon my soul!" gasped the Head. "A fake?"

"Who—who are these people?" asked the Head blankly.

"I think Mr. Tupper will explain, sir," said Pitt. "He's the Gazette reporter who was sacked the other day—sacked for preparing a lying report about St. Frank's."

"And do you mean to say all this affair was faked up?" asked Fenton joyously.

"A swindle from beginning to end," said Tommy Watson.

Mr. Tupper was like a jelly. Exposure had come unexpectedly—dramatically. And Mr. Tupper's nerves were not quite prepared. He was not a particularly courageous sort of gentleman.



"Now!" said Handforth, in a voice that contained all sorts of sinister threats. "Now, Mr. Puddle! What about that rotten article? What about that cad of a Tupper—"

"Yes, sir—a swindle!" shouted Handforth. "These rotters tried to work the dodge so that everybody would be fooled. They wanted to give the school a bad name again. But they couldn't fool the Fourth!"

The six prisoners were forced forward, and they turned out to be the five Bannington youths, and Mr. Tupper. Claude Carter had been released—and Tupper seized in exchange. Carter was a St. Frank's fellow, and would be dealt with later by a specially selected Fourth-Form committee. As Pitt said, there was no reason why Carter's connection with the affair should be disclosed. But Pitt was reckoning without his host.

"It wasn't my idea at all!" he said thickly. "I was against it from the first—it was Carter's plan! He got me into it, the rotten young cad!"

"Carter?" repeated Dr. Stafford sharply.

"Not Carter, of the Fourth?" asked Fenton.

"Yes, of course," panted Tupper. "He wanted me to help him, and I was idiot enough to agree. You can't do much to me, anyhow—it wasn't criminal!"

Dr. Stafford looked very grim.

"Have no fear, there will be no police-court proceedings if you tell me the full

truth," he replied. "Be good enough to explain this matter in detail. I can hardly credit that such a cunning plot could be evolved by one of my junior schoolboys."

But the Head did credit it, after Mr. Tupper had gone into a full explanation. There was, indeed, no shadow of doubt that Claude Carter was the instigator of the whole business.

And later, in the Head's study, Carter found himself on the carpet. He blustered at first, lied wholesale as a second string, and finally broke down and confessed the truth in an access of self-pity.

Carter was expelled from St. Frank's on the spot. Although very little was made of the plot, the whole school was talking about it the next day. Carter had not been

seen since his summons to the Head's study.

He had gone from the school, and there was not a single fellow who regretted his departure.

As for Mr. Tupper, he had learnt a lesson that he would not forget in a hurry. And St. Frank's was left to settle down into its regular, orderly routine.

The famous old college had regained its full prestige, and the days of fate were over. But the term wasn't. And although many fellows predicted that a quiet time was in store, there were others who believed differently.

For they held the simple view that where the St. Frank's Fourth was concerned, a quiet time, like the celebrated problem of Mr. Euclid, was absurd.

THE END.

By Your Editor:



My dear Readers,

The story you have just read concludes the powerful series dealing with the great scandal at St. Frank's. The stirring events that have ended so triumphantly for the Fourth might have finished in quite another way under a less capable leader than the new skipper. As it was, at one time the prospects of St. Frank's ever recovering from the virile attacks made against its name seemed almost hopeless. It was Pitt's first term as captain, and there were doubts among some of his followers as to whether he would be able to survive the trying ordeal before him.

THE ACID TEST.

When the school was denounced in the newspapers, when every respectable person was influenced against it, and when boys were being removed by their parents in alarming numbers, it required great courage and ability on the part of the Fourth Form skipper to take upon his shoulders the responsibility of fighting for the existence of St. Frank's. It put to the acid test his powers as a leader, and from now onwards, having won the esteem and confidence of every member of the Fourth, his position as their captain and leader is unassailed.

COMPLETE STORIES.

As a result of a number of requests from readers, I am devoting the next few weeks to complete stories written around one or other of the leading characters at St. Frank's. Next week, for instance, there will

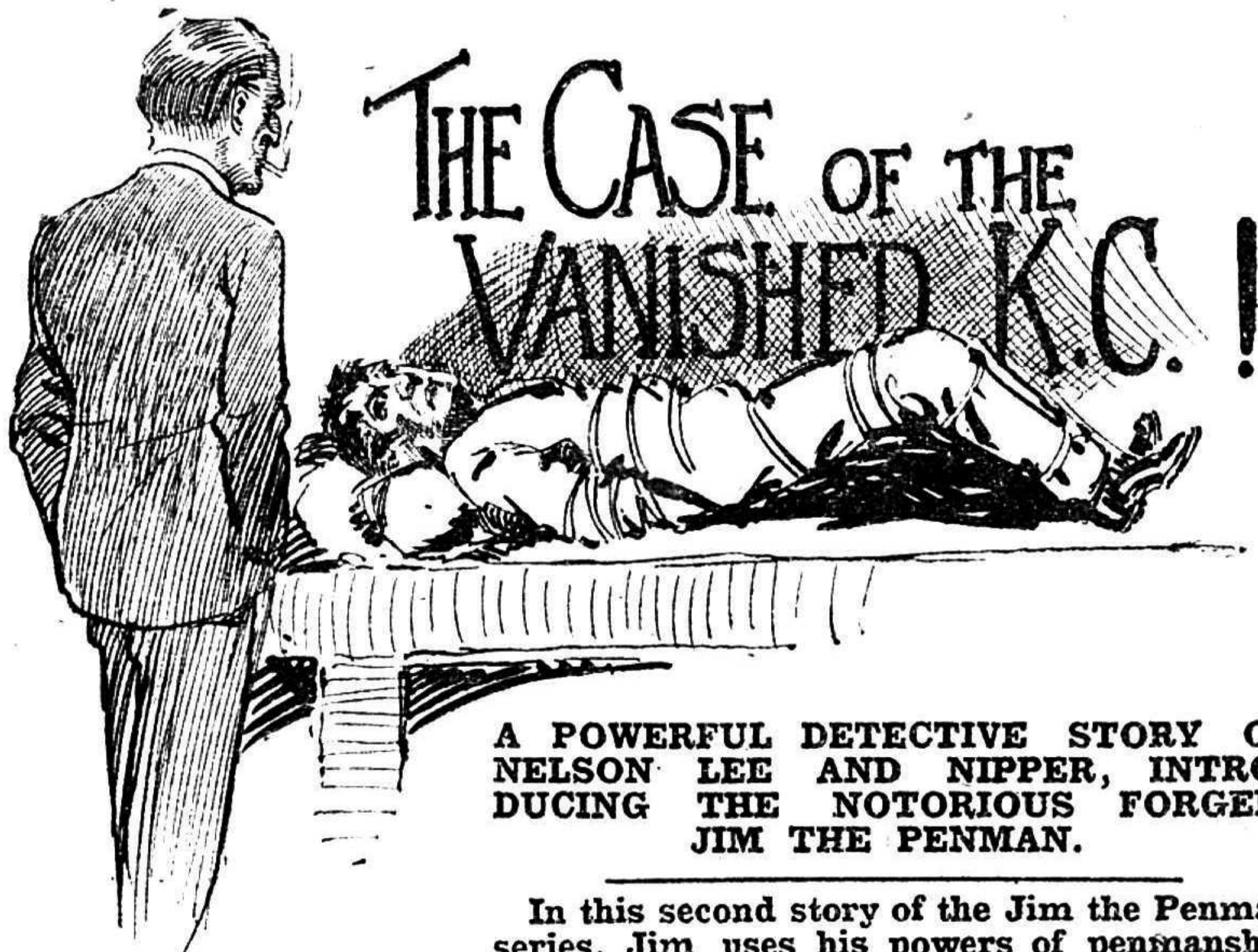
be a long complete story about Archie entitled, "ARCHIE'S AWFUL ANCESTOR!" The week after next there will appear a complete story about another famous junior, and so on, until the two special Christmas Numbers and the New Year Number. After that, we shall start a brilliant new series, which is going to be something really great. The author conceived the idea for this series some months ago, and has decided to save it up for a New Year super-attraction. The time is not yet ripe for me to let you into the secret. Meanwhile, I advise you not to miss any of the complete stories of the next few weeks. The Archie story, mentioned above, finds the author at his best as a humorist, for it is a story that will keep you laughing from beginning to end.

NEXT WEEK'S JIM THE PENMAN STORY.

This popular detective series, featuring JIM THE PENMAN and NELSON LEE and NIPPER, will be continued in another thrilling episode called "THE MAN FROM HEADQUARTERS!" In this story, as in the one appearing in the present issue, Jim proves himself to be as skilful in the art of disguise as he is a forger. Such a man at large is likely to cause the great detective a heap of trouble before he is finally caught. It is a story full of action, surprises and counter-surprises, and will appeal to every lover of a good detective yarn.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.



**A POWERFUL DETECTIVE STORY OF
NELSON LEE AND NIPPER, INTRO-
DUCING THE NOTORIOUS FORGER,
JIM THE PENMAN.**

In this second story of the Jim the Penman series, Jim uses his powers of penmanship in paying off an old score against Sir Rodney Marshall, K.C., the eminent counsel, whose forensic skill sent the forger to penal servitude for five years. But Jim has to reckon with Nelson Lee, whose unexpected appearance upsets the ingeniously laid plans of the forger.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

AN URGENT SUMMONS.

SIR RODNEY MARSHALL looked up from the mass of papers which littered his desk, and smiled amiably at his wife.

"Still busy, my dear!" he exclaimed. "This work has taken me a little longer than I anticipated, and I'm afraid we shall have to postpone our visit to the theatre. Business before pleasure, you know!"

Lady Marshall glanced at the documents, and nodded ruefully.

"So it seems!" she returned, in a tone of disappointment. "What is it which is occupying your attention so closely—that horrid Ferndale case?"

Sir Rodney nodded.

"That horrid Ferndale case, as you call it, is a highly important matter, my dear," he said. "I think it will turn out to be one of the most sensational trials for the past twenty years, and I am very thankful indeed that I have been chosen to conduct the defence. A case of this sort is very exceptional, and it is just the chance I have been waiting for."

Lady Marshall looked at her husband anxiously.

"You seem to be very optimistic, Rodney," she said. "But suppose the trial turns out different to your expectations? Suppose the prosecution is stronger than you think? Arkwright is a very famous man, you know, and he'll do everything in his power to get the better of you—"

"Let him!" interrupted Sir Rodney, with a determined look in his eyes. "I'm not the least bit afraid of Arkwright, my dear! I've got a cast-iron defence for Lord Ferndale, and I don't see how it's possible for me to lose my case!"

Marshall spoke in a tone of great conviction, and it was obvious that he had his heart and soul in his work. Sir Rodney was a very eminent K.C., and he was on the eve of conducting the defence of one of the "money kings" of the commercial world.

Lord Ferndale—a financial magnate and a great power in the City—had found himself unexpectedly brought into notoriety by his enemies, who had taken the bold step of charging him with a series of frauds. The charges were completely unfounded, and

were designed solely to injure the peer's financial standing, and to give his opponents an unfair advantage over him.

But Lord Ferndale was not the kind of man to allow his reputation to suffer. Without a moment's delay, he had commenced to fight his enemies, and he had left no stone unturned to vindicate his honour.

And, very wisely, he had briefed Sir Rodney Marshall to conduct his defence at the trial—knowing full well that he could not find a better man for the job. For Sir Rodney had already gained a tremendous reputation in this class of work, and was well known as one of the cleverest counsel at the Bar.

His opponent at the forthcoming trial was to be Mr. Brian Arkwright—another extremely eminent K.C. But Sir Rodney appeared to have no fears as to the ultimate result—and he based his convictions upon his own knowledge of the facts. In his opinion, Lord Ferndale could not possibly lose his case, and Marshall rather looked forward to the battle between himself and the counsel for the prosecution.

Sir Rodney's absolute confidence was not lost upon his wife, and she again glanced at him with anxiety in her eyes.

"Don't you think it is a little unwise of you to be so terribly sure of yourself, dear?" she asked. "There's nothing I want more than to see you win, of course—but I can't help thinking what a tremendous task you have undertaken. Lord Ferndale is a millionaire, I know, but his opponents have unlimited wealth at their disposal, and they're totally unscrupulous. They—they might resort to some underhand methods of defeating you—"

"Nonsense my dear!" said Sir Rodney, looking at his wife in some surprise. "Surely you aren't getting nervous on my account? There's nothing for you to worry about at all. I'm going to win this case for Ferndale, and I refuse to look on the black side of things at all. Why, just think what it'll mean to me! Winning this case will be a feather in my cap, and it will place me at the very head of my profession. For years I've waited for just such an opportunity as this, and now that it's arrived, I mean to make the utmost use of it. It's going to be a triumph for me—the triumph of a lifetime!"

Lady Marshall smiled happily at her husband's supreme confidence, and murmured her hopes that he would carry the day. For some little time they continued to discuss the matter—Lady Marshall completely forgetting their postponed visit to the theatre.

Sir Rodney had seldom been so enthusiastic over a case as he was over this—and he was amply justified. For he knew that this particular matter had created a very great stir in the land. Lord Ferndale's interests were nation-wide, and the slightest breath of scandal in connection with any

of his undertakings was amply sufficient to cause something akin to panic in financial circles.

For such a man to be deliberately accused of fraud was an appalling catastrophe, even if the accusations were true. When they were false the matter assumed a totally different aspect, and Sir Rodney intended to leave no stone unturned to prove his client's complete immunity from dishonest methods.

Lady Marshall was just about to leave her husband's "den" when a knock sounded upon the door, followed immediately by the entrance of the butler. The man carried a salver, upon which rested a sealed envelope, and he approached his master at once.

"This note just arrived for you, sir," he said respectfully. "The man who brought it is waiting."

Sir Rodney took the envelope, and looked at it in some surprise. But it was evident that he recognised the writing upon the outside.

"Why—this is from Lord Ferndale!" he exclaimed, as he placed his thumb under the flap and ripped the envelope open. "What on earth can he want to write— Well, I'm bothered!"

Sir Rodney had by this time extracted the single sheet of folded notepaper which the envelope contained, and had rapidly cast his eye over the message. It was brief, and ran as follows:

"Ferndale House,

"Park Lane, W."

"Dear Marshall,—Some rather surprising developments have occurred which necessitate an immediate discussion. Will you be good enough to come to my house at once? The chauffeur who brings this has instructions to await your pleasure, and to drive you to Park Lane at your convenience.—Yours very faithfully,

"FERNDALE."

Sir Rodney passed the note to his wife, who scanned it quickly.

"I'll go at once," said Marshall. "Ferndale wouldn't send for me in this manner unless he had something of extreme importance to communicate to me. I can't imagine what developments he refers to—but I shall soon know."

Within three minutes the eminent barrister had taken leave of his wife, and was seated in the waiting motor-car—being whirled towards his destination.

CHAPTER II.

SIR RODNEY'S DISAPPEARANCE.



LORD FERNDALE chuckled.

There was no doubt that the peer was in the very best of moods, for he repeated the chuckle several times. Chuckling, in fact, seemed to be getting quite a habit

with him—for the sole cause of his good humour was the almost certain knowledge that he would win the forthcoming case.

He had been assured, on several occasions, by Sir Rodney Marshall that the issue would be decided in his favour, and it was very pleasant for Lord Ferndale to sit in his library, and to dream of the shock which was undoubtedly awaiting his unscrupulous enemies.

Ferndale told himself that he had nothing whatever to worry about. He had done everything possible to counteract the slanders which had been hurled at him, and the trial in the Law Courts would prove that he was a man of honour, in spite of his financial opponents. His counsel would see to that.

The peer had unbounded faith in Sir Rodney Marshall, and he was perfectly content to leave his defence in such able hands. There was not another barrister at the Bar who could "hold a candle" to Sir Rodney when it came to a hard-fought battle with opposing counsel, and Lord Ferndale had no fears regarding the results of the trial.

But a bombshell was shortly to explode quite unpleasantly near to the self-satisfied financier—a bombshell which seemed likely to upset all his confidence and complacency.

He was still chuckling in his chair when a servant brought him a letter—an unstamped missive, which had obviously been delivered by a messenger. Lord Ferndale frowned as he took the envelope, and proceeded to open it.

A minute later he jumped from his chair as if he had been shot from it by some unseen force, and glared at the letter in his hands with eyes which almost started from his head.

Then he gave vent to a savage growl of fury.

"The traitor!" he exclaimed angrily. "The infernal, cowardly quitter! By the Lord Harry! I've never heard of such a glaring example of craven fear! Marshall—of all people—is running away, and leaving me in the lurch!"

Lord Ferndale paced up and down the room for some moments in a very frenzy of rage, every now and then glaring afresh at the letter, almost unable to believe the evidence of his own eyes. The very last thing he thought could have happened, had happened—and just at the very moment when he was congratulating himself upon the smooth-running of all his plans!

"I can't credit it!" muttered Lord Ferndale. "I simply can't believe that Sir Rodney intends to abandon the case at the eleventh hour in this abominable fashion! It's incredible, preposterous, monstrous! And yet his infernal letter is clear enough!"

For the tenth time Lord Ferndale looked at the letter. As he had said, it was clear enough, and there could be no doubt whatever regarding the writer's meaning. It

was, in fact, almost brutally outspoken, and the peer frowned at it savagely once more.

The message was not by any means a long one. It was addressed from Temple Chambers, E.C., and was worded in the following manner:

"My Lord,—A sudden break-down in my health renders it an impossibility for me to undertake your defence at the trial to-morrow. A brief rest is vitally necessary to me, and I am therefore going for an immediate holiday.

"With apologies,

"I remain, my lord,

"Faithfully yours,

"RODNEY MARSHALL."

Lord Ferndale fumed as he re-read the letter.

"Bah!" he exclaimed. "A man who can treat his clients in such a scurvy manner is obviously useless to a living soul! And yet I could have sworn that Marshall was a man to be trusted. I can't understand it! If Sir Rodney goes away, as he intimates, I shall lose my case, as sure as the sun will shine to-morrow! It is impossible for me to get another counsel in time. Marshall can't run away like this—he simply can't! What's more, he isn't going to!"

A sudden gleam of determination appeared in Ferndale's eyes as he spoke, and he ran out into the hall. There was something extremely queer about the arrival of this letter from Sir Rodney, and the peer made up his mind to discover what it was. For a famous barrister to act in this way was beyond belief, and Lord Ferndale quickly ordered his car, and instructed the chauffeur to hurry to Sir Rodney's private residence.

When he arrived he was met by Lady Marshall, who regarded him with a very surprised look.

"Good-evening, Lord Ferndale," she said. "Has not my husband returned with you? I understood that he went to your house—"

"You are mistaken, Lady Marshall!" cut in the peer grimly. "I have not seen Sir Rodney this evening! But I received a note from him, and I have hurried here to persuade him to abandon his holiday! I trust I am in time?"

Lady Marshall stared at her visitor blankly.

"Holiday!" she repeated, in surprise. "I don't understand! Sir Rodney received your note a short time ago, Lord Ferndale, and hurried off at once to see you!"

"What?" exclaimed the peer. "You say your husband received a note from me, Lady Marshall? Such a thing is impossible—for I did not write him!"

The barrister's wife looked at the peer with a peculiar expression, and then abruptly turned and walked to Sir Rodney's den. When she returned she carried the note

which had called Sir Rodney away, and she thrust the sheet into Lord Ferndale's hand.

"There is the message," she exclaimed. "My husband left in your car immediately he received it!"

Lord Ferndale looked at the message, and he saw at a glance that the handwriting was exactly similar to his own. He frowned angrily, and then looked at his hostess.

"This is a forgery!" he exclaimed emphatically. "I never wrote this note, Lady Marshall! There is something very queer here—very queer indeed! I, too, have received a message—ostensibly from your husband. But its wording was so extraordinary that I could scarcely believe it! Here it is—read it for yourself!"

Lady Marshall did so, and declared instantly that the second note, like the first, must be a forgery. She was very much upset.

"Sir Rodney has been kidnapped, Lord Ferndale!" she exclaimed in distress. "He has been spirited away—and it is obvious that the outrage has been committed by the men who are responsible for the charges of fraud which have been lodged against you! They are afraid that my husband will succeed in his defence of your case, and they have taken these means of preventing him from attending the court."

"By glory," exclaimed Lord Ferndale, "if that's the case, we'll soon have the police on their tracks——"

"The police won't find my husband quickly enough!" interrupted Lady Marshall quickly. "We must enlist the most expert help in London, Lord Ferndale! Mr. Nelson Lee, the famous criminologist, is the only man who can undertake a matter of this sort, and I intend to seek an interview with him at once! Will you come with me?"

"Immediately, Lady Marshall," said the peer. "Your suggestion is an admirable one, and we will ask Mr. Lee's advice without delay. He is the one man in London capable of helping us, and I am sure he will do so."

Lady Marshall's conclusion regarding her husband's kidnappers was somewhat wide of the mark, and, as events turned out, it was fortunate that she decided to interview the famous detective of Gray's Inn Road, for he very speedily formed the opinion that the barrister's disappearance was solely due to the activities of a certain astute criminal who was very badly wanted by the police.

CHAPTER III.

NELSON LEE TAKES A HAND.



NIPPER grasped his master's arm, and pointed to a placard held by a street news-

"Great Scott! Look at that, guv'nor!" he exclaimed

excitedly. "Marshall throws up Ferndale's defence! It's—it's incredible!"

Nelson Lee nodded.

"It is certainly surprising, young 'un," he agreed. "Sir Rodney must be mad to abandon such an important case at this stage, and his reputation will surely suffer—even if it ever survives!"

The famous detective and his assistant were strolling along Gray's Inn Road towards their home, and the wording of the placard gave them ample material for conversation. They were both frankly astounded at the news of Marshall's conduct—but they were soon to obtain enlightenment.

For, a few minutes later, they were greeted in the hall of Nelson Lee's residence by Mrs. Jones, the housekeeper, and informed that two visitors were awaiting them in the consulting-room. Such an event was by no means unusual; but both Lee and Nipper were a trifle surprised when they discovered the identities of the callers.

Their presence—taken in conjunction with the news they had just learned regarding Sir Rodney Marshall—was highly significant, and Nipper looked at his master keenly as the pair mounted the stairs.

"Dashed queer, guv'nor!" he commented. "Looks as if there's something pretty deep at the bottom of this Marshall affair!"

The detective nodded, and entered the consulting-room, where he was soon cordially shaking hands with Lady Marshall and Lord Ferndale. These preliminary courtesies over, the worried peer lost no time in explaining the cause of their presence—the barrister's wife assisting him in making the position clear to Nelson Lee and Nipper.

"I believe my husband has been kidnapped, so that he will be unable to conduct Lord Ferndale's defence," concluded Lady Marshall. "Sir Rodney anticipated a very fierce battle in court, but he could not foresee that his opponents would resort to criminal tactics of this sort, Mr. Lee. It is almost beyond belief that they should employ the services of an expert forger to further their plans; but there can be no doubt whatever that both these notes are forgeries."

"No doubt whatever!" put in Lord Ferndale. "They're infernally clever forgeries, too! I could have sworn that the note I received was written by Sir Rodney—and the second note is an exact imitation of my own hand! It's amazing!"

Nelson Lee looked at the two notes closely, and subjected them to a minute examination under the magnifying-glass. When he had finished there was a keen gleam in his eyes.

"I fancy you are mistaken, Lord Ferndale, in assuming that your financial enemies are responsible for what has occurred," he said quietly. "If these notes are forgeries, as you assert, they are undoubtedly the work of one particular individual——"

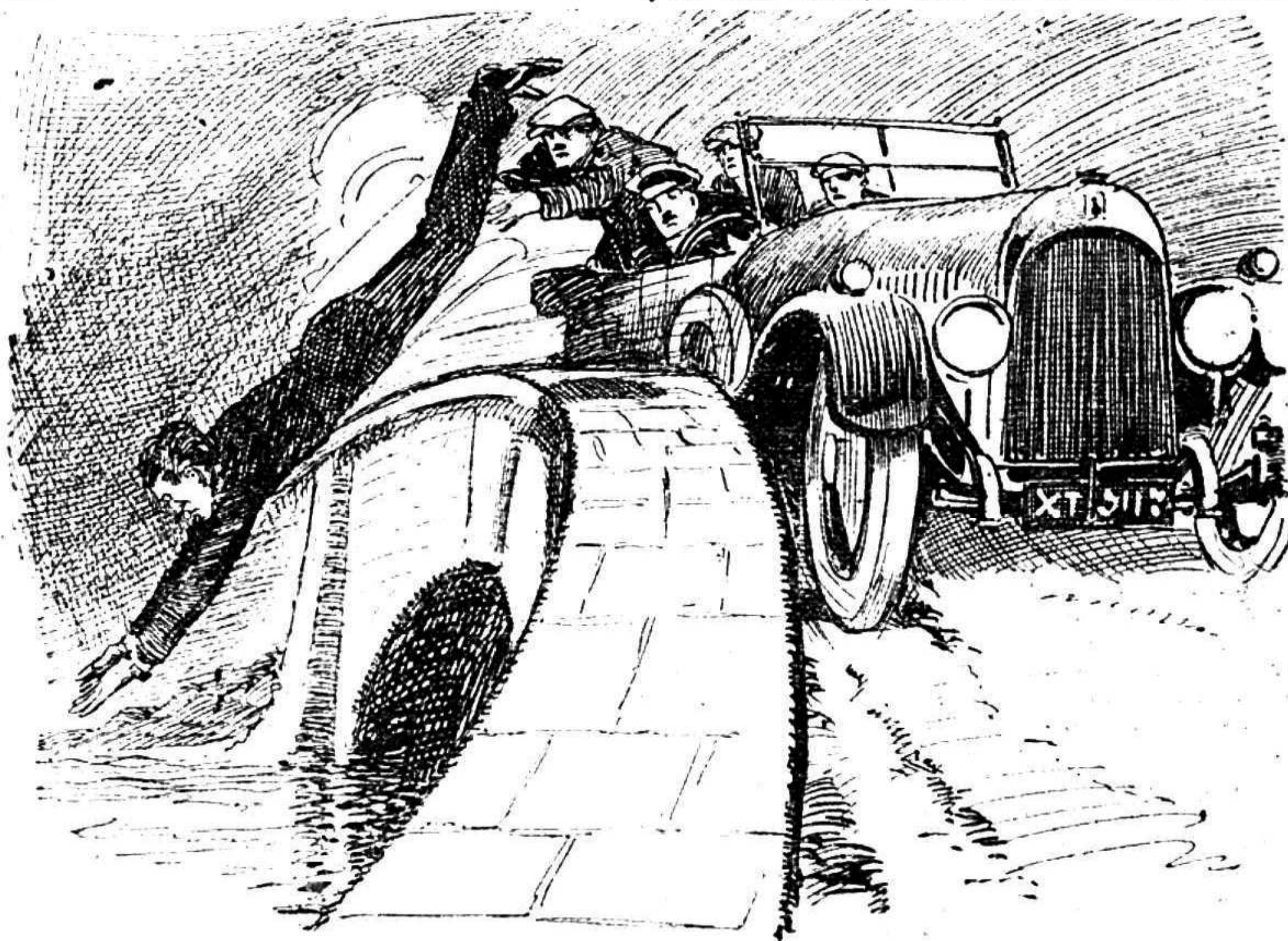
"Jim the Penman, guv'nor!" interjected Nipper excitedly. "By Jimmy!"

"Exactly, Nipper—Douglas James Sutcliffe is the only man who is capable of executing such amazing forgeries as these," agreed the detective. "It is a little difficult to grasp his underlying motives in carrying out this scheme, but— Ah, yes! I remember now! Sir Rodney Marshall acted as Counsel for the Prosecution at Jim's trial five years ago, and Sutcliffe has adopted this plan in order to obtain his revenge! No doubt he has kidnapped Sir Rodney, and will now proceed to rob him!"

Lady Marshall uttered a startled exclamation.

dale was referring to an event which took place a day or two previously—when Jim the Penman, by a clever trick, had succeeded in getting Nelson Lee and Nipper away from their house. During their absence he had disguised himself as the detective, and had boldly entered the consulting-room, where he had calmly helped himself to Lee's cheque-book. Later he had visited the bank, and had drawn a cheque for five thousand pounds—which had been cashed without hesitation.

The bank, of course, had been the losers of the money, but the fact that Sutcliffe



Just as the car was passing over a river by Cuxley Bridge, the forger suddenly leapt up from his seat, and dived clean out of the car into the swiftly flowing waters beneath!

"Good—good gracious!" she ejaculated. "You must be right, Mr. Lee! I remember that Jim the Penman threatened to get even with my husband at the time of the trial! But we took no notice of it, of course. Oh, dear! This is terrible——"

"It is outrageous!" put in Lord Fern-
dale angrily. "I suppose this audacious criminal has spirited Sir Rodney away on the eve of the trial so that his revenge will be even more effective? By gad! Sutcliffe is an amazingly clever man, Mr. Lee! He even victimised you recently, did he not?"

The detective nodded grimly. Lord Fern-

had committed the forgery in the personality of Nelson Lee had been a triumph for him. Moreover, it had served to show Jim's contempt for the famous investigator—an insult which Lee vowed to speedily avenge.

This latest development—the kidnapping of Sir Rodney Marshall—proved that Sutcliffe was bent upon carrying out a systematic scheme of revenge, as he had threatened to do at the termination of his trial five years previously. First, he devoted his attention to Nelson Lee; now he was bent upon exacting vengeance upon Marshall, the man who had prosecuted on behalf of the Crown.

But the detective swore that Jim should not have everything his own way.

Obviously, Jim was adopting totally different tactics on this occasion. He had got Marshall into his clutches by the forged notes, and in all probability he now intended to carry out a robbery by means of forged documents.

Nelson Lee discussed the matter with his two distracted visitors, and promised to get busy immediately. And, very shortly after the departure of Lady Marshall and Lord Ferndale, the criminologist set out to interview Sir Rodney's bankers.

Evidently the detective had formed his plans with his usual swiftness, and was actively engaged in carrying them out.

CHAPTER IV.

JIM THE PENMAN'S REVENGE.



DOUGLAS JAMES SUTCLIFFE smiled amiably, and glanced at the prisoner on the bed.

"Well, Marshall, I'm glad to see you've recovered all right, and that the effects of your doping appear to have vanished so completely," he observed, in a pleasant tone. "It's just as well that you've got a clear head, for I want to have a little chat with you!"

Sir Rodney Marshall, lying bound and helpless, glared at Jim the Penman ferociously.

"What is the meaning of this outrageous conduct, you madman?" he asked, in a choking voice. "Why have you brought me here?"

"Just a little whim on my part, Marshall," replied Sutcliffe. "If it's of any interest to you to know it, you're at present in Brighton—and you're here to assist me in taking the revenge I promised you! Five years ago you prosecuted me, and caused me to endure a living torture in Portmoor Prison—but now my turn has come! I'm a free man once more, and I've made up my mind to get my own back on all those who had a hand in sending me to prison! Do you understand? You're in my power, Marshall, and I'm going to use you for my own ends!"

Jim the Penman's voice had now lost its pleasant tone, and the words were hissed out in a venomous, vindictive manner. The helpless lawyer upon the bed looked at him in amazement, but it was clear enough to Marshall that Jim was in deadly earnest.

"What do you mean?" he queried. "Are you threatening to murder me?"

Sutcliffe smiled evilly, and shook his head.

"No, Marshall—murder is a game which is scarcely worth the candle," he said. "I sent you that note last night in order to get you into my car, where you were promptly drugged and brought here. But

that was only a part of my scheme! I also sent a note to Lord Ferndale—in your hand-writing—telling him that you had abandoned the defence at the trial to-day!"

"You—you fiend!" exclaimed Marshall hotly. "My reputation will be completely ruined——"

"Precisely!" agreed Jim coolly. "That was the object of the message, my dear fellow! I also sent messages to the evening papers, informing them, also, of your sudden determination to back out of the Ferndale case! Oh, I have done everything possible to make your career as a lawyer a thing of the past, Marshall, and I have taken a few very active steps in the direction of reducing your banking account! As a matter of fact, I took the liberty of writing to your bank, and arranging for a messenger to be sent here at 11.30 this morning with ten thousand pounds of your hard-earned cash! Needless to say, I forged your signature with my usual success, and the bank will act without any suspicion. And when the messenger arrives it will be your duty to receive him——"

"I receive him?" repeated Marshall incredulously.

"Exactly!" said Jim. "I shall unbind you for the occasion, and you will receive the messenger just as if you had actually authorised him to bring the money. Also, you will sign the receipt for the cash!"

Sir Rodney Marshall laughed mirthlessly.

"You must be a maniac if you imagine that I will act so foolishly," he exclaimed. "My first act will be to inform the bank messenger of your fraud——"

"In that case your first act will be your last!" cut in Jim the Penman quickly. "For I shall be behind that screen, Marshall, and I shall not hesitate to shoot you at the least sign of treachery! Your only hope of getting out of this house alive will be to carry out my orders implicitly! Do you understand? Unless you sign the receipt without a murmur, you'll be shot down like a dog!"

The lawyer saw that he was in a position of helplessness, and he nodded his agreement gloomily. Jim the Penman had got him in a cleft stick, and there was nothing for it but to do as he was ordered.

"Very well!" said Sutcliffe, noting his prisoner's reluctant nod. "The time now is nearly half-past eleven, and the messenger will be arriving at any moment. We'll prepare for him!"

As he spoke, Jim commenced untying Marshall's bonds, and within a minute the famous K.C. was free. He was then instructed to take his seat at the table, and to await the bank messenger. Sutcliffe—armed with a revolver—meanwhile took up his position behind the screen he had previously indicated, and he again repeated his threat to shoot Marshall unless he carried out his instructions to the very letter.

Sutcliffe's scheme was extremely subtle, for he would not have to resort to forgery

on this occasion. Sir Rodney himself would sign the receipt, and in so doing he would make himself completely responsible for the delivery of the ten thousand pounds. There could be no question of fraud, for the lawyer would actually receive the cash with his own hands.

They had not long to wait, for the messenger arrived within the next five minutes. He was admitted to the bed-room at once, and he nodded briskly to Sir Rodney as he entered.

"Good-morning, sir!" he exclaimed, laying his leather bag upon the table and proceeding to unlock it. "Hope I haven't kept you waiting! Here is the money you sent for, Sir Rodney, and here is the receipt for you to sign."

The messenger laid the money and the receipt-form in front of the K.C., and then stepped back quickly—at the same time casting a quick glance round the room.

Sir Rodney picked up a pen and began to write his signature—his every movement keenly watched by the concealed Jim. So intent was Sutcliffe in seeking for a sign of treachery in his victim that his whole attention was occupied, and he failed to observe the peculiar movements of the bank messenger.

And that individual, with a swiftness which was almost incredible, suddenly darted towards the screen, and quickly thrust it aside, at the same moment producing a revolver from his pocket and jabbing it forcibly into Jim the Penman's ribs!

For a moment Sutcliffe was taken aback, but he recovered his composure in a flash, and glanced keenly at the man before him. Then he understood, and gave a little grunt of chagrin.

He realised instantly that he was gazing into the clear grey eyes of Nelson Lee!

CHAPTER V.

A SLIPPERY CUSTOMER.



THE detective smiled. "Rather an unpleasant little surprise, eh, Jim?" he murmured. "But I see that you recognise me!"

Sutcliffe nodded.

"Oh, yes, I recognise you all right, Lee!" he returned coolly. "This is dashed clever of you, and I really must offer my congratulations! How the deuce did you manage to get on to my game?"

"Merely a matter of anticipating your actions, and making arrangements accordingly," said the detective. "Lady Marshall and Lord Ferndale visited me last night, and showed me your amazing forgeries, Jim. They were marvellous, but you overstepped yourself by writing to his lordship. His action was to hurry to Sir Rodney's house, where he learned of the note which he was supposed to have written. His suspicions led him to seek my advice, and after I had

paid a visit to the bank I had very little difficulty in guessing your purpose. I took the messenger's place, and here I am!"

Jim nodded.

"Very astute of you, Lee!" he said. "I suppose you've brought a few policemen along as well, eh?"

For answer the detective gave an agreed-upon signal, and a moment later Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard, hurried into the room, accompanied by three other plain-clothes men. They very speedily placed the handcuffs upon Jim the Penman's wrists, and took him to the waiting motor-car outside.

Nelson Lee and the chief inspector, between them, soon explained matters to the bewildered Sir Rodney, and he was overjoyed at the manner in which Jim's audacious plot had been frustrated. He was delighted to think that, in spite of Sutcliffe's efforts, he would be able to get to the Law Courts in time to conduct Lord Ferndale's defence, and thus vindicate his honour and regain his almost-ruined reputation.

No time was lost in leaving Brighton now that Jim had been captured. The handcuffed master-forgery was placed in the police car with Lennard and his men, while Nelson Lee and Nipper followed with Sir Rodney in the detective's own vehicle.

The last thing Jim had anticipated was this sudden collapse of his campaign of revenge, and he felt bitterly disappointed and chagrined. But he was not the type of man to give way to despair, and he set his cunning brains to work to find a way out of his predicament.

Jim knew every inch of the London-Brighton Road, and he was well aware that his one opportunity of freedom would come within the next few minutes. And he determined to take it.

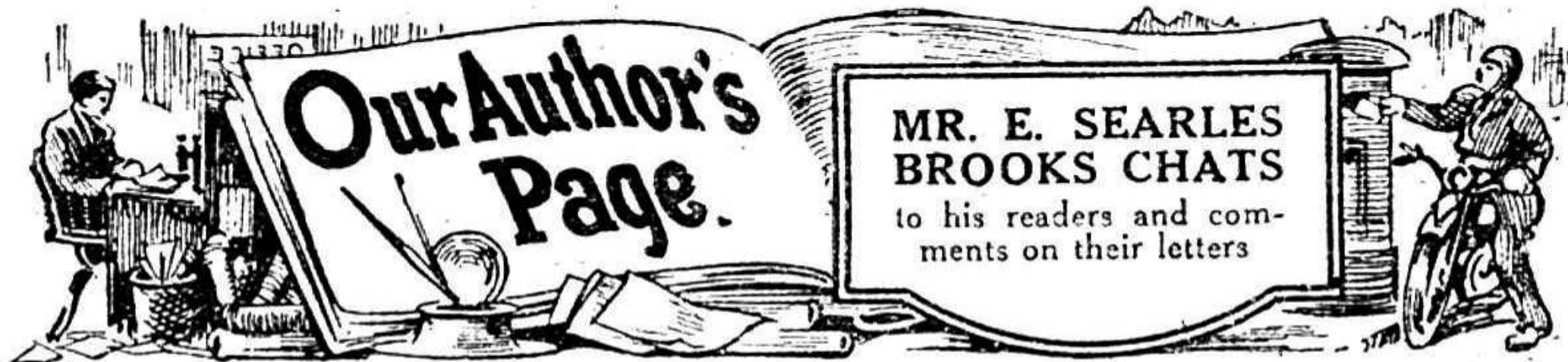
The plain-clothes men were congratulating themselves upon the docility of their prisoner. They had anticipated a hard task in conveying Jim the Penman to London, but here he was sitting among them as calmly as a statue.

But, just as the car was passing over a river by Cuxley Bridge, the forger suddenly leapt up from his seat, and dived clean out of the car into the swiftly flowing waters beneath! So rapid were his actions that the policemen were helpless, and by the time the car had been stopped and a search made there was no sign of Jim the Penman. The waters of the river had seemed to have swallowed him up, and Chief Detective-inspector Lennard—who was in a towering rage—was forced to the conclusion that Sutcliffe had been drowned.

Nelson Lee, however, when he learned of the facts a few moments later, was dubious, and he told himself that Jim the Penman would soon be heard of again.

And the famous detective was right in his surmise, as events would shortly prove.

THE END



(NOTE.—If any readers care to write to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon any remarks that are likely to interest the majority. If you have any grumbles make them to me! If you have any suggestions—send them along. Remember, my aim is to please as many of you as I possibly can. All letters should be addressed to me personally, c/o, The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, LONDON, E.C.4.—E. S. B.)

Letters have been arriving regularly, and I am glad to say that many of them contain serious and well-thought-out criticisms. Frederick Crombleholme wants the "Magazine" section discontinued and the whole paper devoted to detective adventure. On the other hand, "Acme," of Stamford Hill, while also favouring the abolition of the "Magazine," requires a long school story.

I am wondering if it would be a popular move if the Editor decided to cut out the "Magazine" altogether? Certainly we should have more space for the other stories if we did so. But, somehow, I rather think that the majority of readers will want the "Magazine" to be retained.

"Devoted Reader," of Bradford, is asking for a bumper double number at Christmas. Well, I'm afraid we shan't have a double number, but something almost as good—if not better. The fact is, I am preparing not one Christmas story, but two. For two weeks in succession the St. Frank's boys and the Moor View girls will be featured in a Yuletide adventure.

"A Well-Wisher of the N. L.," of Pontefract, is a bit careless, I'm afraid. He accuses me of creating mysteries in my stories, and failing to provide solutions. He quotes one or two instances, but if he will take the trouble to carefully read these stories again, he will find that the "loose" threads are all gathered in, and all details explained. In fact, I rather pride myself on being particularly conscientious in this respect.

I see that Harris Reynolds, of Blackpool, is also in favour of the "one long story" plan. I overlooked him in my above remarks.

Quite a number of readers have expressed regret that my American Notes have finished. Naturally, I feel rather flattered, but these comments of mine are now taking the place of my former short articles. However, I saw many things in America that I have not yet described, and which, I believe, would prove of general interest. If you'd like me to write up a few more of my experiences, just drop me a line. I dare say the Editor will manage to squeeze them in somewhere. But it's up to you, of course.

The Editor and I have been putting our heads together quite a bit. And we've got all sorts of ideas stewing up. That League I mentioned a fortnight ago, for example. And the Portrait Gallery seems to be so popular that we shall certainly keep it on until all the St. Frank's boys are pictured—including the seniors. Then we can give you portraits of the masters and local characters of prominence, if you want them. Needless to say, Moor View girls will not be forgotten. Rely on us! But it'll take a long time, remember—even at four a week. But you don't mind, do you?

Oh, and there's another thing. A year or two ago we gave you a map of St. Frank's and district. How about another one? Don't you think it's about time we produced a more up-to-date map? We've got a really brilliant idea for a splendid new map—it was the Editor's suggestion, so don't give me the credit. You'll hear more about this later on. In the meantime, I'd rather like to hear your views on the subject.

Lots of boys and girls, to say nothing of adults, have written me asking for a St. Frank's Annual. Of course, this isn't my department. But I can tell you that something is stirring in the wind—although, of course, it's altogether too late to produce an Annual this year.



St. Frank's Magazine.

No. 50. Vol. 2. Edited by Pitt. November 8, 1924.

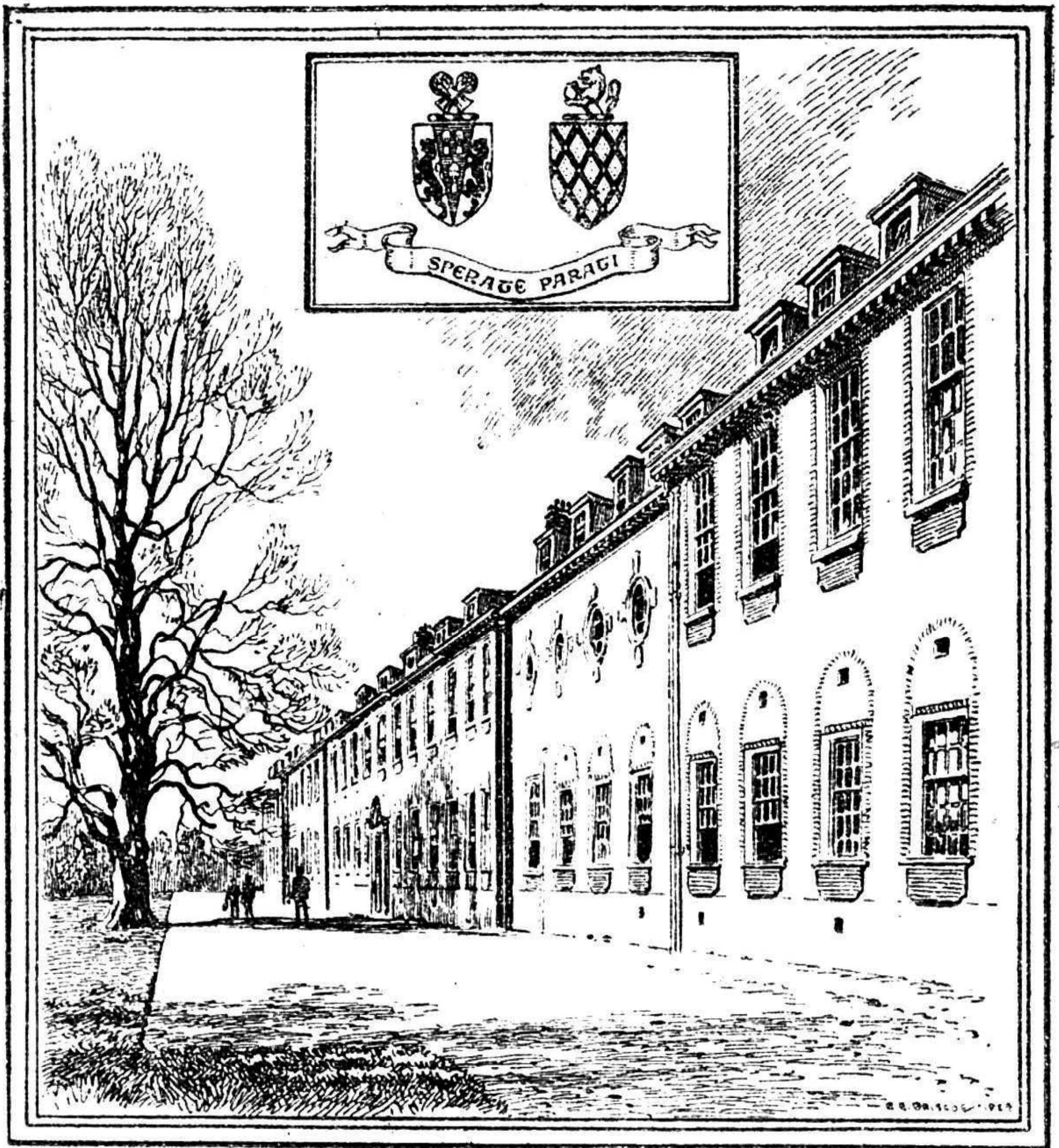
ADVENTURES OF THE HANDFORTH BROTHERS SPLITTING THE ATOM ∴ A Story Without Words



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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

No. 52.—WATFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

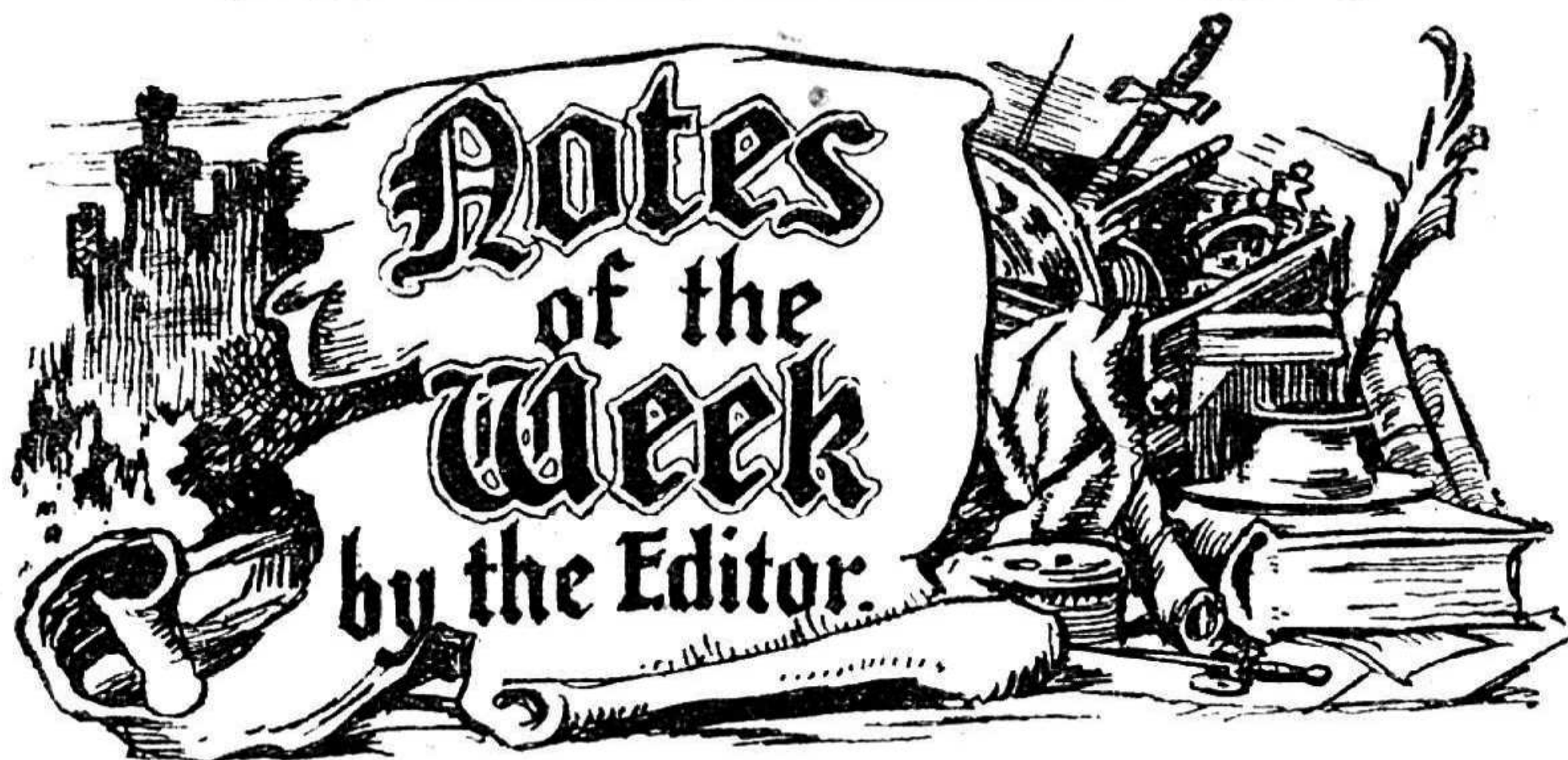


Watford Grammar School is an old foundation, dating back to 1704, when Mrs. Elizabeth Fuller endowed the school for the education of boys and girls. As the school developed it was found necessary to enlarge the buildings, and a new school was built.

In course of time the girls had a separate school built for them, and the boys remained in the old building. Even this building became too small for the increasing number of boys and the requirements of

modern education, necessitating science laboratories, gymnasium, workshops, etc. So a new site was chosen on the Cassio-bury Park Estate, and the present school, which Mr. Briscoe has drawn above, was erected in 1912, and stands in spacious grounds of twelve acres.

The above interesting facts have been supplied me by a reader, together with photograph and badge of the school. I am accordingly presenting this reader with the original sketch of his school.



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

My dear Chums,

I have been asked by a number of readers if there is any likelihood of including some of the Moor View girls in the Portrait Gallery and Who's Who. Of course, I intend to include the girls in this feature later on. It will be many weeks hence though, because we have only dealt with half the Remove so far, and there will be the Fifth, the Sixth, the Third, and the Masters to come.

ADDLED ANCESTRY.

It is some months since this feature last appeared in the Mag. It was in response to several requests from readers that I have induced "Historicus" to take up his pen again and write me another of his amusing sketches of an ancient character in history, whose resemblance to a well-known St. Frank's junior you will have no difficulty in discerning. Hitherto, the identity of "Historicus" has been kept a secret. But this time I have given his initials, and since his portrait appears in this week's "Who's Who," the name of this talented contributor will now be apparent to all.

THE NEW MAP OF ST. FRANK'S.

The artist is already working on the new and revised map of St. Frank's. It will include not only a birdseye view of the school, but all the familiar landmarks, by-ways and highways in the vicinity of the school. It will be drawn on a large scale, and nothing of the smallest importance will be left out. Readers will be able to see the country where St. Frank's is situated for miles around, just as though they were looking down upon it from an aeroplane. The exact position of the River House School, the Moor View School, the villages of Bellton and Bannington, the course of

the River Stowe right down to its mouth will be faithfully represented. It will involve a tremendous amount of work, but I hope to be able to announce in the next few weeks when the map will be ready.

A GREAT DAY AT ST. FRANK'S.

It was a happy thought of Dr. Stafford's to grant us a whole day's holiday on the Fifth for celebrations in honour of a reassembly of the school. Some sort of demonstration was needed, and the invitation to parents, relatives and friends to take part in the festival added considerably to the enthusiasm of the boys. The Fourth came in for a great deal of cheering, and well they deserved it, too. The firework display in the evening was a sight to behold, and the burning of the guy representing "Scandal," amid the loud explosions of rockets, must have been seen and heard for miles around. It brought to an end one of the most memorable days in the history of St. Frank's, and from that time onwards we can look forward to a higher prestige than we have ever known before.

APOLOGIES AND CONGRATULATIONS.

To complete our triumph, letters and telegrams, congratulating us on our victory, have poured in by every post from all over the country. I regret that I cannot answer everyone individually, but I will take this opportunity of thanking all well-wishers and sympathisers here and now, as they say in America. I am pleased to find among these letters several apologies from a number of schools which had turned against us and given us the cold shoulder. In accepting these apologies, I need hardly add that I am mighty glad to bury those misunderstandings which were mainly responsible for all the unfortunate incidents that occurred.

Yours to a cinder,

REGGIE PITT.



OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY. *And WHO'S WHO.*



N. TROTWOOD

No. 25.—NICODEMUS TROTWOOD.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Skinny figure, and thin generally to an amazing degree. Appears to be all legs and arms. Lean face, with eyes set in deep hollows, and a sharp nose overshadowing his other features. Projecting ears. Eyes, vacant-looking, brown. Hair, sandy and curly, in thick masses like a mop, falling about his big ears. Height, 4 ft. 11½ ins. Weight, 7 st. 3 lb. Birthday, February 29th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Looks foolish and simple, but is actually alert and keen. Possesses wonderful, retentive memory, and is a wizard for figures and dates.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Takes little interest in sport, except as a spectator. Makes a hobby of ventriloquism, at which art he is phenomenally expert.

No. 26.—HARRY OLDFIELD.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Awkward and clumsy figure, inclined to be gawky. Cheerful, rugged features, with a humorous mouth, having a characteristic twist at the right corner. Decidedly upturned nose. Eyes, twinkling grey. Hair, chestnut. Height, 5 ft. 1 in. Weight, 8 st. 8 lb. Birthday, December 16th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

A careless, happy-go-lucky disposition. Always ready to do anybody a good turn, and hard to offend. Rash with his pocket-money, generally spending it all at once, and then being stony for the rest of the week.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Prominent in all Modern House sports. Keeps two pet rabbits. An expert amateur carpenter, his hobby being the designing and making of little wooden nicknacks.



HARRY OLDFIELD

THE FOURTH At ST. FRANK'S.



No. 27.—CORNELIUS TROTWOOD.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Skinny figure, and thin generally to an amazing degree. Appears to be all legs and arms. Lean face, with eyes set in deep hollows, and a sharp nose overshadowing his other features. Projecting ears. Eyes, vacant-looking, brown. Hair, sandy and curly, in thick masses like a mop, falling about his big ears. Height, 4 ft. 11½ ins. Weight, 7 st. 2½ lb. Birthday, February 29th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Simple and meek, with very mild manners. As unassertive as his twin brother is pushful. Is afflicted with deafness, and generally mistakes the purport of any remark, invariably misconstruing the last word.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Takes no interest in sports, and prefers to spend his leisure time in quiet reading or studying. Hobby: Stamp collecting.



C. TROTWOOD

No. 28.—BILLY NATION.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Diminutive, wiry and active. Small hands and feet, and tiny, clear-cut features. Cheeky expression, with happy, laughing countenance. Eyes, brown. Hair, fair, close-cut and of silky texture. Height, 4 ft. 5 ins. Weight, 6 st. 4 lb. Birthday, April 2nd.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Always active and bustling, but a champion time waster. Generally busy at something, but never gets anything done. Careful with his pocket-money, and keeps a written record of every penny he spends.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

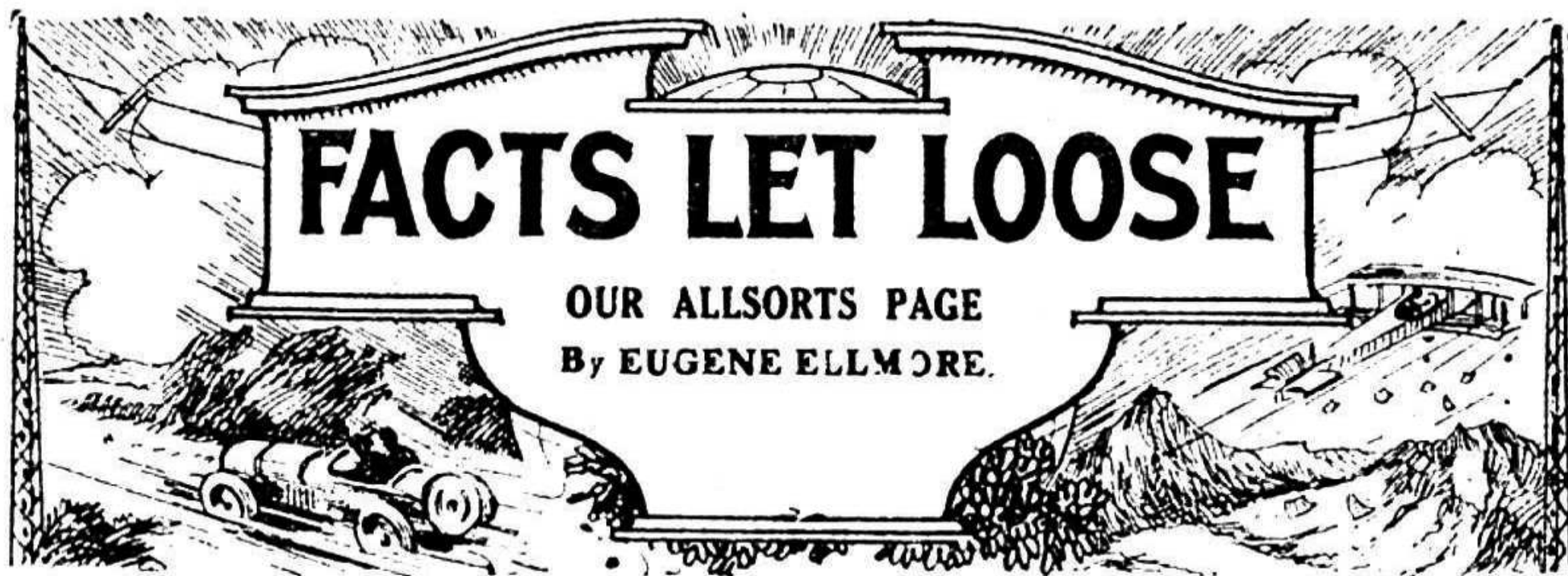
One of the lesser lights of junior Modern House sports. Hobby: Lending money to Harry Oldfield, and trying to get it back.



BILLY NATION

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.

NEXT WEEK: Teddy Long, Walter Skelton, Arthur Hubbard, Eugene Ellmore.



THE MUNGOOSE.

This animal is of extraordinary interest and value. A grey one from India recently arrived at the Zoo. Its coat is pepper-and-salt brindled. Its body is narrow, its tail tapering, its face is fierce and rat-like, and its snout is pointed. No beauty to look at. But no animal in India is more loved and valued. For it is a great snake-killer. Though it is only about a foot long, it will attack the largest snakes—and it always wins. It delights in the fight; its fur bristles and stiffens until it looks twice its ordinary size, and it dances round the snake in the oddest manner, waiting its opportunity. A cobra gets furious, and strikes at the mongoose at random. But the fangs fail to reach the skin of the mongoose because of its thick fur. All at once the mongoose ceases its dancing, and springs on the back of the cobra's neck, which it can break with one snap of its jaws, so powerful are they. No wonder the mongoose is popular where snakes abound and take a heavy toll of human life every year.

STRIKING FACTS ABOUT TISSUES.

The formation of living tissue is a mysterious process. Modern physiological research claims to have proved that a cell may form skin tissue, kidney tissue, muscle tissue, or gut tissue, according to circumstances. In other words, medical science and skill have large scope to determine what a given cell may become, and how it shall act. They tell us that animals work their organs and tissues in shifts, so to speak, and that the higher animals, including man, have more tissue than they need to use in average circumstances. They have always something in hand to meet emergencies. A large part of a man's liver may be taken away, but what is left will do the work. One kidney has been removed from an adult, and the other was called upon to do double duty; but the man became more susceptible to disease. When one kidney was taken away from a child, however, the remaining one grew to the size of two, and

the child was apparently no worse for it. There is a certain fresh-water animal whose body splits into two, and the tail end after separation develops a new head, brain, and all the other necessary organs.

MAMMOTH SKELETONS.

In Moravia six mammoth skeletons have just been found, packed closely together, as if some force had placed them there in an orderly fashion. Some think that the animals were overwhelmed by some natural calamity, but others think that they were killed by men hunters. Remains of wild horse, bear, wild cat, wolf, reindeer, and Alpine hare, were also discovered in the same stratum, together with instruments made of agate and jasper. A few months ago a warrior of the Iron Age was unearthed near Prague, in Bohemia, and the skeleton of a mammoth was dug up in Slovakia, near Bratislava. Czecho-slovakia is famous for its industrial manufactures and modern progress, but it seems to abound in relics of antiquity as well.

TRAVEL TALES

(Continued from page 8.)

the back of the rattler's head. Then, with all my strength I pushed the knife against the snake and into the ground. I felt it go through, and blood spurted out on to my hand and arm. But the writhing body fell away from me on to the ground, and the rattling ceased. The fight was won.

Even then I didn't let go for some time, as I feared there might be enough vitality left in the head to cause the fangs to act. When I did let go, it was with a clean, sudden, quick motion, so as to get quite clear. But the reptile was dead enough, and when I looked into its mouth I found that its fangs were tightly closed over a dead twig of mesquite. I trimmed the rattles off and kept them as a memento of an incident which even now makes me shudder every time I think of it.



THE SIGN OF THE SCARLET SHADOW!

*A Startling New Serial
of Mystery and Thrilling
Adventure, introducing
Trackett Grim and Splinter.*

By EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH

THE BEGINNING IN A NUTSHELL.

Quiver Castle, the house of Sir Makeham Quiver, is being investigated by Trackett Grim and Splinter. Sir Makeham is menaced by unknown enemies, and, after going down a secret passage, Trackett Grim and Splinter enter a cavern. They are confronted by an awful-looking rotter in a steel mask, who presses a button and tries to electrocute his victims. **NOW GO STRAIGHT ON WITH THE STORY, AND DON'T MISS A SINGLE WORD.**

CHAPTER VIII. THE FIRST CLUE.

THE blue flames of electricity played round Trackett Grim and Splinter like a shillingsworth of fireworks let off all in one go. It was pretty awful for the celebrated pair, and they were whacked.

Five minutes later they came to themselves, and found, to their horror, that they were fixed to the wall, side by side. Great steel handcuffs tethered them, and they were padlocked to some great iron stakes.

The man in the steel mask removed his headgear, and grinned. His eyes were so triumphant that they glittered dangerously.

"You dotty lunatic!" he said witheringly. "What's the idea? Think you could whack me at this game? I'm Standon Quiver, old Sir Makeham's nephew."

"You rotter!" roared Trackett Grim. "Lemme go!"

"Not likely!" retorted Standon Quiver. "I've been trying to trap you for months, and at last you're in my power! I mean to put you out of the way until I've scared my uncle to death, and pinched all his cash!"

And the man in the steel mask laughed scornfully, and vanished through a narrow

stone doorway. On the instant, Trackett Grim exerted all his enormous strength. And his ropes parted with two or three loud cracks, and he was free. In next to no time Splinter was also released.

"Follow me!" snapped Grim. "We'll soon stop this game, my son! If he thinks he's dished Trackett Grim, he's on the wrong set of rails! Once alone with Sir Makeham Quiver, and he'll do him in!"

"To the rescue, sir!" gasped Splinter.

"You bet!" retorted Grim.

They shot through the doorway, and found themselves in a blind passage. At the end of it was a door, and it stood half open. They got through, and found themselves in Sir Makeham Quiver's library.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Trackett Grim, staring round in blank amazement. "I thought we were miles away from the castle! And here we are in the middle of it!"

Trackett Grim was not in the least surprised, and he remained calm and cool. And at this moment a thud sounded overhead, followed by a terrific scream.

"Too late!" gasped Grim frantically.

He dashed out into the hall, whizzed upstairs, and Splinter followed him. Sir Makeham's door stood half open, and Trackett Grim pelted in. He reeled back when he discovered that Sir Makeham Quiver had vanished.

"Great Scott!" roared the detective. "He's been kidnapped!"

And just then the library door closed with a slam. And clouds of thick yellow smoke poured in from all sides.

"Poison gas, sir!" breathed Splinter desperately.

(How do our famous pair escape? Read next week's instalment, and if your shadows don't turn red like Sir Makeham's, they ought to!—AUTHOR.)



ADDLED ANCESTRY

Hazarded by
"HISTORICUS"
(N. T.)

No. 4.—YE ASTROLOGER OF ISIS

IN ye dayyes of King Solomon there lived a learned astrologer from ye City of Isis, and ye name of this man of science was Tuckh-Tymm-Othy. And ye great man didde journie far, and come unto ye Court of King Solomon. Now ye astrologer made announcement that he would proceed that nighte to give a lecture on ye subject of ye stars.

And ye populace rolled up in ye myriads. And King Solomon himselfe graced ye occasion by his presence. For Tuckh-Tymm-Othy was famed throughout ye Lande of Egypt, and men didde travel far to hear ye words of wisdom from his lips.

Ye lecture was billed to commence at ye houre of eight but ere seven o'clocke had struck on ye cittie clockes, ye halle was fulle to ye brimme, and ye "House Full" boards were placed at ye entrance, in order to discourage further citizens who sought entrie.

Ye great man appeared before ye multitude. And ye multitude was impressed. For Tuckh-Tymm-Othy proved to be a man of strange appearance. His head was bigge with ye high dome, and hair grew upon his head like ye tangled moppe.

And ye lecture on ye stars commenced, but ere long ye subject drifted away to a different theme, and ye learned astrologer tolde his audience of ye domestic policie of ye ancient Peruvians, and ye social problems of pre-historic Russia.

Ye audience thereupon became somewhat restive, and King Solomon himselfe didde sidgete righte testilie in his royal box. And in due course ye monarch did arise in wrath, and pronounce a few wordes of his celebrated wisdom. He didde, in truthe, pronounce ye lecturer to be dottie, and thenceforthe Tuckh-Tymm-Othy was consigned to ye asyume as a harmlesse fattheadde.

And throughout ye ages ye Tuckhs have remained ye same—ye presente dayye representative, known as T.T., being more dottie than all ye others of his celebrated line.



TRAVEL TALES.

By An Old
Boy
(Lord Dorrimore's
Weekly Trifle)

No. 21.—How I Came Upon a Rattlesnake.

WE were imprisoned in a desert hole in California—on the Morjave Desert, to be exact—and our great need was for water. We had to find water or die.

Whilst hunting for water one day, I followed a rabbit's tracks, and at times I had to crawl on all fours. I had killed the rabbit, and from the contents of its stomach I judged that it had drunk quite lately, so that there must be water near.

When wriggling through a particularly thick clump of mesquite, a thorny bush, I clapped my hand upon something that struck very cold and clammy. What was it? A snake, undoubtedly. What was I to do? If I withdrew my hand suddenly, and tried to run away, the snake would have advantage, especially in that dense scrub, and I should probably soon be a corpse. So I held on. In fact, I could do nothing else, for I seemed to be paralysed. The snake, suspecting something, began to uncoil, and started his rattles, which made a fearful din as they waved to and fro in the air. There were sixteen of them, and a "button," as I found afterwards.

My hand was on the snake's head, which I pressed firmly into the ground, and daren't let go, for that would have been fatal. Meanwhile, the five feet of the body and tail were wriggling and squirming about my shoulders and arms and face. But I knew that I had to hold on.

At last I managed to get out my hunting knife, and press the edge of the blade against

(Continued on page 6.)

IN REPLY to YOURS



(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.H.)

R.H. (Stock): Why should I tell Church and McClure that Zambuk is good for squashed noses? Their noses don't need any ointment. They're tough and leathery from long acquaintance with my fists.

INTERESTED (Charmouth): As a matter of fact, I'm a film actor in addition to being a detective. Of course, I haven't actually acted in front of the camera yet, but if I did once start, Rudolph would have to look out!

BRUCE CHALCRAFT (Edinburgh): Don't worry about Ena. She's getting on fine at the Moor View School. As long as she stays there I shall be satisfied. It's only when she comes to St. Frank's that I get the wind up.

SARCKY (Catford): Draw it mild, old son! That picture of yours is pretty decent, but it's no more like Irene than my boot is. Irene's as pretty as a dew-covered rose on a summer's morning. Have another shot!

ELIZ. HOYE (Liverpool): Your letter was jolly interesting, but I believe you pinched some of it from somewhere. Glad you like the Moor View girls—you wouldn't be human if you didn't. But you say nothing about Trackett Grim.

NIPPER (Grimsby): It's no good trying to spoof me—I'm too cute. You're not Nipper at all—and Nelson Lee wouldn't own a Ford. If you want to know how to make oxtail soup, write to Fatty Little. I'm not a chef, you ass!

Correspondence Answered by Edward Oswald Handforth

ROBERT LANGFORD BAKER (Brixton, S.W.2): Of course we're having fireworks this year, you guy! As a matter of fact, we have fireworks every day. Ask Church and McClure, if you don't believe me.

CANTAB (Cambridge): Being a girl, it's only natural that you should like Willy. Somehow, the young fathead seems to be popular with the girls. I expect this is because he doesn't care a snap for 'em! Girls are rummy creatures!

VERA (Hanwell, W.7): It's impossible for me to give you any information about Archie's latest waistcoat. He has so many that we can't keep count. I don't dislike Willy at all. What makes you think so?

A FIFER (Dunfermline, N.B.): Like your nerve to call me a Teddy Bear! No, I don't write love-letters. They're too sloppy and silly for an active, energetic chap like me. I believe in curdling my readers' blood!

W. T., S.C., & S.C. (Gravesend): Yes, we had our sports long ago. Ancient House came out on top by yards and miles. Those Modern House fatheads are too jolly slow for anything. They wish they had me there!

JUANITA MALVEREZ (Manchester): If you're really like that sketch at the bottom of your letter, you must be jolly pretty. As you say, no artist can really do full justice to my stories. We authors have a hard time.

FRANCIS HOYE (Liverpool): Thought I'd missed you, eh? No fear! I never miss anybody or anything. The fact is, your letter got chucked behind the bookcase, and your sister's somewhere else. C. and McC. are untidy beggars.

SANE (Victoria Docks, E.16): So I mustn't tell people to go and eat coke, eh? And my T. G. stories are piffle? By George! I'll show you! You can not only eat coke, but cinders and flint stones as well! Nerve!

HUBERT EDWARD ARTHUR (Dorking): So you want me to ask Willy to punch my nose? Sorry, old chap. I can't do it. Willy would try it on like a shot—and then I should have to spank him. You know how I hate quarrelling!

CORNELIUS VANDERBILDT (New York): I didn't know that a suburb of Broadstairs was named New York. Why didn't you call yourself Henry Ford while you were about it?

NOORMAHAAL (King's Cross, N.): Rose of the Desert, eh? More like rows of houses! You've got wonderful sense, and I admire you. Your description of Irene is correct; she certainly is GREAT. I ignore your insults!

TREBOR NITRAM (Liverpool): Here's your reply, Bob. Been looking for it, eh? So my T.G. yarns thrill you to the core? Good! You don't realise how terribly hard it is to think of these intricate plots.

JAQUETTA MALVAREZ (Manchester): Judging by that pencil drawing, you're just as pretty as your sister. If you two girls have got a brother he must be lucky. Jolly glad you're both English, and proud of it.

THE ARAB (King's Cross, N.): Are you the husband of Noormahaal? Or are you merely a second self? You can take your questions to Timbuctoo! You call me the biggest fool at St. Frank's, and then expect me to give you a polite reply!

JACK & DOT WILLIAMS (Chester): Pleased to hear from you, but I haven't got space enough to answer your string of nine potty questions. Besides, you say that on the whole I'm a bit of an idiot. 'Nuff said!

KCAJ REKSA (Norwich): So you're coming to St. Frank's. And you'll get off with Irene? If you come here with those ideas, my lad, you'll soon end up by getting off the earth! Don't forget I'm here!

A BOY READER (Plymouth): You grumbled at your last reply—five mouldy, miserable lines. Sorry, old chap—you'll get less this time. Can't be helped; not enough space. But everything comes to those who wait!

AN ADMIRER OF MY FEATURES (Hull): Of course I didn't give your love to Irene last time. Like your cheek to send it. Why, you don't even know her! Don't worry—the portraits of Irene and Co. will appear in due course.

C.P.D.A.O.S.Y. (Cleethorpes): It's a good thing you didn't give your name in full, or I shouldn't have had any space

for a reply. I haven't got much, even now! In fact, I haven't got any at all! Sorry!

JOAN (Killiney, Co. Dublin): Thanks for your good wishes. Yes, rather, I'm feeling O.K.! Both Church and McClure are a bit out of sorts this evening. I can't understand it. They were quite all right ten minutes ago!

GLADYS BOWEN (Dudley): I wish you'd come to the Moor View School, Gladys. You think the Fourth would do a lot better with me as skipper, eh? You're just the kind of girl I like to hear from. Write again, please!

JOHN WILLIAM HERBERT WOOD ROBERTS LUCOCK LUCAS (Toronto, Canada): You're even worse than that Cleethorpes chap. Don't trouble to send any snakes to Willy. He's slippery enough as it is.

WILLY HANDFORTH (Walworth, S.E. 17): I did write an article on ventriloquism, but the editor turned it down for some reason. It's always the same—I'm constantly being squashed out of the Mag. I never get a look in!

P. CABLE (Shepton Mallet): So I couldn't knock the skin off a rice-pudding, eh? I'll bet I could knock the skin off your face, anyhow, and that would be just about the same thing. You can't insult me just as you like.

DORIS C. (Leytonstone, E.11): Sorry the portraits displease you. The fact is it's awfully difficult for an artist to get character in a face and retain youth at the same time. We try to please everybody, but just can't do it.

ALFRED COMPLEXION (London, S.E.1): Yours of the 30th to hand. In reply, I beg to say that my face is quite good enough to satisfy Irene—therefore it's good enough for anybody. You can go and lose yourself, and forget to come back!

TWO TOMBOYS (Southport): Of course, I really thought you were two girls all the time. Just a little slip on my part. I've given your message to Reggie Pitt, and he's awfully pleased. Your second letter is as nice as your first.

**ANOTHER BIG BATCH
OF REPLIES COMING
NEXT WEEK!**

**AVOID THE XMAS RUSH
AND WRITE NOW!**

"THE FOOTBALL DESERTER!"

Hallo ! Hallo ! Hallo !

Who's looking for a tip-top footer yarn ? Who's wanting to read about a jolly sailor-boy who was a first-class footballer, too ?

You mustn't miss meeting this cheery lad. Terry Truscott's his name, and he's the fellow everybody's talking about this week.

Where can you find him ? Why, in that super-yarn of Football and Navy life, "The Football Deserter," which has been specially written for the BOYS' REALM by that old favourite

ROBERT MURRAY

You must certainly read how an honest, straight-as-a-die young sailor like Terry became a deserter. It was a queer business—and, of course, Terry wasn't to blame.

And whilst you're reading the first chapters of this wonderful new football story you'll be reading a number that contains no less than FIVE other rattling sports stories, all of which you can begin right away.

There's "The Drudge of the Team," another tremendous footer story ; " Battling Grayle & Son," a feast of boxing thrills ; " Scapegrace School," something new in school stories ; and two more terrific yarns.

It's The Best Twopennyworth You Can Get !

NOW ON SALE !

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